To whom it may concern in the Department of Arts, Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs,

I have been requested to submit the following text on behalf of a member of the NLI Board, Eoin McVey:

Dear Minister,

I have the honour of being a director of the National Library of Ireland, having been appointed by yourself in 2015.

Along with my fellow directors I am very interested in the public consultation that you are facilitating on the possible extension of the policy of collecting, preserving and making available all published formats, including digital formats.

I do believe sincerely that the policy should be extended. Within a year of publication, about one half of web output is gone or is rendered unrecognizable. This means government publications, online newspapers and websites documenting all aspects of life in the 21st Century will be lost to future researchers.

Many countries have already amended legal deposit legislation to incorporate deposit of the published digital output of that country e.g. websites and electronic publications; digital legal deposit. The majority of EU countries are collecting digital material. Ireland must not be left behind in this regard.

The extension of this policy to include all contemporary formats, including and especially online digital formats, is necessary given the changing publications landscape. It is an important precursor to amended digital legal deposit legislation.

If the policy extension is not provided for, it will be harder for Irish people to access, free of charge, the total published output of the nation. The balance between digital and physical material will shift, and eventually there will be more digital material produced than physical, and none of this digital material will be collected and preserved for future research. The loss of publications that document all aspects of 21st century life in Ireland will only add to the ever growing digital black hole created by the ongoing absence of legislation in this area.

Digital publications will be as important as printed books for future generations if they wish to understand life in Ireland in the 21st century. They can disappear more quickly than periodicals and books and therefore they need to be captured without delay.

They are important to researchers and citizens alike as they document
the local as well as the national, the creators and innovators as well as the more formal machinery of the state. Life in the 21st century will increasingly be documented in digital form, in blogs, vlogs, and digital newspapers. The extension of policy, to facilitate amendments to current legislation to enable the capture of this material, will ensure collection, preservation and access to the documentary and intellectual heritage of 21st century Ireland.

I therefore support the proposal as outlined in the public consultation and urge the Minister of Arts Heritage, Regional, Rural and Gaeltacht Affairs to consider and act on this response.

Yours sincerely,

Eoin McVey

Kind regards,

Orla Sweeney

Rúnaí don Bhord agus Choiste Feidhmieacháin, Leabharlann Náisiúnta na hÉireann, 4 Sráid Chill Dara, Baile Átha Cliath 2, D02 A322, Éire.
Secretary to the Board and Executive, National Library of Ireland, 4 Kildare Street, Dublin 2, D02 A322, Ireland.
T: (+353) (0)1 6030 244. www.nli.ie

Picture