

# The Library of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

**Abstract:** Conor McCabe outlines the role of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions, the way that the library provides support and the impact of budget cuts on the service.

**Keywords:** government; information services; Ireland

The Director of Public Prosecutions enforces the criminal law in the courts on behalf of the people of Ireland, directs and supervises public prosecutions on indictment in the courts, and gives general direction and advice to the Garda Síochána (the state's police force) in relation to summary cases and specific direction in such cases where requested. The DPP's Office is totally independent. The mission statement of the Director and his Office is: *To provide on behalf of the People of Ireland a prosecution service that is independent, fair and effective*".

The Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions is divided into three main divisions:

- The Directing Division which is responsible for the overall direction of serious criminal proceedings. This includes making the decision whether to prosecute and for what offence, for making any decision to withdraw proceedings or to accept pleas to lesser offences, and to bring appeals in relation to points of law or seek reviews of unduly lenient sentences.
- The Solicitors Division is responsible for providing the solicitor service in Dublin to the Director. This includes the preparation of indictable cases, including the preparation of books of evidence, and the instruction and attendance on counsel at hearings, the conduct of summary prosecutions and the conduct of all Judicial Review cases on the Director's behalf.
- The Administration Division provides the organisational, infrastructural, administrative and information services required by the Office and also provides support to both the Directing and Solicitors Divisions. It is within this Division that the Library and Research service sits.



Conor McCabe

## Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions

The Library of the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions was opened in 2000 with a staff of one Librarian and one administrative assistant. Eleven years later, following a major expansion in the remit of the Office, the Library has grown to two branches with two Librarians and two administrative assistants and now also boasts a separate research unit with two dedicated Legal Researchers.

The Library of the DPP supports the work of legal staff through two chief objectives:

- By providing straight-forward and user-orientated access to information required by legal officers of the Office of the DPP for the effective performance of their duties.
- To provide a research service to support the work of legal staff

## The Library Collection

The Library's hardcopy collection comprises of mostly criminal law textbooks and journals and legislation. We provide access to all of our electronic material via iLink, giving desktop access to all staff.

Apart from acting as the point of access to our external electronic resources, iLink also allows access to our internal collection of scanned judgments (one of the largest collections in the State), Garda Circulars, Policy Documents, Internal Circulars, Research Documents and Counsel Opinions. Users can also access our media management portal from here, giving them access to that day's newspaper stories of significance.

Our Library Management system is Unicorn and our Image Archive Software is Hyperion, both provided by

SirsiDynix and administered in-house by the Assistant Librarian.

## Current Awareness and Know-How

The Library produces a bi-monthly journal titled “DPP Journal” which acts as both a knowledge management tool and a current awareness resource. To act as a KM conduit, we ask a different Legal Officer to write a keynote article for each issue which usually highlights procedural changes they have come across in the preceding two months. Further to this, each of the heads of the legal sections contribute a piece to update the rest of the Office on goings-on within their section in the previous month. Both these pieces disseminate knowledge that often doesn't find its way out of section or senior managers' meetings.

To satisfy the need for a current awareness service, the journal keeps people updated on legal information—Legislative updates; abstracts of recent court judgments; legal research notes; legal journal and legal blog articles of interest – in short, any information legal officers need or may find useful for their everyday work.

## Budget Cuts

As with many Libraries, the last three years have been quite testing regarding cutbacks with the challenge of providing the same service with more limited resources. We have managed to retain the majority of services with some services being transferred in-house (serials management, scanning) and in many cases we have had to explore new and more cost-efficient ways to continue tasks we are dedicated to performing. For example, we recently launched a legal resources bookmark page on Delicious.com in order to assist our nationwide state solicitors with the minefield of online free-to-access legal resources – in years gone past we might have invested in an add-on to our own website but cutbacks are the mother of invention.

I believe over the last eleven years the Library and Research Unit has become an established and integral cog within the Prosecution Service in Ireland. Cutbacks may be here for some time to come but it is quite motivating to reflect on how we have managed to survive and grow despite that and it is very encouraging for the future.

## Biography

Conor McCabe is Head of Library and Research at the Office of the Director of Public Prosecutions.

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# The Legal Aid Board and Library and Information Services

**Abstract:** Zoe Melling writes on the Legal Aid Board in Ireland and the work of the professional information and research unit.

**Keywords:** legal aid; government; information services; Ireland

## The Legal Aid Board

The Legal Aid Board is the statutory body in Ireland charged with providing civil legal aid and advice to eligible clients. It also operates the Refugee Legal Service, which caters for asylum applicants. From 2012 the Board is expected to assume responsibility for the administration of

the criminal legal aid scheme, currently managed directly by the Department of Justice and Equality through the courts.

## The Library

One feature distinguishing the Legal Aid Board from its UK counterparts is its professional information and