

**NUI MAYNOOTH**

Ollscoil na hÉireann M<sup>á</sup> Nuad

**Quality Review of  
the Library  
15 – 17 November 2010**

**Peer Review Report**

**Peer Review Group:**

**External Reviewers:**

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University Librarian,  
University of Durham;  
Mrs Deborah Shorley,  
Director of Library Services,  
Imperial College London.**

**Internal Reviewers:**

**Dr Thomas O'Connor,  
Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Celtic Studies  
and Philosophy, NUI Maynooth;  
Professor Ray O'Neill,  
Vice President for Research, NUI Maynooth.**

## NUIM Quality Review of the Library November 2010

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## **Executive Summary**

We undertook our Peer Review of the Library at the National University of Ireland at Maynooth (NUIM) in early November 2010. We base the findings contained in our Report on the Library's Self Assessment Report (October 2010) and on the information we gathered at our meetings with a wide range of stakeholders and library staff. As we said in our informal presentation at the end of our visit, we were highly impressed by all we read, saw and heard. We are entirely confident that the Library is providing an excellent service to NUIM. In our professional judgement we consider it to be very well managed, user-focused and innovative in its approach.

In this report we identify areas worthy of particular praise, and suggest a number of issues which could usefully be addressed. These suggestions should, however, be seen not as adversely critical; rather as possible ways of making an already excellent service even better.

Among other issues, we have highlighted:

- The role and profile of the subject librarians (work on this is currently underway)
- The operation of the Russell Library, to ensure it can better serve the campus community as a whole
- The need for a revised staff structure, particularly in the light of the planned new library building extension

## **Acknowledgements**

We were very impressed by the way this Peer Review of the Library was organised, both in advance of our visit, and also during the three days we spent at the University. The professionalism of all those we met was beyond reproach, and we were received warmly everywhere. We are particularly grateful to Dr Richard Watson and Mrs Marguerite Lohan from the Quality Office and to the Librarian, Cathal McCauley, the Deputy Librarian, Ms Helen Fallon and their staff for their open and thoughtful approach throughout. It made our task far easier.

## **Methodology**

We undertook our Peer Review visit between 15 - 17 November 2010. We had already scrutinised the Library's Self Assessment Report provided to us in advance of our visit.

During our visit we had the opportunity to meet library staff at all levels and a wide range of stakeholders, including library users and senior managers of NUIM (see *Appendix 1*).

We gave all those we spoke to the opportunity to talk to us openly and in confidence about the Library and its services, and to indicate to us how they believed these could be improved, or modified in the light of NUIM's evolving strategy. We are confident all spoke frankly and shared their views with us in a spirit of constructive criticism.

At the end of our visit we made a short informal presentation of our initial findings to library staff (see *Appendix 2*).

## Commendations

During our visit to NUIM as External Peer Reviewers, we found a Library service in good heart, providing a range of valuable library and information services to an appreciative academic community and delivering services of an extremely high standard.

We would like to offer the particular following commendations to the University:

1. The production of an excellent Self Assessment Report which gave a very full picture of the range of Library services provided, referenced some of the issues relating to the management of change, the opportunities presented by the new Library building and preparedness for possible reductions in finance available to the Library.
2. Congratulations to NUIM for the appointment of its Librarian. With the Deputy Librarian and the appointment of two new Senior Librarians, the Library has a exemplary senior management team with the vision, determination and skills to move the Library forward, keep it aligned with NUIM strategy, but also to engage in national shared services agendas.
3. A library staff characterised by professionalism, enthusiasm, energy and verve, not afraid to try new initiatives and with a track record of innovation, service enhancement, client-driven services and engagement with their academic and student communities.
4. Creative collaborative projects within the University, the local community (Maynooth Post Primary School Library as an exemplar) and with wider national and international collaborative initiatives have strengthened NUIM's reputation while validating the Library's expertise and knowledge as a collaborative partner.
5. An impressive, innovative and well developed Library and Information Skills Training (LIST) information literacy programme much appreciated by undergraduates and postgraduates. The publication of an annual LIST programme is beneficial, helps promotion and take-up while the flexible nature of the programme ensures relevance to NUIM's strategy of, and commitment to, lifelong learning.
6. Across the board appreciation of library services from academic and professional support staff, undergraduate and postgraduate students – in fact every group the external reviewers met. Despite our very best efforts, it was very difficult to persuade anyone to be adversely critical about the Library or any of the services provided.
7. Library staff are to be congratulated on their ability to maintain and develop library services with the current restrictions imposed by the existing Library.

8. Staff training and development is taken seriously both in terms of financial investment and in the intention to develop and support a flexible, creative and skills workforce. The Library is regarded as a University pathfinder by the Staff Development Unit which again, reinforces the Library's reputation for innovation and service development.
9. Impressive outreach activities within NUIM, such as the Publications Festival, Academic Writing Support, exhibitions and the development by the University of Ireland's first Institutional Repository; all contribute to the Library's relevance, alignment and engagement with University education and research imperatives.
10. The contribution of the Russell Library staff and collections to the University's reputation and research agenda.
11. Confirmation of the position of the Library as the cultural and intellectual heart of NUIM.

