Letters of 1916

A Year in the Life



Ordinary Lives Extraordinary Times







Professor Philip Nolan President I Uachtarán Maynooth University

Tá Ollscoil Mhá Nuad thar a bheith mórtasach as a bheith ag treorú agus ag reáchtáil an tionscadail Litreacha 1916, tionscadal atá ar thús cadhnaíochta i dtaca le taighde i réimse na ndaonachtaí digiteacha agus na saoránach. Tá cartlann bheo dhigiteach de litreacha a scríobhadh timpeall an ama inar tharla Éirí Amach na Cásca á cruthú ag an tionscadal seo. Ciallaíonn an cur chuige sluafhoinsithe go bhfuil teacht ar réimse leathan d'fhoinsí poiblí agus d'fhoinsí príobháideacha agus go bhfuil solas an léinn á scairteadh anois ar mhórán ábhair nach raibh aon eolas air roimhe seo. Tá foireann 1300 tras-scríobhaí deonach ag obair ar bhreis agus 2500 litir a bailíodh. Tugann na litreacha spléachadh ar gach gné de shaol na gcomhfhreagraithe, idir chomhfhreagaithe poiblí agus chomhfhreagraithe príobháideacha agus tá cur síos forleathan iontu ar chúrsaí polaitíochta, gnó agus cultúir na linne. Tá gach cosúlacht ann go dtabharfaidh an tionscadal speisialta uathúil seo an-léargas dúinn ar shaol na ndaoine ag an am sin agus ar thionchar na n-imeachtaí a bhain le hÉirí Amach na Cásca. Is sampla iontach é de léann den scoth, atá á reáchtáil ar bhealach nua spreagúil. Tá ár mbuíochas agus ár meas tuillte acu siúd ar fad atá páirteach ann.



Maynooth University is deeply proud to lead and host the Letters of 1916 project, a project at the forefront of digital humanities and citizen research. The project is creating a living, digital archive of letters written around the time of the Easter Rising. The crowdsourcing approach casts the net wide across public and private sources, and brings much hitherto unknown material to the light of scholarship. A team of 1300 volunteer transcribers are working on the over 2500 letters collected. The letters give glimpses of all aspects of the lives of the correspondents, public and private, and comment widely on the politics, business and culture of the times. This unique and special project promises to give us deep insights into people's lives at this time, and the impact of the events surrounding the Easter Rising. It is a wonderful example of scholarship at its finest, conducted in a new and exciting manner; all those involved deserve our thanks and appreciation.

Letters of 1916 is Ireland's first public digital humanities project. Its goal is to create a window onto life in Ireland, and how events in Ireland were viewed internationally, a century ago. Begun in September 2013, it has collected over 2500 letters from 45 private collections and 25 institutions.

Letters provide us with a window onto the past, a reminder of what has changed and what has remained the same, an intimate glimpse into a world left behind, but also part of our own. Letters, by their very nature, convey movement: traveling across time and space; these letters reach us, much as they reached their intended recipients a century ago, conveying the hopes and dreams, fears and joys, of people who, like us, sought to connect.

These letters remind us that we are all temporary custodians of the places we inhabit. As the historian G.M. Trevelyan so eloquently wrote in his autobiography:

The dead were and are not. Their place knows them no more and is ours today... on this earth, once, on this familiar spot of ground, walked other men and women, as actual as we are today, thinking their own thoughts, swayed by their own passions, but now all gone, one generation vanishing into another, gone as utterly as we ourselves shall shortly be gone, like ghosts at cockcrow.

Letters of 1916 gives voice to stories which might otherwise remain hidden in archives or family attics to form a national mosaic, making their time as real and immediate as our own. Technology is the enabler of this unique resource, allowing us to bridge time and space through hundreds of letters connecting thousands of lives.

Letters of 1916 has been to me, personally, a joy and a privilege to create. I have been blessed with a wonderful and committed team of people who have worked tirelessly to bring this project to fruition. This brochure is a small tribute to the many individuals who have so generously shared their letters, their time, and expertise in making Letters of 1916 a success.



Susan Schreibman
Letters of 1916 Founding Editor
Maynooth University

The Irish Jesuit Archives doesn't have a physical exhibition space; therefore, contributing to the 'Letters of 1916' project provided the archives with a digital platform to showcase previously unseen material. Benefits from the project include archives advocacy, transcription of the letters by the public, and their long-term digital preservation. From a personal perspective, involvement in the project has heightened my awareness of digital humanities and provided an opportunity to learn new digital skills.

The Letters of 1916 project has led to a democratisation of access to archives. This has empowered the public to unmask and investigate letters which have remained hidden for a century.

