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National Museum of Ireland
Ard-Mhúsaem na hÉireann

Library Policy

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National Museum of Ireland – Library Policy

The Library of the National Museum of Ireland (NMI) comprises the published works used for research, management, and interpretation of the collections of Museum Heritage Objects and for the effective operation of the museum. These include collections of books, periodicals, individual offprints, maps, and digital resources. This policy covers acquisition, disposal, management, care, and access for all library holdings and resources of NMI.

Legislative Basis

NMI has a role under the National Cultural Institutions Act, 1997 to interpret the museum collections and make them accessible to the public. The Library is a key resource in supporting these requirements. Specific sections of the Act address aspects of the role of the NMI Library:

“11 - (2) The Board shall have all such powers as it considers necessary or expedient for the performance of its functions under this Act including, but without prejudice to the foregoing, the following powers:

(e) to promote research and scholarship,

(f) to disseminate and promote the dissemination of literature and information relating to the collection of the Museum,

(o) to compile, publish and distribute (with or without charge) books, magazines, journals, reports or other printed matter, including aural and visual material as may be appropriate in relation to any matter connected with its functions or activities”

Role

The role of the National Museum of Ireland Library is to support the National Museum of Ireland to:

1. Collect, preserve, promote and exhibit Ireland’s portable material heritage and natural history;
2. Interpret and promote the collections and make them accessible to audiences at home and abroad;
3. Be an authoritative voice on relevant aspects of Irish heritage, culture and natural history;
4. Maintain the lead role in education, research and scholarship pertaining to the collections.

The NMI aims to:

1. acquire and preserve library resources to aid the understanding of the collections of the National Museum of Ireland;
2. provide a service to staff and research visitors to source information relating to the collections through access to its own library holdings and to external resources;
3. provide a service to staff and research visitors to source information relating to the history of NMI and museology through access to its own library holdings and to external resources;
4. support the business activities and functions of NMI for all departments by making available publications on museum management, conservation, marketing, education, photography, design or other areas of NMI work.

Acquisition and Development of the Library Collection

1. Material acquired by the National Museum of Ireland Library should further the aims of NMI. Acquisitions which do not meet the criteria will only be accepted in exceptional circumstances. NMI reserves the right to transfer collections which are considered superfluous to an alternative appropriate public body or institution.
2. The provenance of all items acquired by the NMI Library should be ascertained and recorded in the Library Catalogue to international standards, including provenance. The Library will not seek to acquire any material unless it is satisfied that the donor, vendor or lender had valid title to the material.
3. The Library will purchase books and periodicals, and accept gifts or bequests. All gifts to the Library shall be in the form of permanent transfer of title.

Disposals from the NMI Library

As with the NMI collections of Museum Heritage Objects, there is a general presumption that the holdings of the Library are in perpetuity.

1. The NMI will retain all Library holdings unless there are specific exceptional reasons put forward for their disposal.
2. Any proposed disposals will be submitted in writing and be assessed by an internal panel, and referred to the Head of Collections & Learning, before being submitted to the Director for consideration.
3. Reasons for disposal of Library holdings may include:
 - 3.1. Legal: Lack of title or other legal reasons where the holding of an item in the Library is brought into question.
 - 3.2. Condition: Damaged or deteriorated beyond use or representing a health and safety hazard.
 - 3.3. Value: Non-paper material held in formats that are no longer readable or have been superseded by newer versions.
 - 3.4. Relevance: Lack of relevance as judged against acquisition and development criteria.
4. All actions pertaining to the de-accession of Library holdings will be documented in full. Catalogue entries for items that have been disposed of will be maintained.
5. Due diligence will be undertaken to ensure that any Library holdings are the property of NMI. This will include appropriate scrutiny of any factor that may be raised as a challenge to the rightful ownership. For Library holdings originally belonging to parent institutions (RDS, RIA, RSAI, TCD) the views of the relevant collection stakeholders will be taken into account.

Catalogue and Library Management

1. NMI will catalogue the holdings of the Library to international library standards.
2. A Library Strategy will be prepared, to be approved by the Director, focused on building and managing a specialist library and related services, supporting the work of NMI and the understanding of its collections, within the financial resources available.
3. NMI will care for its Library holdings through appropriate standards for accommodation, conservation, handling and security.
4. Library holdings will be considered in the general NMI Disaster Response Policy.

Access to the Library

1. NMI will ensure online availability of the public catalogue entry for each of the holdings in its Library.
2. Visitors to the library will be facilitated on the understanding that this is a specialist library, primarily to serve the understanding of the NMI collections of museum heritage objects.
3. NMI may lend material from its Library for the purposes of exhibition or display subject to agreements on transport and display conditions.