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Peter Corrigan | Head of Library Systems

Gaeltacht is a traditional Irish word for “Irish-speaking region.” This word refers to any area in Ireland where the government recognizes Irish Gaelic as the predominant language. The Connemara Gaeltacht is the largest Irish-speaking area in Ireland. The National University of Ireland (NUI) in Galway, which was originally founded as Queen’s College in 1855, is located in close proximity to this region.

The first librarian of the college—and the man for whom the modern-day library at NUI is named for—was James Hardiman. He was an active member of the Royal Irish Academy and collected and rescued many examples of Irish traditional music and poetry.

Everything old is new again

It then comes as no surprise that today’s librarians are also very interested in the preservation and access of their rare collections. In keeping with NUI’s progressive thinking, a new initiative was launched to enable the University’s world-famous library to offer digital access to its huge collection of older and more valuable books.

NUI began searching for state-of-the-art equipment that would enable its books to be released from the confines of their archives

and be viewed electronically on a daily basis by its end-users.

Criteria formulated in the selection process included the scanning speed, the size of the resulting PDFs and the amount of compression required. Other more obvious factors taken into account were ease-of-use, productivity and reliability.

The Kirtas Solution

Together with BookScan Bureau, a division of their U.K.-based reseller Hollingsworth & Moss, Kirtas Technologies was able to provide the exact solution NUI was looking for. The University determined that the Kirtas APT 1200 was best suited to meet their current needs.

“Because many of these books are older and quite delicate, we needed a system that would preserve the integrity of the original,” said Peter Corrigan, head of library systems at NUI and project lead. “One of the key requirements therefore became that the equipment did not damage our originals in any way. This single factor helped us to narrow down the options quite quickly and it became clear early on in the tender process that the Kirtas book scanner being offered to us by BookScan Bureau fulfilled this need as it was non-destructive. Many of the other scanning devices we looked at needed to have the original either to be completely flat or even take completely apart.”



The Kirtas APT 1200 is a book digitization system that can capture 1200 pages per hour using a high-resolution Canon digital camera. The patented SmartCradle Dynamic Book Handler holds the book open at exactly 110 degrees throughout the process, providing low-stress support for rare and fragile books. Meanwhile, the SureTurn robotic arm reduces the need for manipulating pages by hand. The computer controlled arm uses an adjustable vacuum system to gently pick up and turn one page at a time.

Irish eyes are smiling!

One final advantage that The NUI recognized in the Kirtas system was its ability to display older material from the last century on-screen much more clearly than some of the competing equipment.

“There were a large number of factors to consider but Book Scan Bureau worked very hard with us and ultimately we went with the Kirtas solution because there simply isn’t another system on the market that can compete with it,” concluded Corrigan. “Once we placed the order, it was very reassuring to find that the installation team also had outstanding knowledge, enthusiasm, attention to detail and passion for the product. Given the quality of the product itself, and the caliber of the support, my colleagues and I feel confident we can approach our bound

document digitization projects here to deliver consistent, quality output, second to none.”

The preservation and restoration of the library’s cherished documents will be a valuable addition to the University since it launched a 35 million (Euro) institution dedicated to pioneering third-level education through the medium of Irish. The regular use of the Irish language has been an established part of social and academic life, and now it will continue for years to come.



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