Irish Jesuit Archives

Damien Burke

Assistant Archivist Irish Jesuit Archives

> Very Reverend and dear I Provincial Many Ranks for your short note. So In Morris is gatting into Ramuels very soon In sure the life out here with it variety. Constant sucreise, oppen air will do his health much good, while has with his planning manuer, o zeal will do a great deal of fact here. Bhaplains - that is RC - are wants here. be are all kept going night + morning, o there is plenty of room for more. Our Confieres are of course much were leisured - Sunday is their Gusyday, except those who take along of the Content to but that is not strictly ministerial work is it? Some ofther are very auxious to do their best

Letter from Fr Francis M Browne SJ to Fr Thomas V **Nolan SJ** 21 August 1916

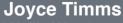
NSTITUTIONS



Letter from Nellie May Preston to Albert G. Woodman 4 May 1916 Joyce Timms, Private Collection

PRIVATE COLLECTIONS

I collaborated with the Letters of 1916 project because I have a letter which was kept carefully by my grandfather and thereafter my mother, as it contained my grandmother's personal account of this historic time in Ireland. I think history told through personal experience becomes much more alive and relevant when it speaks of the impact on the individual, no matter how slight that might be.



Granddaughter of Albert and Nellie Woodman



Letters of 1916 **IN NUMBERS**

45 private collections and 25 collaborating institutions

Allen Library

American Irish Historical Society

Archives and Special Collections, James Hardiman Library, NUI Galway

Cloyne Diocesan Archives

Corradh na Gaeilge

Cork City and County Archives

Cork Public Museum

Irish Capuchin Provincial Archives

Irish Distillers Pernod Ricard Archive

Limerick Diocesan Archives

Irish Jesuit Archives Maynooth University, Library

Medical Missionaries

Mary

Military Archives of Ireland

New York Public Library, Manuscripts and
Archives Division

National Archives of Ireland

National Library of Ireland

National Museum of Ireland Public Record Office of Northern Ireland (PRONI)

St.Patrick's College Maynooth, Archives

The National Archives, UK

Trinity
College Dublin, Manuscripts & Archives Research Library

University Archives of
University College Cork

University College Dublin, UCD

Archives

Wexford County Archive

1315 registered users 1936

likes on Facebook

4300

followers on Twitter

38410 total website visits

1280 a month 2 Teacher's Workshops

50 participants

lesson plans

21 stories on Storify

with total 1539 views

2665464

characters transcribed since September 2014

TEAM

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EDUCATION

The greatest strength of the project is to make archival material, the daily lived reality of 1916, accessible through social media and encourage a conversation about the events, what they meant in 1916 and what they mean now in 2016.

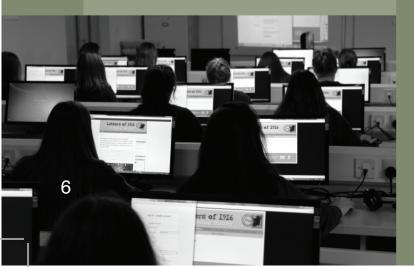
Dominic Price, Teacher and Author Drimnagh Castle Secondary School

I was immediately struck by the myriad exciting possibilities for application in the classroom. Transition Year, in particular, with its focus on facilitating student-led research, group work, presentation and communication skills lends itself beautifully to a dedicated module based on the letters.

Helene O'Keeffe, Teacher and Author St. Angela's College, Cork

I really enjoyed this History project as I thought it was a completely new way of learning about history. I think more people should learn this way as I found it stayed in my mind better. I was actually visualising someone and their life.

Julie Mackey, Transition Year student St. Angela's College, Cork





Philip Costello

Curiosity first drew me to the *Letters 1916* project. Before long I was transcribing on a daily basis and, in the process, learning fascinating background details. This led me to much reading outside of the

reading outside of the project on the subject of the 1916 Rising and also Irish involvement in WW1. The insights I have gained through my involvement have been immensely valuable to me in other projects I have undertaken since.

The availability of a searchable database of letters has to be a very useful tool for any

researcher.

IRANSCRIBE



Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht

Digital Repository of Ireland / HEA / PRTLI5

Digital Scholarly Editions Initial Training Network (DiXiT) / Framework 7

Maynooth University

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Science Foundation Ireland (SFI) Discover Programme

Trinity College Dublin, The Faculty of Engineering, Mathematics, and Science

Science Foundation Ireland has funded the *Letters of 1916*Project under its SFI Discover Programme Calls 2014 and 2015. The project provides a novel means of engaging people with the benefits of technology through their interest in history and heritage. The geographical spread of the events presents a great opportunity to engage with people nationwide in this centenary year.



Professor Mark Ferguson

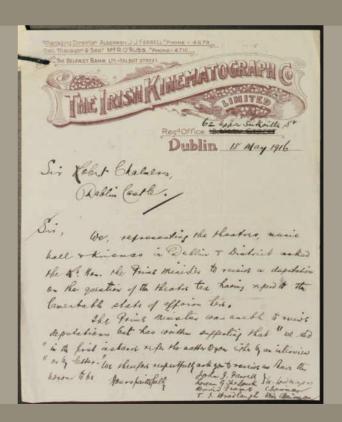
Director General
Science Foundation Ireland and Chief Scientific Adviser
to the Government of Ireland

RESEARCHERS

What excites me about 'Letters' is the potential that it has in changing perceptions about oral history. While it may seem an oxymoron to refer to written materials as 'oral history', I strongly believe that there is a case for examining ephemera, such as letters, as 'oral' data. Letters, after all, tell stories – they are narratives.



Thérèse McIntyre



Letter from John J. Farrell et al. to Robert Chalmers 18 May 1916 National Archives of Ireland

www.letters1916.maynoothuniversity.ie



Be part of the research process

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