

ROYAL
IRISH
ACADEMY
STRATEGIC
PLAN 2013—
2018



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President's Introduction

This is the third strategic plan to be produced by the Academy, and in some ways the most radical as well as (in a positive sense) the most conservative. It brings the Academy back to its fundamentals and reminds us of our origins, while at the same time giving us a vision of where we should be going and what we ought to be doing. It is short, clear and mercifully free of management-speak. It holds a mirror up to the Academy, in which we can see much beauty but also some faults, and it reminds us of our responsibilities both to the world of scholarship and to civic society.

No less could have been expected from a Strategic Planning Committee chaired by a noted philosopher and ethicist with great administrative and political experience. The Academy owes a deep debt of gratitude to Onora O'Neill and her colleagues for their hard work on the Committee. As I remarked at one point during the process, undertaking a strategic review is like stripping down an engine. Half way through you have bits and pieces strewn around, and it all looks like a hopeless mess. You have to clean and examine all the parts. Then you put it all back together, but this time you know what every bit does, which parts are showing signs of wear, where components need replacing, what features are missing, etc. The Review Committee has thoroughly overhauled the Academy, and its report and recommendations are before you.

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This proposed strategic plan wisely avoids being over-prescriptive. The external environment is so uncertain at the moment that it would be unwise to set too many targets or give hostages to fortune by promising specific deliverables. Rightly, it is the Council of the Academy which is charged with finding the tactics and resources required to implement the broad-brush vision of the strategic plan.

Some messages that I personally have taken from the strategic review process are that our independence is a key value that we must protect; that the Academy needs to do more for its members; equally, that the members need to do more for the Academy; that scientific and scholarly excellence may be found outside the pale of the traditional disciplines; that we need to develop new ways of pursuing our goals; and increasingly that this will involve a digital element.

There is much to do. We have a good plan to guide us; let's get on with it.



Luke Drury
March 2013

About the Royal Irish Academy

The Royal Irish Academy is an independent, all-Ireland learned society established under Charter in 1785. It currently has more than 450 members, chosen for their distinguished contributions to research in the sciences, humanities and social sciences. It is governed by its President and Council, who are elected by the members at a general meeting held in the spring of each year, as stated in the founding Charter.

Our Purpose

Since its foundation, the Royal Irish Academy has encouraged and rewarded excellence in scholarship and research throughout the island of Ireland, and has played a significant role in promoting the value of the sciences, humanities and social sciences to society.

During the five years from 2013 to 2018, the Academy will build on its scholarly tradition, working to enhance the contribution made by research and scholarship to wider society. It will take action to foster the community of scholars on the island of Ireland and to strengthen the engagement of this community in international scholarly matters.

Our Role Serving Scholarship, Research and Ireland

The Royal Irish Academy is internationally renowned for its role in promoting excellence in scholarship, recognising achievements in learning and directing research programmes. Through its own major research projects, particularly in areas relating to Ireland, its heritage and the digital humanities, the Academy plays a significant role in disseminating our history and heritage to the world-wide scholarly community. The Academy library is one of Ireland's premier research libraries and includes not only a unique collection of medieval Irish manuscripts, but also substantial collections of later and contemporary material, all of which are used by scholars in many fields. The Academy is active in scholarly publishing, and its many books, journals, pamphlets, reports, maps and fascicles communicate the latest Irish scholarship to a wide public.

The Academy provides access to valuable networks of scholarly expertise across the world, and in this way it acts as a significant portal for international discussion of the scholarship in which Irish academics and researchers are engaged: in doing so the Academy also helps raise Ireland's international profile.

The Academy provides and administers funds for researchers through its highly competitive grants programmes, and it also supports efforts to enable early-career scholars to create international networks and take part in public engagement initiatives.

The Academy offers a trusted and neutral arm's-length channel through which the expertise of Ireland's scientific and scholarly communities can inform policy-making and public discussion. Through the seminars, workshops and lectures organised by its many committees, and their associated publications, the Academy contributes to public debate on issues of major interest to the sciences, humanities and social sciences.

