

become quite complicated when there is a noticeable contraction in purchasing power. Keeping a close watch on trends of library use is a good indicator of where resources need to be allocated and at present the library is pushing increased resources into particular areas such as book purchasing, to support the needs of practitioners, who for the moment may prefer to borrow than to buy books.

Despite the fluctuation in student numbers and the knock-on impact on numbers within the profession, the library has maintained its services and is committed to

continuing to support the research needs of the profession throughout the recessionary period and beyond. The library staff team are also actively examining what is the best model for the supply of legal information to our varied profile of users in future so that relevant and accurate materials are more easily accessible. Enhancements in library technology offer some indicators of the way ahead but like many other law libraries we are endeavouring to find the correct balance between satisfying the demands of all of our users and introducing innovation at an acceptable pace.

## Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Byrne, Margaret. (2002) "The Law Society Library" in Hall, Eamonn G. and Daire Hogan (eds.) *The Law Society of Ireland 1852–2002: portrait of a profession*. Dublin, Four Courts Press. 197–208.

<sup>2</sup>*Annual Report of the Law Society of Ireland 2006/7*. 14–15.

## Biography

Mary Gaynor is Head of Library and Information Services at the Law Society of Ireland Library.

# From Law Library Society to Law Library: the First 180 Years, 1816–1996

**Abstract:** This article, by Jennefer Aston, outlines the origins of The Law Library, focusing on its librarians and the services that were provided for members in the first 180 years.

**Keywords:** law libraries; legal profession; Ireland

## Introduction

No issue dealing with Law Libraries in Ireland would be complete without some mention of The Law Library in Dublin. The library is owned by and serves the practising Bar of Ireland (currently over 2,000 members). The present information services in the Law Library have

been highlighted in John Duffy's recent article<sup>1</sup> so I am going to concentrate on the past. I will deal briefly with the first 180 years of The Law Library, its library service and some of the librarians during that period.

Today the library is run by the Bar Council, funded entirely by subscriptions from, and is the centre of work for, the practising members of the Irish Bar. The Bars of Northern Ireland and Scotland<sup>2</sup> also use the library-based

system, with local variations, rather than the chambers system that operates in England and Wales. The library system fosters sharing of resources and knowledge and is an extremely cost effective way to provide library and information services in small jurisdictions.

The Law Library has its origins in the need of the practising Bar to have easy access to a good supply of books. There had been a tradition of booksellers and lending services providing paid services to individual practitioners. Books were hired, usually on a daily basis, and indeed this continued after the establishment of the Law Library itself.

In 1816 subscribers to an existing law library in the Four Courts met. They founded The Law Library Society, and agreed to purchase the stock of the library from Mr Delany, who they agreed should continue as librarian. The Society also appointed a committee, and a treasurer, and that committee drew up rules and regulations for both the library and the conduct of the librarian. The Benchers of the King's Inns furnished a room for the Society in the Four Courts and The Law Library, as it became known, started in earnest.

### Valentine Delany 1816–?

The librarian's duties included the obvious tasks of cataloguing and keeping the books in order, but he also had to provide pens, and could sell paper and forms (the right of stationery). More unusually he had the task of collecting the subscriptions from the members and accounting for those to the committee, and keeping the register of members. One condition that might worry today's librarians was that the librarian was considered personally responsible for missing books and the replacement thereof.

During the next 25 years the library and its membership expanded dramatically and by 1840 the Society had obtained larger premises from the Benchers and had over 600 members (a number not reached again for over 145 years). In 1826 George Delany was appointed as assistant librarian, a post he retained until his death in 1853. The Delanys published a "Handbook for Justices of the Peace in Ireland...." No author is given, nor is there a name affixed to the Introduction but the title page ends with – DUBLIN: V. DELANY & SON, LAW LIBRARY, FOUR COURTS, 1852. So it would seem that the librarian and his son not only wrote the work but also ran a publishing and book selling business from The Law Library.

The library was a noisy, crowded space with hundreds of members seeking to practise from a single room. As the library grew in terms of books and members, space was at an absolute premium and many times during the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Society petitioned the Benchers for improved accommodation. The limited seating was allocated on a first-come first-served basis. If a member left his seat for more than 15 minutes it was considered vacant and could be occupied by someone else.