## Recommendations

From what we have written so far it should be obvious that we consider the Library at NUIM is providing a wide range of library and information service extremely well aligned with University strategy, valued by all the various stakeholder groups we met during the review and leading in many exemplars of good practice and service delivery. But there is always room for improvement.

More specifically we recommend that the Library:

1. Clarify and implement its new staffing structure.

The new Strategic Plan, and the likely staffing implications of the planned new library extension mean the new structure should be implemented as a matter of some urgency.

2. Work collaboratively with the University Computer Centre:

to identify areas of service improvement, efficiency and delivery as a consequence of Computer Centre staff being present in the planned new building. Already good relations between the University Librarian and Director of the Computing Centre should provide the basis for deepening collaboration and exploring areas of possible shared services such as help/enquiry desk services or extended hours provision

3. Develop a shared, coherent and comprehensive collection development strategy.

This needs to be rooted in the Library, and managed by the Library, but with academic staff consultation and involvement. This is a key Library activity in both print and electronic domains and should not be a devolved responsibility to academic departments.

4. Address the role of the Subject Librarian Team.

Building on the work already begun by the Senior Librarian Learning, Teaching and Research Development, the Library should define the role and function of the Subject Librarians, develop and expand their academic liaison and teaching role and determine the core functions of this team and which of their responsibilities could be delegated elsewhere within the Library or not performed in the short term until staffing levels are appropriate. The name of this team should change to reflect its strategic importance.

5. Review opening hours.

NUIM Library's opening hours are considerably shorter than at other comparator universities. With a greater diversity of students, together with the flexibility of the new building, there is scope for a reasonably cost-effective extension of existing opening hours, possibly by employing NUIM research students.

6. Secure an equitable share of printing/photocopying costs.

With the implementation of a new University wide print management system, the Library needs to ensure no loss of income from photocopying and Library-controlled printing. It should also be recognised that reduced income from print photocopying is matched by increased printing income from Library electronic content residing with University Computing Services. An adjustment is required to protect Library income.

7. Work energetically with the Development Office to expand the Library's fundraising capacity.

As a historic and unique Irish University College with unique assets of the Russell Library and its collections together with the new building, opportunities exist for attracting philanthropic gifts. This should be actively explored and developed.

8. Review access control and security issues, particularly in the light of the new Library building.

9. Encourage and develop a new culture of staff flexibility and adaptability.

There is some evidence to suggest that the relative longevity of the current staff structure has encouraged a degree of complacency amongst some staff. The new staff structure, the appointment of the new University Librarian and the two new Senior Librarians together with the need for new working practices in the new building should all foster more flexible working, less emphasis on grading issues and more on skills development and service delivery.



10. Clarify the role and function of Special Collections, especially the future of the Russell Library, with particular regard to succession planning and knowledge transfer.

The development of a Special Collections service in the new Library building should be taken as an opportunity to review the role and function of Special Collections within the University. We advise NUIM to appoint consultants to advise the University and make recommendations for the future operations and strategic development of Library Special Collections.

11. Address turnaround time for shelving.

Bottlenecks need to be resolved. The employment of student shelvers is one possible solution.

12. Further streamline routine library tasks.

Staff-intensive library operations should, where possible, move to self service. (For example, laptops or notebook pcs available for self service).

13. In view of the success of the accredited module of the BA in Local/Community studies, request the University to consider the accreditation of the LIST programme and eventually other Library-delivered courses in appropriate consultation with Faculties, Departments and other units.

This might be seen as part of the strategic reorientation of the Library within the University as the Library continues to develop its role in information skills delivery and related areas.

14. Might contribute to a more active archives acquisition programme both to enhance existing collections and develop new holdings.

15. Might adopt, at the invitation of the University, a more pro-active role in the development of University strategic policy.

This seems to be demanded by the Library's changing role within the University both as a space for interaction/service provision and as a partner in the learning and research experience of students and staff.

## **Conclusion**

The Review Team is happy to report its **broad confidence** in the Library's provision of library and information services to support teaching, learning, research and engagement at NUI Maynooth.

