

# The Law Collections at the Library of Trinity College Dublin

**Abstract:** In this article Terry McDonald provides an introduction to the Library of Trinity College Dublin (TCD) with particular emphasis on the legal resources available to students and visiting readers. She outlines the history and the current nature of the library and the University's School of Law before turn attention to the law collections, the legal deposit status, the role of library and its law subject specialists, particularly in the context of supporting the teaching objectives of the Law School.

**Keywords:** academic libraries; Trinity College Dublin; Ireland

## TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN: AN INTRODUCTION

Trinity College Dublin ('The College of the Holy and Undivided Trinity of Queen Elizabeth near Dublin') was created by Royal Charter in 1592. Visitors to Dublin will be familiar with the Library's glorious Old Library and Long Room, where a visit to the *Book of Kells* is considered a must see on many a tourist's itinerary. The *Book of Kells* and its companion piece the *Book of Durrow*, were presented by Henry Jones, Bishop of Meath and former vice-chancellor of the University, in the 1660s. Other special collections include the Library of James Ussher (acquired in 1661) and the Fagel collection, purchased for the Library in 1802. For many years the Old Library was the only dedicated library building in the College, but the 1937 Reading Room – a small building over five levels, catering to the college community, was completed just before the outbreak of World War 2.

Since 1801, TCD Library has been designated as a legal deposit library – and benefits from the legal deposit legislation of both Ireland and the United Kingdom, one of only six libraries with this privilege, and the only one on the island of Ireland. Legal deposit accounts for the bulk of the Library's six million volumes.

In 1958 the growing student population and the increase in the number of volumes held in the Library, led to the instigation of a fundraising campaign to raise finance for a new Library building. In 1967 the Berkeley Library (still called by some the 'New Library') opened its doors. The Berkeley Library, 'Ireland's brutalist gem' was designed by the Austrian-born British architect Paul Koralek at the age of only 28 and is a monument to this sometimes controversial style of architecture. All the original desks, shelving and window seats remain and the curved glass around the windows, along with the elevated atriums are much-loved features of the building<sup>1</sup>. Indeed photographs from that time demonstrate that it has hardly changed in the intervening years. Last year saw the

Berkeley Library's 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary<sup>2</sup> and it is only now being recognised as an architectural treasure and not as the Old Library's 'ugly sister'.

## THE BERKELEY LIBRARY

With the opening of the Berkeley Library, the law collections finally acquired a permanent home in the Morrison Room on Level 1 of the new building. Over the years they have had to share the space with the music library, the official publications collections and the classics collections but stealthily the law collections have taken over half this floor, an area loved and sometimes jealously guarded by generations of law students. In 1969, the Lecky or Arts Library was added to our collection of buildings and in 2003 the Ussher Library was completed, linking the Berkeley and Lecky to form the BLU (Berkeley, Lecky, Ussher) complex of buildings. Three floors of the Ussher Building, called Kinsella Hall, are open around the clock, as is the 1937 Reading Room on Front Square, which is set aside for postgraduate students.

The 50<sup>th</sup> birthday of the Berkeley Library generated a re-think about how we use some of the space and now the ground and lower ground floors have been remodeled into a more social space for the students. The ground floor, called the Iveagh Hall, is the location of the Library's Issue Desk (where books are borrowed and returned) and the Duty Librarian's Desk where library users can ask the 'where? when? what?' type of queries. More specialized enquiries are passed on to the relevant subject librarian. Microfilm and microfiche readers, filing cabinets, the Library's DVD collection and older catalogues (now digitized) were moved and replaced by comfortable 1960s-style seating in bright colours, and suddenly the space was transformed into a hub of student activity (not all of it academic!). While some have noted the increased noise levels as a result of these

changes, most of us feel that we have gained a vibrant area that is really enjoyed by the students.

The basement of the Berkeley Library is the home of our two main teaching rooms, as well as the information desk for the College's printing and photocopying service. In addition it is the home to our very popular group study rooms, bookable online through the Library's homepage<sup>3</sup>. As collaborative projects are forming a greater part of the Student learning experience it is expected that the demand for these rooms will only grow and the Library is investigating suitable spaces for expanding the number of these rooms.