The Review Process

In March 2012, recognising the need to build on the Strategic Plan of 2007–2012, the Council of the Royal Irish Academy appointed a Strategic Planning Committee to recommend priorities for the Academy for 2013–2018. This Committee was chaired by Baroness Onora O’Neill, Hon. MRIA.

The Committee met five times between April and October 2012, with extensive work and engagement ongoing between meetings. It conducted a comprehensive consultation with Members, staff, Academy committees and interested individuals and bodies outside the Academy. The Committee also benefitted from the learning and experience of partner academies internationally, particularly the British Academy, the Royal Society and the Royal Society of New Zealand.

The Council and the membership of the Academy have now agreed six strategic priorities for the period 2013–2018. These priorities complement and will build on the Academy’s current suite of activities, and will inform and focus the development of Academy work over the next five years.

Strategic Priorities 2013–2018

- 1** To foster the Academy’s all-island and international scholarly engagement
- 2** To enhance its role as a centre for research, scholarship and learning
- 3** To build public engagement and understanding of the sciences, humanities and social sciences
- 4** To strengthen the contribution and influence of scholarly knowledge and academic research in public discussion and the making of public policy
- 5** To renew and deepen Members’ engagement with the scholarly life of the Academy
- 6** To aim for a vibrant and sustainable future for the Academy

To foster the
Academy's all-island
and international
scholarly engagement

The Academy is one of a small number of institutions in Ireland that operates on an all-island basis. This will be of particular significance during the upcoming decade of centenaries and during a period that may see constitutional changes in the United Kingdom. The Academy will build on the work of its North–South Standing Committee to create stronger links and deeper north–south engagement.

The Academy will seek opportunities to engage actively with agencies involved in the formulation of European science policy, to inform our European colleagues of activities in Ireland and to promote the influence of Irish researchers. We will deepen our links with sister academies, particularly the Royal Society, the British Academy and the Royal Society of Edinburgh. We will review our long-standing participation in significant international scholarly networks to ensure these contribute to and are supportive of the Academy's strategic priorities. We will prioritise engagement with collaborative international advocacy initiatives in support of scholarship and research. We will seek to enhance our international mobility awards to foster and support early-career researchers.

To enhance its
role as a centre for research,
scholarship and learning

At the heart of this priority is a commitment by the Academy to support outstanding research across the disciplines and, at the same time, to pursue excellence in our own research.

The Academy has a library of national and international importance, undertakes academic publishing in areas of national significance and manages a number of research projects in cultural and historical disciplines. We will continue to develop and refine these activities, and we reaffirm our commitment to collaborative as well as individual research, to scholarly partnerships and to the identification of earmarked funds to support these activities.

The Academy has significant strengths and expertise within the digital humanities, and we will build on our role as a centre for excellence in the digital humanities.

We will expand and enhance the digital presence and public profile of the Academy through the further development of the Academy's Digital Strategy.

To build public engagement and understanding of the sciences, humanities and social sciences

Working with other stakeholders, the Academy will strengthen its ability to communicate the contributions made by higher education, research and scholarship to our society, culture and economy, and to demonstrate the importance and variety of those contributions.

The Academy will encourage and support greater public understanding of scholarly activities through lectures, publications, exhibitions, seminars, discussion meetings and workshops, and through the work of our many committees. The Academy will encourage and facilitate greater communication by researchers and scholars on issues of public concern. We will embrace the opportunities offered by new technologies to show the positive value and impact of research and scholarship. We will continue to work to build a strong and confident public profile for the institution.

To strengthen the contribution and influence of scholarly knowledge and academic research in public discussion and the making of public policy

The Academy will facilitate greater engagement between researchers, policy-makers and the public. We will develop our role as an independent and autonomous forum for debate and dialogue on matters of interest to the sciences, humanities and social sciences.

We will engage in policy activities on matters that affect the practice of scholarship and research and will advocate for and represent the views of the sciences, humanities and social sciences to policy-makers and other stakeholders.

We will facilitate greater access to appropriate expertise in the scholarly and research communities for policy-makers, the public, business sectors and other cultural institutions, throughout the island of Ireland.

