Nowlan Digitsation Grant 2021

Deirdre Raftery

Name	Deirdre Raftery
Date report was submitted:	Aug 4, 2022
2a. Year awarded:	2021
2b. Title of project:	Carysfort College Registers, 1883-1922
2c. Please provide a summary of the project (minimum 100 words):	The concept for the project proposal was to digitise the Carysfort College Registers, 1883-1922, and draw on the registers for analysis in research outputs (papers/presentations). The project was designed to be part of a suite of projects that involved digitising material within convent archives, undertaken by the UCD ConventCollections research team (PI Professor Deirdre Raftery), in collaboration with UCD Digital Library.

The significance of the project, and the potential for researchers, is noted here:

1. Teacher Professionalisation in Ireland
The 'English system' of teacher training was introduced to Ireland in 1883, and a training college on Baggot Street was founded by the Sisters of Mercy that year. It moved to a large estate known as Carysfort, in Blackrock, Co Dublin, in 1903. When the college opened, few teachers had any kind of training; by 1920, some 80 per cent of teachers in the workforce were trained (Ó HÓgartaigh 2013, 217). Carysfort played a key role in the professionalisation of teaching, and the accreditation of women teachers.
Influence on Irish Language Education: Influenced by the broader cultural nationalist movement which was shaping Irish society in the early twentieth century, Irish examinations were introduced to the college from the 1910s (Ó HÓgartaigh 2013, 212). The formation of 'the Irish woman teacher' was very much shaped by the curriculum at Carysfort College. Indeed, the impact of the college on the promotion of the Irish language is just one area that future researchers will be able to consider, drawing on these digitised registers.

2. Irish Social History: The college had many notable students, including Jennie Flanagan, later well-known as Sinead Bean de Valera. Well-known lecturers, across the life of the college, would include Eamon de Valera, and Seamus Heaney. However, these prominent figures are only some of the many people who played a role in the college. The early students were ground-breakers: not only were they the women who would both manage school and teach in schools, but they were also women who would become involved in the fight for Irish independence, and names in the registers can be cross referenced with names in memberships of Cumman na mBan, and other organisations and groups of the revolutionary period. The registers provide the kind of granular detail on individual women that will be very useful in research in this area.

3. Women's History: The data in the digitised registers will make it possible for researchers to better understand how women came to dominate the teaching profession in Ireland, as they graduated in increasing numbers from Carysfort College. For example, in 1918 a total of 217 men were attending teacher training colleges throughout the country, while at Carysfort College alone there were 200 women being trained for the profession (Ó HÓgartaigh 2013, 217). The registers

contain detailed information on who these women were, such as their places of birth, the schools at which they held positions, their age at entry to training, how many became ill and/or died during their training, and how many were married or single. Some student teachers already held senior positions in schools, at the time of being sent to Dublin for training; others were young girls who had worked as 'monitoresses' - older schoolgirls with the academic potential to become teachers. There is probably no other profession open to women in Ireland the period 1883-1922, for which such detail is available: this represents a richness of material for future researchers.]

4. Family History: The data in the digitised registers will be available to those interested in local history and family history; researchers will be able to look up family members who were believed to be in training during the period 1883-1922, and uncover information about their training, education and professional lives.

5.Accessible data: The registers are part of the collection at the Mercy Congregational Archives, Dublin. Housed in a small premises, the Archives can only facilitate one researcher at a time. By digitising parts of the collection, such as these registers, it has been possible to make them widely accessible by removing the need to travel to the Mercy Congregational Archives.

2d. Please outline the objectives of the project:

This project objectives were:
1. To digitise the registers of Carysfort College, 1883-1922, and create a searchable index.
2. To thereby promote research into the development of the teaching profession in Ireland, by providing important data on Irishwomen's lives and work.

