Consultation on the Legal Deposit of published digital material in the 21st century in the context of Copyright legislation

A submission from the Irish Traditional Music Archive (ITMA)

1. Should the policy of collecting, preserving and making available the published output of the nation for the benefit of the public be extended to include all contemporary publication formats of Irish interest including online digital formats e.g., .ie websites?

As Director of the Irish Traditional Music Archive (ITMA), I would fully support the extension of collection, preservation and access policies to include online digital formats, including websites.

ITMA itself as a national archive and resource centre for Irish traditional music has already been engaged in such policies with regard to multimedia output within Irish traditional music. With a remit to collect, preserve, organise and make available the contemporary and historic materials of Irish traditional song, music and dance, we have followed published formats as dictated by the community. Despite the absence of legislation, ITMA already hosts a range of digital formats in its collections. ITMA would suggest therefore that the development of national policy in this area would include consultation with existing genre based organisations, to ensure an informed, rational and effective approach to national digital collection policies.

However with particular regard to the nature and scale of website archiving, the archiving of Irish traditional music related web sites has not yet been possible within ITMA resources. ITMA would suggest that any web archiving policy would include consultation with genre based organisations such as ITMA to ensure input and access to a national website archive resource.

I would urge that in the development of such policies, the issue of resources to establish, maintain and sustain national digital legal deposit are fully discussed. Again ITMA would suggest consultation with existing genre based organisations, to ensure an informed, rational and effective approach to national digital collection policies.

2. What issues arise if a policy extension on digital legal deposit is not provided for?

Contemporary published output in Ireland has moved beyond traditional print models. New platforms of ‘publishing’ and information sharing are evident in the growth of e-formats to record cultural, academic and societal output. The nature of information sharing is now reflected in new concepts of digital storytelling, multimedia curation, the use of social media platforms, crowdsourcing, online discussion panels, YouTube etc, as well as traditional formats. The ‘word’ is no longer the definitive expression of information and resource sharing. Collection policies must reflect the nature of such output and an understanding of contemporary information sharing. Should these emerged and emerging formats be excluded, our knowledge of contemporary society may prove unrepresentative and possibly present a bias among national memory keepers. It should also be noted that the nature of the web offers opportunities to ‘publish’ material of inappropriate/offensive nature – policy will need to examine if it is ready to take a non-judgemental nature in such archiving.
The potential of such resources becoming the reserve of proprietary organisations could also arise, with material only available through pay walls or similar restrictive access filters.

3. **What are the benefits if a policy extension on digital legal deposit is provided for?**

   Collection policies will meet contemporary output formats and modes of publishing and communication.

   It will go some way towards redressing the digital ‘black hole’ which already exists.

   It will increase awareness among individuals and organisations of the value of the digital formats which they create, and the need to consider long term preservation of such resources when they are created.

   It may help towards developing standards for digital publishing in Ireland.

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