

Press Release – Immediate Release

Minister Launches Dúchas.ie Giving Global Access to Ireland's National Folklore Collection at University College Dublin

- **€1.75 million of new funding to enable further digitisation of one of the world's largest folklore collections**

Dublin, Ireland, 18 December 2013, Dinny McGinley TD, Minister of State at the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht has officially launched Duchas.ie, a new Irish folklore repository, at an event held at NovaUCD, University College Dublin (UCD).

Duchas.ie currently features some 64,000 pages of hand-written folklore and local history recorded in 1937-38 by Irish schoolchildren in counties Dublin, Mayo, Donegal and Waterford.

This original material, digitised for Duchas.ie in a project funded by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, is part of the Schools' Manuscript Collection. This material, part of the National Folklore Collection at UCD, comprises in excess of 500,000 pages of material recorded by some 50,000 school children in over 5,000 schools in 26 participating counties.

At the event Minister McGinley TD also announced €1.75 million of new funding jointly provided by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht and UCD.

This funding, running from 2014-2016, will fund the main phase of digitising of the National Folklore Collection including the remaining Schools' Manuscript Collection material.

The additional funding for this project, which is supported by the UCD Office of the Vice-President for Innovation, will enable new material to be added to Duchas.ie on a phased basis.

The National Folklore Collection at UCD is one of the largest folklore collections in the world. The Collection comprises ca. 2 million manuscript pages, ca. 500,000

index cards, ca. 12,000 hours of sound recordings, ca. 80,000 photographs and ca. 1000 hours of video material.

Speaking at the launch of Duchas.ie Minister McGinley TD said, "Folklore allows for fresh insights and interpretation regarding our culture. I am delighted to be here at NovaUCD to officially launch Duchas.ie which will enable Irish heritage and culture to be disseminated to a global audience allowing for a deeper understanding of the definition of society. This is an innovative project bringing together the old and the new in a way which allows for long-term possibilities regarding the understanding of our tradition."

He added, "At present Duchas.ie contains material from 4 counties, representing the 4 provinces, including the primary school I attended in Donegal. I am delighted to announce today new funding of €1.75 million jointly from my Department and UCD over the next 3-years to continue with the digitisation of the National Folklore Collection, including further material from the Schools' Manuscript Collection."

He concluded, "This project is the result of an extremely successful partnership and co-operation between the National Folklore Collection at UCD, Fiontar, DCU, my Department and the UCD Office of the Vice-President for Innovation and I wish everyone involved every success with the next phase of the project."

The launch of Duchas.ie is the result of a partnership formed originally in 2012 between the National Folklore Collection, UCD, Fiontar, DCU and the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht.

The objective of the partnership is to digitise the National Folklore Collection, a major Irish cultural resource, to facilitate greater public access to it, and to establish a data management system in place for the Collection to which other material can be added in future.

An tOllamh Ríonach úí Ógáin, UCD School of Irish, Celtic Studies, Irish Folklore and Linguistics and the Director of the National Folklore Collection at UCD said, "I have spent almost forty years working with the National Folklore Collection and the fact that it is on the road to digitisation and global access represents the fulfilment of a long term vision. The true potential of the project will only be realised in future decades and cannot be fully imagined today."

Dr Ciarán Mac Murchaidh, Head of School at Fiontar, DCU said, "Our goal is really rather simple, the dissemination of the wealth of the linguistic and literary

tradition of the Irish language for the benefit of the global community. That goal sits very neatly with a key aspiration of third level research activity, which is to maximise the societal impact of what we do at the interdisciplinary, inter-institutional and international level. Duchas.ie represents another important opportunity to further develop and enhance this aspiration in collaboration with our partners.”

Professor Peter Clinch UCD Vice-President for Innovation said, “UCD is delighted to be jointly funding the next phase of this exciting Duchas.ie project. Duchas.ie is opening up of the riches of the National Folklore Collection at UCD in an innovative and accessible way to a national and international audience and will allow visitors to engage dynamically with the Collection’s material. The launch of Duchas.ie, along with the additional funding to allow further digitisation of this vast and unique Collection, will help to position UCD as one of the largest providers of online folklore material globally and will enhance UCD’s international position and reputation in the arts and cultural arenas.”

The Digital Repository of Ireland (DRI) is involved in an advisory role in Duchas.ie with regard to standards and inter-operability in digital archiving.

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Editors Notes

National Folklore Collection at UCD

The National Folklore Collection at University College Dublin is home to one of the largest collections of oral and ethnological material in the world. Visitors are invited to explore the large selection of books, manuscripts, audio recordings, videos and photographs, drawings and paintings dealing with Irish life, folk history and culture.

The specialist library contains books, periodicals and off-prints on Irish and comparative folklore, ethnology and related fields. A range of finding aids will

assist researchers in locating information about a particular subject, or material contributed by any of the many thousands of storytellers, collectors and correspondents over the years.

New material continues to be added to the Collection, including photographs, audio and video material, books and documents. www.ucd.ie/irishfolklore/en/

Schools' Manuscript Collection (1937-38)

In 1937 the Irish Folklore Commission, in collaboration with the Department of Education and the Irish National Teachers' Organisation, initiated a revolutionary scheme in which schoolchildren were encouraged to collect and document folklore and local history.

Over a period of eighteen months some 50,000 children in 5,000 primary schools in the twenty-six counties were encouraged to collect folklore material in their home districts. The topics about which the children were instructed to research and write included local history and monuments, folktales and legends, riddles and proverbs, songs, customs and beliefs, games and pastimes, traditional work practices and crafts, etc. The children collected this material mainly from their parents and grandparents and other older members of the local community or school district.

Now known as the Schools' Manuscript Collection, the scheme resulted in more than half a million manuscript pages of material which is now part of the National Folklore Collection at UCD.