Information is scarce on several of the librarians and on their exact years of office, but the next librarian of whom I am aware was Mr. Thomas Robbins who joined the library in 1859, became librarian in 1869 and retired in 1922, giving a staggering 63 years of service.

### Thomas Robbins 1869–1922

Those 63 years were times of great political drama in Ireland, which experienced many waves of political struggle; World War I; the 1916 Rising; and the War of Independence resulting, in 1922, in the division of Ireland into two new states: the Irish Free State and Northern Ireland. This in turn led to civil war between those who accepted that division and those who did not.

During the latter part of the 19<sup>th</sup> century the Library remained a dangerously crowded space and petitions to the Benchers for more space continued. Deaths of members from typhus finally precipitated the granting of new premises. Robbins oversaw the building of a marvellous new purpose built library which opened in 1897 on the ground floor of the East wing of the Four Courts. However, even in the new premises, things were not ideal. In 1898 the Irish Law Times records "a large portion of the gallery floor in the new Barristers' library, Four Courts, has been found to be rotten and in a most dangerous condition"<sup>3</sup>.

During the Easter Rising in 1916, the library suffered considerable damage when the Four Courts were occupied. Books and furniture were used to barricade the windows in the absence of sandbags, and staff reported removing bullets from the books once the occupation was over. Worse was to follow. Members were to enjoy these premises for only 25 years before the Library was again occupied. This time it was by anti-government forces in 1922 as part of the civil war. After a couple of months of occupation the bombardment to force a surrender began. The shelling and the resulting fires, followed by looting, completely destroyed the library. The total destruction of the library was too much for Robbins, who was then 80 years old, and he retired in November 1922.

### Frederick Price 1922–1950

Born in 1872, Frederick Price had worked in the library for many years. He was appointed at a salary of £3 "with no right of stationery". The hundred-year-old tradition of the librarian selling stationery and providing pens to the members was officially at an end. From this time the Committee oversaw the sale of stationery to members and over the years this grew to encompass, in the 1980s, the sale of text books that had been reprinted in addition to the usual collars, bands, studs, court forms, etc.

Members of the Irish Bar who had chosen to practise in Northern Ireland demanded their share of books to enable them to set up their own library – the Bar Library in Belfast. The Benchers made a grant of books to start the library and some of the books from that original grant are to be seen still in the Royal Courts of Justice in Belfast.

Although all the books, fixtures, and most of the members' papers, wigs, gowns and personal effects had been destroyed in 1922, the Law Library survived as the Bar's place of work, and moved to the King's Inns where the courts were sitting temporarily, and where members had the use of the King's Inns library. When the Government transferred the courts to Dublin Castle the Law Library transferred to St Patrick's Hall in the Castle. An appeal went out to the public and to all government offices for law books to be sent to Dublin Castle. Today many of the oldest books in the library bear the stamp "Law Library Dublin Castle". Mr Price went on an extended buying tour of booksellers and libraries across Ireland and the United Kingdom and gradually re-established a library, which by 1931 was thought to have 10,000 volumes.

In 1931 the courts and the library returned to a changed Four Courts, re-built and improved with the provision of electricity and heating. The books were transferred in baskets lent by the Post Office. Mr Price supervised the installation of the books in the new library<sup>4</sup> and life returned to normal. The library was now in what had been the old Solicitors' Hall and had spacious accommodation for a Bar reduced in number by the loss of their Northern colleagues. For the first time there were robing rooms for women and men within the library precincts.

### **Reginald A Harrison SC 1950–1968**

After the tumultuous events during his predecessors' stewardship, Mr Harrison's term was delightfully uneventful. Called to the Bar in 1929 he practised for a while before he left the Bar for business. After his return to the library he first became a reporter and then librarian. In addition to being Librarian, he was Editor of the Irish Reports<sup>5</sup> and compiled the Irish Digests for 1939–1948 and 1949–1958. He was called to the Inner Bar in 1965 while he was both librarian and editor. He died in office in 1968.