To renew and
deepen Members'
engagement with the
scholarly life of
the Academy

The Academy recognises excellence in scholarship and research across all disciplines. The Academy Council will review its processes and structures in order to promote greater diversity within the membership, paying particular attention to issues of gender, academic discipline representation and the identification of excellence in research and scholarship outside the higher-education system.

The Academy will build awareness of its activities among members and will support greater engagement by Members with these activities.

We will gather information about Members' expertise and interests, to facilitate wider engagement by the membership with policy-makers and the public.

The Academy will engage with Members to identify how best we can develop and enhance activities and services to the Membership.

To aim for a vibrant
and sustainable future
for the Academy

Activities to advance the Academy's long-term sustainability and financial security are an ongoing priority. During the five years from 2013 to 2018 the Academy will:

develop strategies to diversify the Academy's sources of funding;

raise the public profile and recognition of the Academy;

review current internal structures to ensure that they are suitable for delivering the agreed strategy;

extend cross-institutional collaboration and cost-sharing where feasible and appropriate;

and assess the sustainability of the Academy and its programmes on a regular basis and ensure regular reporting of such reviews to Members and staff.



In Conclusion

The outcomes of the extensive review leading to this strategic plan for the period to 2018 have re-affirmed the fundamental values of the Academy but have challenged its Council and the wider Membership to undertake a programme of reform, renewal and implementation around the key strategic priority areas set out above. We are confident that this plan provides a foundation on which to base a strong, sustainable Academy serving the needs of scholarship and learning in Ireland well into the twenty-first century.

Onora O'Neill
Chair, Strategic Planning Committee

Tom Brazil
Secretary, Royal Irish Academy

**Membership of the
2012 Strategic
Planning Committee**

Onora O'Neill, Hon. MRIA (*Chair*)
Tom Brazil, MRIA
Mary Canning, MRIA
Bernadette Cunningham, Staff Representative
John Hegarty, MRIA
Eugene Kennedy, MRIA
Colm Lennon, MRIA
Laura Mahoney, Acting Executive Secretary
John Pethica, MRIA
Frances Ruane, MRIA

In attendance

Rebecca Gageby, Senior Programme Manager
Sinéad Riordan, Senior Policy Officer

Art and Architecture of Ireland (AAI)

In 2014 the AAI project will publish a five-volume, scholarly work, spanning the period from medieval art to the end of the twentieth century. A collector's edition will be published simultaneously. The work, though written by leading scholars in the field and based on new research, is designed for non-specialists interested in Irish art or architecture. No comprehensive publication of this nature exists. The project will greatly enhance the visibility of Irish art in a global context, and will promote the international reputation both of Irish art and of academic research in Ireland.

Committees and Working Groups

Much of the strength and vigour of the Academy today derives from the work of its Committees. These have as members academics, researchers and representatives from government departments and other cognate or related organisations. They concern themselves with promoting their disciplinary interests, pursuing policy development, providing independent advice, formulating public statements and organising high-impact activities.

Digital Repository of Ireland (DRI)

The DRI is an interactive, national, trusted digital repository for contemporary and historical, social and cultural data held by Irish institutions. DRI is working to inform national policy for digital preservation and access, and provides a central internet access point and interactive multimedia tools for use by the public, students and scholars. The Academy is the lead institution of this four-year, PRTL cycle-5-funded project, and the DRI Research Consortium comprises six academic partners.

Dictionary of Irish Biography (DIB)

DIB is the definitive, multi-volume reference work dealing with the lives of all deceased prominent Irish men and women. The *DIB*, published in association with Cambridge University Press, was launched in November 2009; the online edition is updated on a six-monthly basis.

Dictionary of Medieval Latin from Celtic Sources (DMLCS)

An integrated database and dictionary project, designed to contribute to the fields of Patristic, medieval, Celtic, and Latin studies by researching, compiling and publishing suitable scholarly works, in both electronic and conventional media. DMLCS is part of the family of Medieval Latin dictionary enterprises being conducted across Europe and has as its mission the analysis and interpretation of the Latin texts written within the territories that were Celtic-speaking in the early Middle Ages, as well as in the monasteries that had been founded by Irish pilgrims.