## THE SCHOOL OF LAW

The University's School of Law was founded in 1740 and is one of the leading law schools in Europe, with a scholarly community of staff, students and alumni dedicated to the pursuit of legal knowledge and critical engagement with the legal challenges that confront modern communities. At present there are about 700 undergraduate students studying law, law and a language, law and business or law and politics, and about 200 postgraduate students – mostly studying for taught LL.M degrees, with about 65 M.Litt and Ph.D researchers. There is a lecturing staff of about 30 and an additional number of visiting staff who undertake teaching individual modules<sup>4</sup>. The Law collections are looked after by myself and by Senior Library Assistant Tony Carey, a very familiar face to many of the students and staff who have used our Library over the years. The Library has an excellent relationship with the School of Law and the School of Law Library Committee - consisting of representatives from the school staff, undergraduates, postgraduates and law library staff - meets quarterly for a cordial exchange of ideas and suggestions for improvement. The School of Law is housed in a number of buildings

throughout the TCD campus and beyond (including House 39, where Nobel Laureate Samuel Beckett roomed as a student) but planning is underway for a new School of Law building on the campus. These plans are at a very early stage right now but it is hoped that building could commence within the next few years.

## THE LAW COLLECTIONS

The law collections on the Library's open shelves reflect the legislation, law reports, journals and books required by our undergraduates and postgraduates for their day-to-day work. Nearly all law journals and law reports used for teaching are also available online, and we also have subscriptions to a large range of legal databases. It is interesting to note that any suggestions about moving our print collections of journals and law reports to off-campus storage have always been met with horror by our Library users. Despite being available in electronic format the connection to the print collection remains strong and usage remains relatively high. Until now, undergraduate borrowing has been relatively restricted, with an allowance of up to four specially designated lending copies of books per student. However, by the start of the next academic year 2018-19, we are hopeful of increasing this allowance to ten of these books per student. Under the new rules, postgraduate and staff borrowing allowances will also be increased. Fines for late returns are strictly enforced and students with outstanding fines have their Library accounts frozen, and ultimately, will not have their degrees conferred.

The Library also has a short loan service entitled counter reserve, where extra copies of the most heavily used books are deposited. Library users may borrow up to four books from here for a maximum of five hours, and these books may not leave the library building. In this way we ensure continuous access to the most heavily



Figure 1. Morrison Room, 1967.



Figure 2. The Berkeley Library, 1967.

used titles. Law books make up almost half of the counter reserve collections. Probably because of high cost, students rarely purchase law textbooks and tend to rely on the Library to supply course materials for the duration of their entire student career.

Due to space restrictions, most of the Library's collections are held in external repositories – with only about 15% of our material available on the open shelves. Generally speaking, items held in closed access may be retrieved by clicking on a link provided in our catalogue. However, we aim to keep all books that might be used by our Law faculty on the shelves in the Morrison Room.

As well as current staff and students, the Library is widely used by what we term 'visiting readers' – usually alumni (who are entitled to a graduate reader's ticket for life), students from other third level institutions, and visiting academics and legal practitioners. A large number of former students taking professional exams are frequent visitors to the law collections in the Morrison Room. Access is free of charge but is subject to some conditions and may be restricted during term time. The Library is also something of a 'library of last resort' for researchers and staff of other law libraries in the country. We frequently receive requests for cases and judgments unavailable elsewhere and we are always happy to help if we can. Many of the city's largest law firms also have accounts with the Library's Information Service – a fee-based service that allows clients access our collections and utilise the specialist subject advice of our librarians.