### **William MM Hurley: 1968–**

William MM Hurley, Bill to most of us, was a man famous in other circles. Born in Ireland he had gone to Oxford and had joined the regiment called the Artists Rifles in the First World War. From there he joined the fledgling Royal Flying Corps (later the RAF) and learned to fly. Bill remained in the RAF until after the Second World War when he left with the rank of group captain. Among the

many interesting aspects of Bill's life, he wrote speeches for Alfie Byrne (Westminster MP 1914–18 later Lord Mayor of Dublin). Visiting your MP was a ground for extra leave in the armed forces and so it was mutually beneficial. In the Second World War he was Officer Commanding the North Atlantic, based in Ballykelly. He was Lawrence of Arabia's commanding officer and became his friend. He later contributed to a book "Lawrence, by his Friends". He annotated a copy of Ulysses for Lawrence explaining the various phrases of "Dublinese" and locations in Dublin. This annotated copy is listed in the catalogue of Lawrence's books.

Having retired from the RAF, Bill first studied agriculture in Scotland and obtained a gold medal. He then studied at the King's Inns where he again achieved success by winning the John Brooke Scholarship<sup>6</sup> and was called to the Bar in 1956. However, Bill's severe deafness (too many years in flying machines) was a serious impediment to succeeding in practice as a barrister and he became deputy librarian and then librarian.

During his time in the library he kept meticulous records, indexed all legislation – primary and secondary, and put together subject files on popular topics so that anyone going to court could have an envelope with all of the Acts, Statutory Instruments and the relevant Judgments in their hand. This was at a time when the last index to Irish case law was for 1958, so for years Bill's card index to the unreported Judgments was vital to the practising Bar. For many of those years the Bar was very small and Bill provided a personal SDI service approaching members and saying to them "do you know that the new Copyright Bill has passed both Houses" or "Did you hear that the Supreme Court have given judgment in x."

Although at that time Bill was in his seventies, as librarian he was also responsible for all administration within the library. In this respect he was responsible for: collection of subscriptions; pursuit of defaulters or reluctant payers; maintenance of the building; accounts from the shop; supervision and payment of staff; payment of all bills; and even counting the money from the telephone boxes.

In 1968 there were 217 members, but by 1979 there were over 400 and the library was very crowded. The Bar Council courageously undertook, for the first time, to purchase premises to house its own members. To do this they had to persuade existing members to pay a capital sum and commit to increased subscriptions to service the loan into the future. Members were effectively agreeing to higher costs in order to allow more members to join and compete with them. The premises purchased were the former Law Society Library and associated rooms in the Four Courts. The purchase was of great assistance to the Law Society in funding their purchase of the Kings Hospital or "Blue Coat School" in Blackhall Place, now its headquarters<sup>7</sup>.

In addition to purchasing additional premises, the Bar Council recruited a professional administrator to take

over the collection of subscriptions, the maintenance of the building and the supervision of the shop. The shop had originally sold paper and pens but, as the years went by, it sold all manner of stationery, court bands, books, tokens for the telephones and collars. The Bar Council also acquired additional sets and texts to equip the new space and appointed Jennefer Aston, a qualified law librarian, as sub-librarian to develop the service to modern standards. Bill Hurley continued to index material and to provide information services for many years but he no longer had to deal with the day to day running of the library. As a courtesy he retained the title of librarian long after he had effectively retired.

### Jennefer Aston 1979–1998

One of the first steps towards modern practices was the cataloguing of the textbooks, law reports and statutes. However, there were many other day to day challenges just to keep the library functioning. The lack of text books on Irish law was a serious problem and, to encourage the circulation of books and obtain copies for the library stock, the library established the practice of holding auctions of private law libraries in the library. The library also commissioned the reprint of text books that were still in use but had been published before 1922. The bulk of this reprint was sold pre-publication to the members, the balance was available in the Law Library shop.

Up to this point, all library records were paper-based and painstakingly recorded by hand. At one point in the straitened economic circumstances of the day, the librarian had been restricted in the amount of paper that he could buy, so many of those indexes were prepared on reused envelopes. The information service was completely dependent on the presence of the librarian, however his hours were becoming shorter and the library opening hours were becoming longer, so access to information was necessarily restricted.

At that time, the library assistants who had been working in the library for many, many years<sup>8</sup> had an encyclopaedic knowledge of the stock and were able to locate anything that a member might require. However, with the increasing number of members and the deaths of older library assistants, that knowledge and institutional memory was fast disappearing. It became imperative to establish systems that were independent of the presence of particular individuals.