Documents on Irish Foreign Policy (DIFP)

DIFP provides a comprehensive record from archival sources of major Irish foreign policy decisions and actions since 1919. It is an essential public resource for the study of twentieth-century Irish history. The project aims to make the origins, development and execution of Irish foreign policy accessible to all, and to promote public engagement with the history of Ireland's international relations.

Foclóir na Nua-Ghaeilge (FNG)

Is é is cuspóir an tionscnaimh ná Foclóir Stairiúil na Nua-Ghaeilge a thiomsú.

Currently, the staff of FNG in Dublin and Donegal is compiling a corpus of Irish-language texts for the period 1882–2000. This will include published and unpublished material, material reflecting the spoken word and material from folklore. Words in these texts will form the basis for drafting dictionary entries in the *Historical Dictionary of Modern Irish*.

Grants and Awards

The Academy administers and awards a wide array of grants on an annual basis, in the sciences, humanities and social sciences. Grant awards are made under a broad network of schemes. In addition, the Academy acclaims Ireland's leading thinkers through its celebrated Gold Medals Scheme.

Irish Historic Towns Atlas (IHTA)

The aim of the IHTA project is to record the topographical development of a selection of Irish towns. Each town is published separately as a fascicle or folder and includes a series of maps, historical plans, views and illustrations, complemented by a detailed text. IHTA is part of a wider European scheme, with towns atlases containing broadly similar information available for a number of countries.

International Collaboration

The Academy works with a range of partners to develop and maintain international relations and promote networking and collaboration between Irish and overseas scholars and researchers. It is a founding member of EASAC—the European Academies Science Advisory Council—established by the national science academies of the EU member states to enable them to collaborate in providing advice to European policy-makers. It is a long-standing member of ALLEA, the federation of All European Academies. The Academy provides funding for international activities and research through a series of agreements and grant schemes.

Library

The Academy houses a library of international importance, containing a unique manuscript, pamphlet, drawing and early printed book collection. The library holds the largest corpus of Irish-language manuscripts in a single repository, the oldest surviving Irish manuscript and other important early texts. It offers access and outreach programmes, facilitates master classes and visits, holds exhibitions and lecture series and publishes on the collections.

Membership

Membership of the Royal Irish Academy is awarded to persons who have attained the highest distinction by their unique contributions to education and research. The membership is drawn from the whole island of Ireland. Each year, up to 20 new members are elected from the sciences, humanities and social sciences. Election to membership of the Royal Irish Academy is a public recognition of academic excellence and the highest academic honour in Ireland.

Members assist the Academy in its work by providing expert advice for its Council and committees, by representing the Academy nationally and internationally and by promoting the strategic mission of the Academy.

North–South Standing Committee

This committee was constituted on 14 May 2012 to enhance the Academy’s overall strategic mission on the island of Ireland, by strengthening its presence in Northern Ireland. It will contribute to the Academy’s provision for its Northern Ireland members and the academic community in Northern Ireland through involvement in the promotion of events, workshops and lectures, both public and specialist.

It will also contribute to cross-border initiatives through dialogue and networking with appropriate stakeholders.

Policy and Advocacy

The Academy is an advocate for the interests of the scholarly and research community in the sciences, humanities and social sciences. The Academy seeks to contribute to improvements in the environment under which research and scholarship can excel. It looks to inform those who make or influence policy as it pertains to the practice of research and scholarship. It fosters the role of scholarly and scientific knowledge and expertise in informing public policy discussion and formation.

Publications

The Academy is one of the longest-established publishers in Ireland. Founded in 1785, it began publishing scholarly articles in its *Transactions* (later renamed *Proceedings*) in 1787—six journals covering a range of disciplines in the sciences, humanities and social sciences are now published annually. The Academy also publishes series and monographs, frequently based on its own research projects, as well as books aimed at communicating scholarly material to a wider public.

Scholarship

The Academy has a proud tradition and history. From the beginning it has published scholarly papers and conducted research projects. Over the years it has continued to promote advanced research, and also public understanding of the relevance of research to society. It has established relations with all of the Irish universities and with educational institutions abroad, and it represents Ireland on more than 30 international scholarly organisations.



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