2e. Please outline the findings of your research and/or milestones achieved. (Please refer to the intended outcomes stated in your application form)

Milestones
UCD and the Sisters of Mercy signed a Memorandum of Understanding (MOU), which detailed the agreement between the two organisations. The UCD ConventCollections research team commenced working on the project by photographing every page of all of the registers, using an iPad, to provide the research team with a record of the project content, and a source for the Index data.

The Mercy Congregational Archives were obliged to close fully due to restrictions imposed by the global pandemic and national public health guidelines in 2020. This was a major set-back, as the registers could not be moved to UCD until February 2022.

Work commenced on the Indexes; the photographs of every register page were uploaded from the iPad to two computers with large screens, and two researchers (working from home) commenced transcribing from the registers to create searchable indexes to all of the registers. These were cross-checked several times.

It was not possible to commence the digitisation at UCD Digital Library until February 2022. At that point, UCD organised transportation to/from the Mercy Congregational Archives and collected the material under a temporary custody arrangement. The collection remained at UCD between February and May 2022.

Significant challenges presented themselves prior to digitisation, namely COVID19 and the closing of the Mercy Congregational Archives, digitisation equipment failure at UCD, and staffing issues (including illnesses, jury service, and secondments).

The images were completed on the 8th of July, and transferred over to the programmer. The images and metadata then began the transformation process for the UCD Digital Library. The collection were published on July 20th.

The crosswalk of metadata with the DRI began in June and following in-depth discussions with DRI staff, the data was added to their batch metadata template. The Digital Library team received further clarification from DRI about some of the metadata, and the collection ingest into DRI took place in July.

Digitisation and image editing

The collection consisted of three large Registers, with columns that spanned both pages of the volume. The volume, when opened, was larger than the digitisation equipment (i2s SupraScan Quartz A1 HD book scanner) by 5mm. This meant that the volumes had to be scanned in sections (left page, right page) and the images were then stitched together using Adobe Photoshop. The third volume goes up to 1925, which falls outside the date range of the project, and so the pages beyond 1922 were not scanned.

Metadata

UCD Digital Library took the finding aid from the Mercy Congregational Archives and extracted out the relevant descriptive information and encoded the information in MODS, which was then further converted to Dublin Core, and DataCite.

Part of the project requirements was for the collection to be deposited in the DRI. UCD is currently not a member of DRI, so the collection is published under the RIA membership. UCD Digital Library crosswalked the MODS metadata to the DRI batch upload template, and created a profile in the DRI. The profile was then added to the RIA membership, enabling upload of the collection to the DRI.
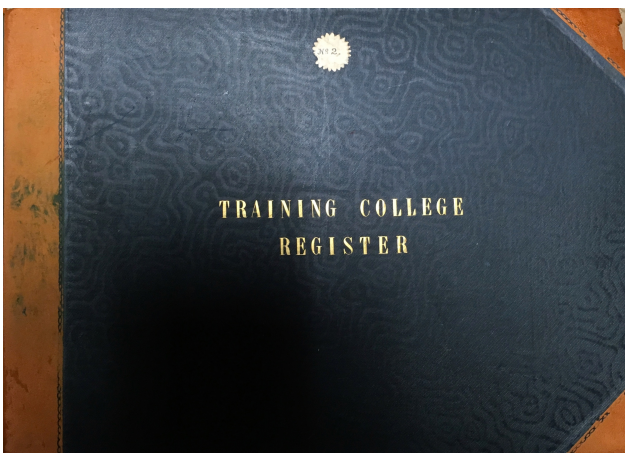
Indexes

Searchable Indexes to the registers were created in excel; these were created by two researchers who have experience of working with the ConventCollections research team; they firstly photographed all of the pages of the registers on an iPad, and then uploaded the images to computers, and worked their way through the sheets to create entries by year, with additional columns of searchable data such as 'diocese of birth', 'age at entry', and 'position in school'. The data in the indexes was double-checked for accuracy, before being submitted to UCD Digital Library for inclusion. When the Mercy Congreational Archives reopened, research into some of the names contained in the register was undertaken, and the historical context of the college has been studied, drawing on the Archives and on secondary sources.