The library was one of the first Irish libraries to apply new technology to solve the age-old problem of

finding information. An attempt was made to establish a co-operative database of judgments between the major professional, university and government law libraries. However, sharing resources proved impossible so the Law Library did it alone. The first in-house database created in 1983 was Judgment Information for the Law Library (JILL). Initially providing only indexed information, JILL has developed since then to include the full text of judgments. In 1983 printed indexes were very limited for Ireland and the last digest of case law covered the period to 1970. In an effort to improve published access to case law, the Library also collaborated with the Irish Association of Law Teachers in the production of the red and green indexes<sup>9</sup>. Later the Library published the blue index<sup>10</sup>, itself using the JILL system.

Circulation of the limited stock of textbooks drove the installation of the first computerised library management system – URICA from McDonnell Douglas – in 1987. The system quickly allowed the delivery of other benefits: providing searching as to the commencement of Acts; the implementation of EU Directives; amendments to Statutory Instruments, and an index to periodical articles. At the time, these services were unique to the Law Library. In 1996 the library migrated to the Unicorn system now Symphony.

As technology improved so did the availability and range of services that we provided, with in-house and commercial databases networked around the Library. CITRIX allowed the library to provide remote access to its members nationwide. It was the first library in these islands to use CITRIX. We pioneered laptop lending to our members and trained barristers in the effective use of technology in law.

Numbers at the Bar were still steadily increasing and the Library opened its first office block for members in 1994. By 1996, at the end of our time frame, there were 998 members and plans were well advanced for further offices for members in the Distillery Building. The building also included the Dublin International Arbitration Centre and a purpose built Legal Research Centre which opened in 1998. This was to be the fourth library in 100 years that librarians had planned and equipped for the members. The fundamental difference this time was that it was not in the Four Courts but was within their own building, so that members could have access to the centre whenever they wished, it became a 24 hour 365 day resource. The library service continues to prosper but, as I said, the modern story has already been told.

### Footnotes

<sup>1</sup>Duffy, John (2010). When Free and Easy Isn't an Option: Intranet 2.0 at the Bar Council of Ireland Law Library *Legal Information Management* 10(4), 265–270t.

<sup>2</sup>Longson, Andrea (2009). The Advocates Library *Legal Information Management* 9(1) 35–37.

<sup>3</sup>1898 ILT&S] 256.

<sup>4</sup>1931 ILT&SJ p202.

<sup>5</sup>Appointed Editor in July 1949.

<sup>6</sup>Awarded to the person achieving first place in the class.

<sup>7</sup>Mary Gaynor. (2011) The Law Society of Ireland Library – serving the solicitors' profession in challenging times *Legal Information Management* 11(2).

<sup>8</sup>Many had started in their teens as “book boys” and learnt their trade on the job.

<sup>9</sup>Index to Unreported Irish Superior Court Judgments 1966–1975 Aston, Byrne, Kerr and McCutcheon (1990) Index to Irish Superior Court Written Judgments 1976–1982 Aston and Doyle (1984).

<sup>10</sup>Index to Irish Superior Court Written Judgments 1983–1989 Aston (1991).

## Biography

Jennefer Aston was the first specially trained Irish law librarian. Jennefer was Librarian of The Law Library and subsequently Consultant Librarian to the Bar Council. She now runs LawBooks Ireland (LBI). The business specialises in supplying books on Irish law as well as selling books from all the different international law publishers. LBI also deals with a limited amount of used texts and sets. The website for LBI is: [www.lawbooks.ie](http://www.lawbooks.ie)

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# The Law Firm Sector in Ireland: An Overview

**Abstract:** John Furlong reviews the law firm sector in Ireland as it weathers the storms of recession and the winds of change. The article provides details on the size and scale of the sector as well as statistical information on solicitors and law firms.

**Keywords:** law firms; law firm libraries; Ireland

Lawyers and law firms play a significant role in the business life of Ireland. Their influence extends beyond the confines of law and legal advice and many lawyers have a significant public profile through business activity or media attention. Many long established law firms are well known names at both local and national level. The legal community is relatively small and yet its members have a strong group influence on national life. The legal community have a notable track record in political life – 3 of the past 5 Justice ministers have been solicitors<sup>1</sup>.



John Furlong

However, this influence is not without challenge; a challenge which has increased in recent years based on concerns about legal costs, competition issues and a number of high profile fraud cases involving solicitors.

## General outline; size and composition

The general structure and operating environment for law firms in Ireland is