## E-LEGAL DEPOSIT

Since the advent of electronic legal deposit in 2013, many UK legal publications formerly received as printed monographs under copyright are now only accessible online, using dedicated terminals based in the Library's reading

rooms. Because legal publishers were among the first to opt for e-legal deposit, this has had a considerable knock-on effect for our users. Unlike some other libraries which receive UK legal deposit material, TCD Library does permit lending of these monographs to postgraduate students, staff and to other libraries through inter-library loans. Depositing material through e-legal deposit has put an end to that, much to the chagrin of some of our readers. E-legal deposit material may only be accessed by one reader at a time and until recently, access was restricted to Library opening hours because of the location of the e-legal deposit terminals. We do provide access to this material for the non-TCD community through four specially designated terminals in the Berkeley Library and demand for them is high. Last August the Library introduced a patron driven acquisition scheme in conjunction with e-legal deposit, whereby our students and staff can request an additional electronic or print copy of an e-legal deposit book. This has been a huge success with hundreds of book purchase requests completed over the last few months.

## THE ROLE OF THE LAW LIBRARIAN

So what does the law librarian do? Along with the rest of the subject librarians most of the beginning of the academic year is given over to orientation and user education. We are very lucky that the School of Law schedules some training sessions as embedded in the timetables for both first-year undergraduates and new postgraduates. This usually takes the form of library tours and an hour-long lecture on the library resources available, and how to use them. Attendance at the lecture for first-years is compulsory, so this gives us a great opportunity to introduce them to the library and to us, the custodians of the legal collections. Unfortunately, due to time constraints,

it consists of a PowerPoint presentation running over the location of the law resources and borrowing rights, and how to find items that appear on their reading lists – cases, legislation, monographs and periodical articles. We are aware of the limitations of ‘death by PowerPoint’, but because of the size of the group – about 180 Students – it is difficult to think of an alternative method of getting across a large amount of information in such a short time. However, judging from feedback it does succeed in our primary goal – giving the students a point of contact if they run in to difficulties finding course materials. Our email inboxes in the weeks following this seminar are proof of this!

## LAW STUDENTS

First and second year undergraduates, called junior and senior freshmen in the College, are expected to complete 6 compulsory core modules, each worth 10 ECTS (European Credit Transfer and Accumulation System), which are designed to give a grounding in the world of law and a basic understanding of the Irish legal system. Each module is assessed with an essay due at the end of the module and an exam at the end of the academic year. Of course this means that demand for particular books is very high – with dozens of students looking for the same titles at the same time. As already mentioned, the cost of law books means that very few of our student cohort purchase legal textbooks, relying solely on the Library to

provide them. The knock-on effect of this is that the Library needs to purchase multiple copies of these core textbooks – for example we have 36 copies of the 2014 edition of *Byrne & McCutcheon on the Irish Legal System* – all of which are heavily used. The short loan copies have all been borrowed more than 150 times each, while the longer (weekly) loan copies have been borrowed about 50 times each. Third and fourth year undergraduates, called junior and senior sophisters, both need to complete 60 ECTS from a list of about 35 modules each worth 5 or 10 ECTS, so the demand on these books is not nearly so high. Final year students also have the option of writing a final year dissertation worth 20 ECTS, of which more later.

## ORIENTATION TRAINING

Orientation training for the new postgraduate students also consists of a tour and a more in-depth introduction to our electronic resources. Attendance at this tutorial is not obligatory but is usually relatively high – with about 60% of the students attending. A large proportion of these students are from overseas – especially from non-EU countries – and being older and more experienced are more inclined to seek assistance in the Library, either requesting further Library tutorials for smaller groups, seeking help individually either via email, or through one to one sessions in my office. A great many requests to purchase books come from postgraduate students and at