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**Jon Purcell**  
**External Reviewer**

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**Deborah Shorley**  
**External Reviewer**

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**Dr Thomas O'Connor**  
**Internal Reviewer**

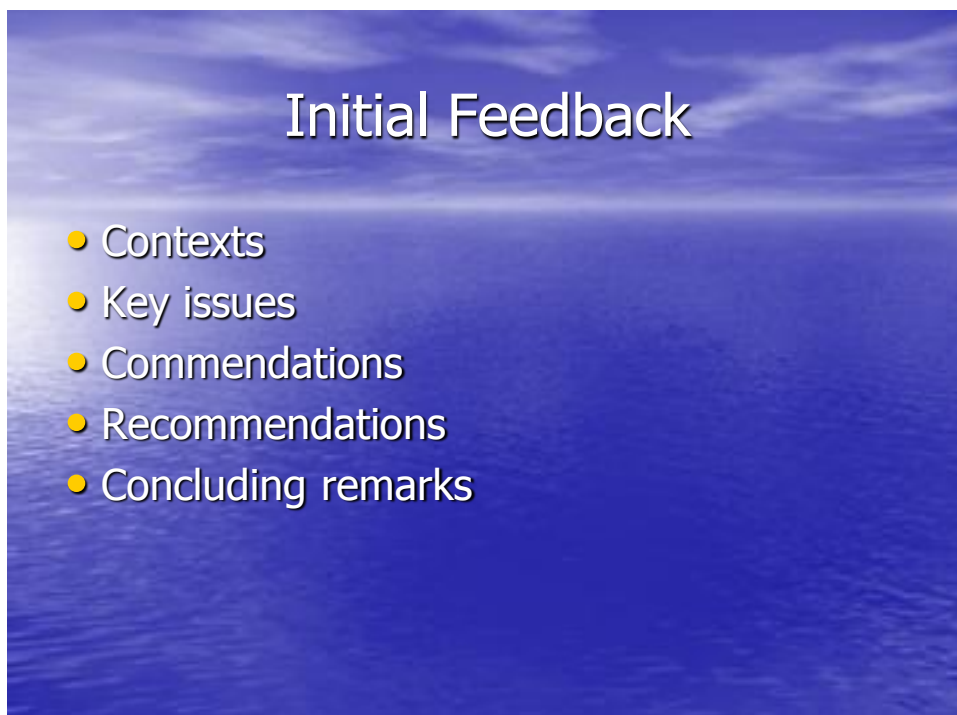
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**Professor Ray O'Neill**  
**Internal Reviewer**

January 2011

*Appendix 1: Stakeholder groups and individuals consulted during Peer Review of Library visit.  
(Listed in chronological order of meetings held)*

Prof Tom Collins	President, NUIM
Prof Ray O'Neill	Vice President, NUIM
Dr Tom O'Connor	Faculty Dean
Mr Cathal McCauley	Librarian, NUIM
Ms Helen Fallon	Deputy Librarian, NUIM
Ms Penny Woods	Member of Library Staff, NUIM
Group of Russell Library Users	
Group of Russell Library Staff	
Ms Jacqui Morrissey	Member of Library Staff, NUIM
Prof Peter Lucas	Russell Library User
Mr Johnny Nevin	Local School Principal
Group of NUIM Postgraduate Students	
Dr Honor Fagan	Graduate Studies, NUIM
Dr Caroline Ang	Research Support Office
Ms Orla Hanratty	Centre for Teaching and Learning
Lynne Budden	Staff Development Officer
Mr Brian Carolan	Director of Computer Centre, NUIM
Group of NUIM Heads of Departments/Library Representatives	
Prof Jim Walsh	Deputy President, NUIM
Mr Frank Fitzmaurice NUIM	Director of Corporate Services, NUIM
Ms Valerie Seymour	Member of Library Staff, NUIM
Ms Linda Noonan	Member of Library Staff, NUIM
Group of NUIM Undergraduates	
Monsignor Hugh Connolly	President, St Patrick's College
Groups of NUIM Library Staff	
Group of NUIM Support Staff	



## Contexts

- The University
- The new building
- Rapid technological change
- Challenging financial situation
- Evolving user needs

## Key Issues

- New staff structure: the right people doing the right job in the right ways
- What are core Library activities and what are peripheral?
- Responsiveness to student experience issues, especially postgraduate students
- Future proofing and alignment with University mission (new Strategic Plan)
- Russell Library: strategic review of functions, staffing and development as part of Special Collections

## Commendations (1)

- Enthusiasm, energy, professionalism and dedication of staff
- Congratulations to NUI Maynooth for choice of Librarian
- Excellent Self Assessment Report, thanks to all staff who contributed
- Creative collaborations (added value)
- Fruitful Advocacy

## Commendations (2)

- Impressive outreach
- Publications Festivals
- Planning for new building: innovations
- LIST programme: a national exemplar
- Effective delivery of services despite building inadequacies
- Staff and student appreciation of Library services

## Recommendations (1)

- Implement new staff structure aligned with strategic plan and new building including discussions with Computer Centre
- Develop a coherent and comprehensive collection management strategy
- Raise profile of Subject Librarians team (name change?)
- Review of opening hours to reflect NUIM needs

## Recommendations (2)

- Secure equitable share of printing/photocopying income
- Work proactively with development to fundraise for Library
- Address access control and security issues
- Foster culture of flexibility and adaptability across Library
- Consideration of Special Collections (JP11/Russell libraries)

## Thank You

We have really enjoyed working with you all over the last few days and thank you for your hospitality.

Debby Shorley / Jon Purcell