Ingest

Due to staffing shortages and illnesses, the processing of the images had to be completed by the Digital Library Manager, which added to the delays. As noted above, the images were completed on the 8th of July, and transferred over to the programmer. The images and metadata then began the transformation process for the UCD Digital Library. The collection were published on July 20th.

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3a. Please provide details of the dissemination of the outcomes from this project (Publications, presentations, outreach, media etc) including details of any social media/web platforms used to publicise this project:

'Digitisation and the future of archives of women religious'. Paper featuring the project, presented by Deirdre Raftery (PI) at the 12th Triennial Conference of the History of Women Religious, 26-29 June 2022, University of Notre Dame, USA.

Deirdre Raftery (PI, UCD ConventCollections) and Audrey Drohan (UCD Digital Library, presentation entitled 'Digital reunification and digital collections: recent projects by UCd ConventCollections'. DPASSH 2022 Conference, 29-30 June 2022, Royal Irish Academy, on theme of 'Digital Preservation of Religious Collections'. https://dpassh.org/ Archives of Women Religious, the Present and the Future. Symposium and webinar at University College Dublin, 5 April 2022. Presentation showcasing this digitisation project, by Deirdre Raftery (PI UCD ConventCollections) and Audrey Drohan (UCD Digital Library).

3b. Number of academic papers/articles published:

N/A (1 forthcoming, see below)

3c. Number of lectures given/outreach events involved in:

Three

3d. Media coverage (articles in newspapers/ University websites etc.:

https://www.ucd.ie/conventcollections/ contains a cover feature on the project. Coverage on twitter for all of the above events. See @ConventCollections @UCDDigitalLibrary @RIA

3f. How will you continue to communicate the results of your project?

It is proposed to research and present a paper on the project content at an international conference. Deirdre Raftery (PI) and Catriona Delaney (project researcher) propose to present a paper entitled 'Who were the teachers? Uncovering women educators in Ireland, 1883 -1922, via the Carysfort College Digitisation Project,' at the annual conference of the History of Education Society (UK) at the University of Exeter, November 2022. The completion of this final stage is noted in the Feedback and Impact section below, as it relies on the project budget.

3g. What are your publication plans?

It is proposed to completed and submit an article for submission to History of Education (peer-reviewed international journal, published by Taylor and Francis), by Deirdre Raftery and Catriona Delaney, entitled 'Who were the teachers? Uncovering women educators in Ireland, 1883 -1922, via the Carysfort College Digitisation Project. This will be developed from the conference paper which it is proposed to present in November at the annual History of Education Society (UK) Conference. See above, and also below (Feedback and Impact).

5c. How did the bursary enhance your professional development (e.g. in terms of specific opportunities, opportunities for enhancing skills, collaboration with others etc.)?

The bursary allowed for collaboration with UCD Digital Library, to extend the scope of UCD Convent Collections by adding a new digital project to our portfolio of projects that showcase the archives of women religious. The project facilitated cooperation between UCD and the Mercy Congregational Archives, and gave researchers on the project the opportunity to work with manuscript collections at the Mercy Archives in order to deepen their understanding of the data that was gathered. The project gave a post-doctoral scholar the chance to work closely with UCD Digital Library to better understand how digital projects are developed. By showcasing the project at a research event in UCD, the project team were able to emphasise the value of digitisation projects and their place in the future of archival collections and research on such collections. By featuring the project at a paper presentation at the University of Notre Dame, it was possible to showcase the work of the DRI, and the collaborative nature of projects with the DLI, the RIA and universities such as UCD.

5d. What plans (if any) do you have to further your proposal/project?

I would like to present a paper arising from the research at the History of Education (UK) conference in November 2022, and then submit it for the conference special issue of the international peer-reviewed journal, History of Education. I propose using the digitised registers in my graduate taught modules (Masters) in the history of education, next academic year, and would like to encourage students to draw on the digitised registers for their term papers and thesis research.