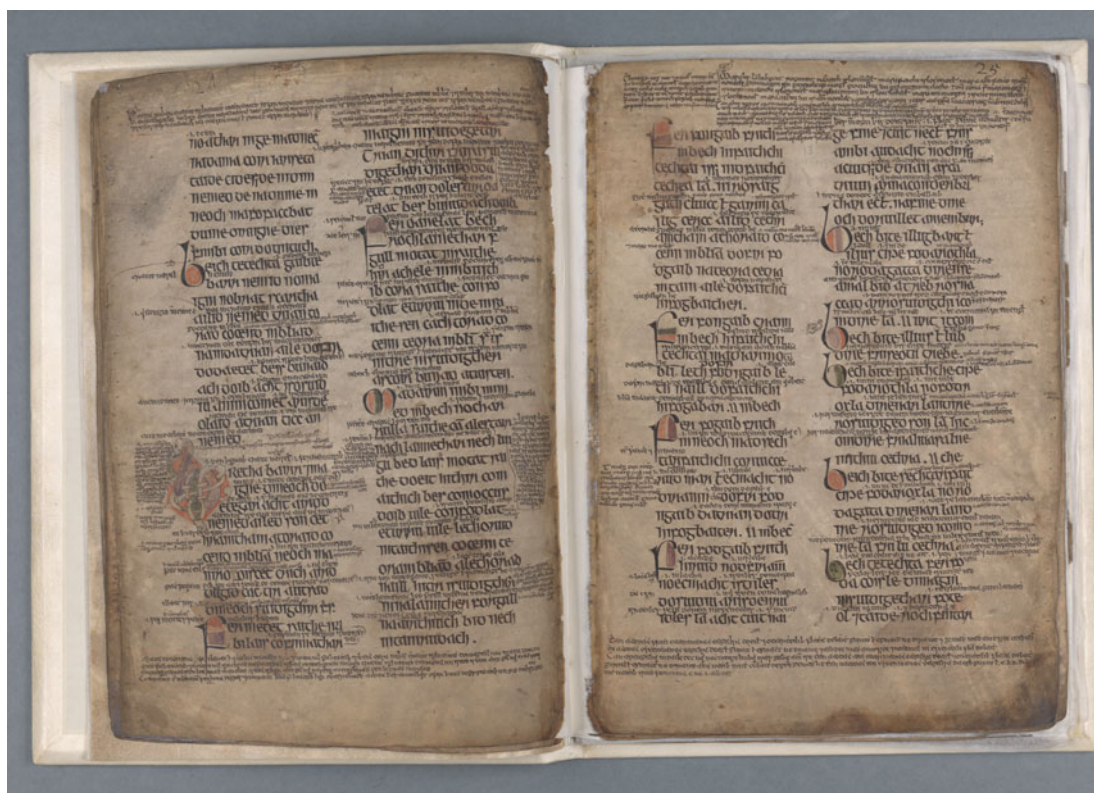


Figure 3. MS1316-2, pp24–25.



Figure 4. Terry McDonald, Law Librarian.

the moment we are in the fortunate position of having adequate funding to meet these needs.

## LEGAL CITATION

The School of Law recommends that for essays and other projects, students use the *OSCOLA Ireland*<sup>5</sup> legal citation style. The Library supports the EndNote bibliographic management software tool and demand from the School of Law students for the EndNote classes given by Librarians has gone up. Because the most heavily used legal databases such as *Westlaw*, *Justis* and *LexisNexis* are not compatible with EndNote (references cannot be downloaded directly from the databases into the EndNote Library) this traditionally meant that EndNote was not popular with our law students. This situation is changing due to two factors – one is that *OSCOLA* now works better with EndNote – and the other is that there is now greater access to legal journal citations and cases through *Google Scholar*. *Google Scholar* works pretty seamlessly with EndNote so a student can download a legal citation into their EndNote library from *Google Scholar*, and then save and attach the .pdf of the article from the legal database to the article in the EndNote library. The upshot of this is that demand from the law students for EndNote classes given by the Library is expected to increase greatly.

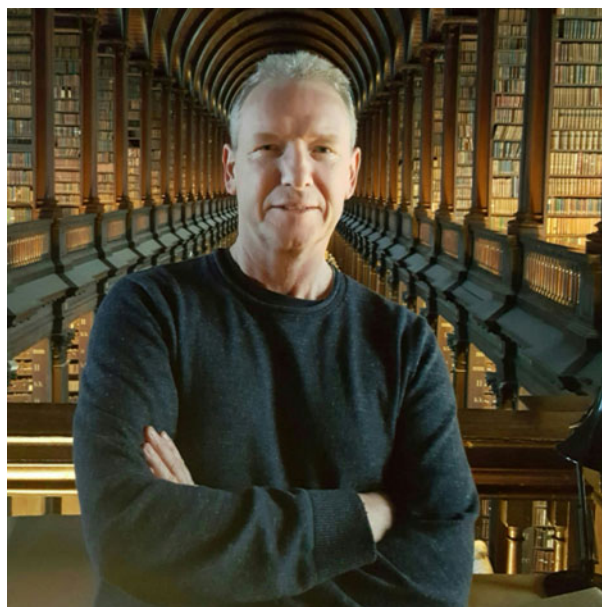


Figure 5. Tony Carey, Senior Library Assistant, Law Library.

## THE TRINITY EDUCATION PROJECT

The latest College innovation in undergraduate teaching is the Trinity Education Project (TEP), a renewal of the undergraduate curriculum. The TEP will be instrumental in introducing the concept of graduate attributes – a series of skillsets which each TCD student will be expected to have achieved upon graduation. Within the School of the Law will mean that each final year student will be expected to complete a Capstone Project which will consist of a 13,000-word dissertation worth 20 ECTS. This has been available as an option for final year students in the School of Law for some time, but for the first-year intake of 2018/19 the final year Capstone Project dissertation will be compulsory. We already give a range of classes in the Library aimed at students writing dissertations with titles such as, *The literature review process*, *How to evaluate journal research papers* and *Avoiding plagiarism* and we are hopeful that we will be able to collaborate on a suite of tutorials so that students will be well prepared for writing these final year projects.

## MEDIEVAL MANUSCRIPTS

In conclusion, mention should be made of the Library's unique collection of medieval manuscripts held in our Manuscripts and Archives Research Library – especially those related to early Irish law. To give some background, in 1603 King James I issued a proclamation stating that Ireland would follow English common law, but prior to that the legal system that prevailed in Ireland was known as Brehon law. Among our holdings, the Library is lucky enough to have in its possession some of the earliest known records relating to Brehon Law, including the *Senchus Mór*, the great collection of Brehon law tracts dating from the 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> centuries. Because these

manuscripts also represent some of the earliest written records of the Irish language, they have attracted scholars from all over the world for their linguistic, as well as for their historic value. The illustration shown is the *Becbretha* or the Brehon laws governing beekeeping, and is currently on display in the Long Room of the Old Library as part of the exhibition *Irish Manuscripts in the Library of Trinity College Dublin*. It may also be viewed online at: [www.tcd.ie/library/exhibitions/irish-manuscripts/](http://www.tcd.ie/library/exhibitions/irish-manuscripts/)

## A LIBRARY AND A SOCIAL HUB

As mentioned already, the School of Law is split among a number of buildings, both on- and just off the main TCD campus. As a result, there is a general feeling that for the

law students the Berkeley Library is not just a place to study, but a kind of unofficial social hub, where they meet their fellow students, exchange ideas and work on assignments. More than one lecturer has commented that they have been to weddings where the happy couple first met in the Library, and it is not uncommon for the Library to receive requests from couples asking permission for their wedding photographs to be taken at the shelf or desk where romance first blossomed. It is to be hoped that connection they feel with the Library will continue, even after the new School of Law building is completed.

Finally, I am always delighted to welcome a fellow law librarian for a tour and an exchange of information, so if you are in Dublin do please feel free to get in touch using the contact details below.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup> Peter Murtagh, Berkeley Library: a 'hand-crafted' rarity of modern architecture, *Irish Times*, (24 February 2017)

<sup>2</sup> Berkeley50: Celebrating Trinity College Dublin's Brutalist gem (<https://www.tcd.ie/library/berkeley/>)

<sup>3</sup> ([www.tcd.ie/library/](http://www.tcd.ie/library/))

<sup>4</sup> TCD School of Law homepage ([www.tcd.ie/Law/about/](http://www.tcd.ie/Law/about/))

<sup>5</sup> ([www.legalcitation.ie](http://www.legalcitation.ie))

## Biography

Terry McDonald holds a BA, MA and MLIS all from University College Dublin, and CPD qualifications in Irish Criminal Law and Irish Civil Law from the Dublin Institute of Technology. She has been an Assistant Librarian in the Library of Trinity College Dublin since 1999, working as a Subject Librarian since 2001, and Subject Librarian for Law since 2014. Her particular areas of interest are user education and information literacy.