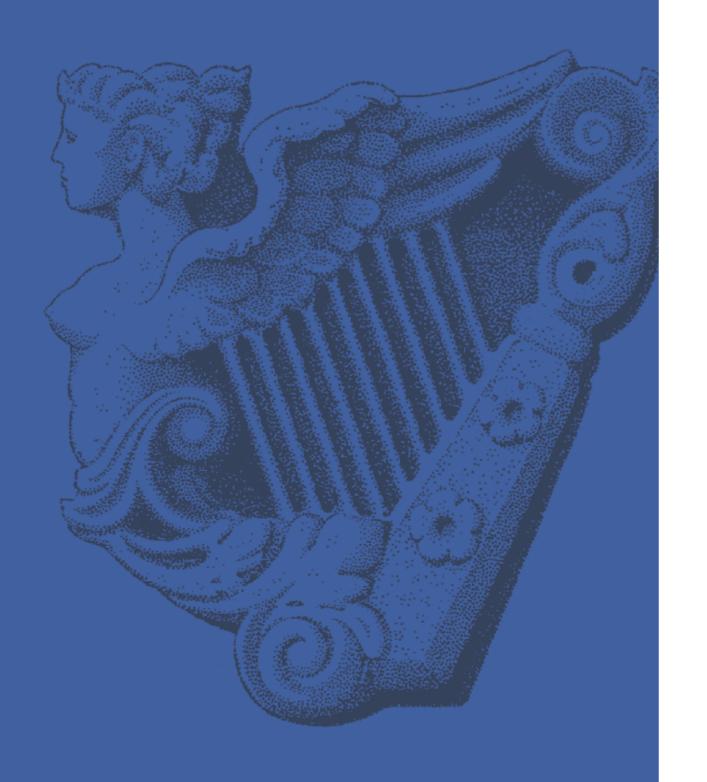
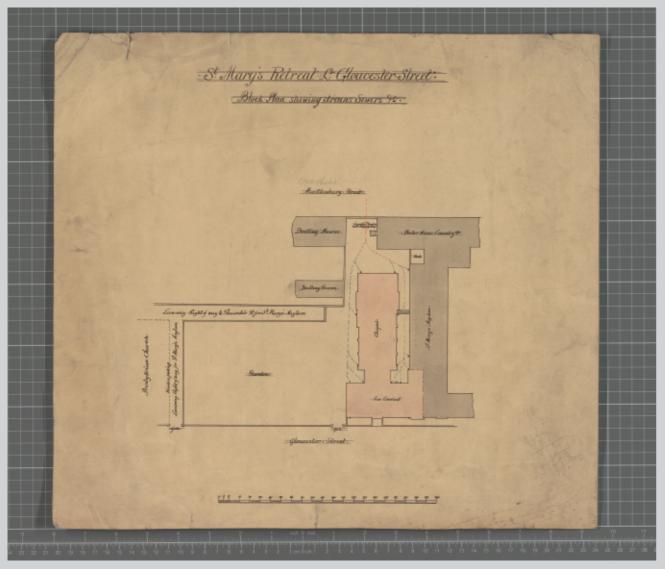
Irish Architectural Archive Strategic Plan

2021-2025



Approved by the Irish Architectural Archive board 3 November 2020



IAA scan of block plan of St Mary's Retreat (Magdalene asylum and laundry), Gloucester Street (Sean MacDermott Street), Dublin, c. 1890 (2006/142.594/7)

Irish Architectural Archive Strategic Plan



2021-2025

Archival collections play a critical role in the development of an honest interrogation of a nation — one which allows us to view our past in a way that can be, of course, at times appropriately celebratory but which prevents us from idealising that past or from ignoring its flaws or evading the mistakes that were made.

Freedom of access to archives is a vital element, indeed a fundamental value, of a properly functioning democracy. Such access allows us to investigate and interrogate the actions and decisions of those who went before, to explore our individual and collective identities, and to understand our role and our responsibilities as citizens.

PRESIDENT MICHAEL D. HIGGINS December 2019

Introduction



Mission

The Irish Architectural Archive collects and preserves material of every kind relating to the architecture of the entire island of Ireland, and makes that material available to the public.

Vision

The Archive seeks to be an authoritative and comprehensive repository of primary evidence relating to Ireland's architecture and built environment. Through the holdings of the Archive, freely accessible to all, that architecture and built environment can be celebrated, interrogated, understood and reimagined.

Values

The Irish Architectural Archive is curatorial, industrious, open, inclusive, inquisitive, acquisitive, flexible, grounded in the past yet forward thinking.



'Architecture is a series of connections, and a building an aggregate of ideas passed down though a multitude of hands.' Marius Grootveld, 'Collecting to find out', Alternative Histories: a Drawing Matter project, 2019

The Irish Architectural Archive was founded in 1976 out of a belief that architecture is an expression of national culture and identity. As the national architectural archive, it holds the memory of how our buildings were created, by whom and for whom. The Archive is both cultural heritage institution and an educational resource. It is a repository of primary evidence relating to Ireland's architecture. It provides the bedrock for celebrating, interrogating, understanding and reimagining our built environment.

The Irish Architectural Archive is an archival repository first and foremost, and will continue to be one into the future. Under the Strategic Plan 2021-2025, the Archive will strive to implement well-established best international archival practice in acquiring, preserving and cataloguing our holdings, whilst also innovating as required to adapt to new technologies.

Sustaining and complementing the archival mission is a range of activities from corporate governance to public engagement, and this Plan will guide endeavours in these areas too.

The Plan sets out four primary objectives for the five year period, and identifies a number of high-level goals for each objective. For each of these a measurement of success is also identified.

Over the five year period 2021-2025, this Plan will inform and underpin annual work programmes and budgetary allocations. By 2025, the Plan will have delivered a strong, vibrant, relevant and robust organisation, a respected and valued national cultural institution.

Objectives



Be archival

The Irish Architectural Archive believes that architecture is an expression of national culture and identity. The Archive will continue to acquire a wide-ranging and comprehensive record of Ireland's architecture, one that encapsulates the processes and culture of architecture on the island and documents the buildings produced. The Archive will preserve and maintain the collections in its care.

1. Maintain and preserve our collections

Provide suitable storage on site at No. 45 Merrion Square, specifically by completing the second phase of the current passive archives stores.

We will have succeeded when the additional stores have been completed.

2. Acquire new material

Identify and take into care suitable items and archival collections to continue to preserve a coherent, comprehensive record of Ireland's architecture and architects.

We will have succeeded if the holdings of the Archive continue to grow in a sustainable way over the lifetime of this plan, without any significant losses or gaps.

3. Implement best archival practice in the care, maintenance and cataloguing of our holdings

Implementing best practice requires adherence to standards. It also means deploying professional qualified staff, equipping and supporting them to carry out their duties, and providing training opportunities to ensure that they keep up to date with developments in archival science and practice.

We will have succeeded because the Archive will be adequately staffed with suitably qualified, engaged and committed staff members.

4. Run the organisation the right way

As an independent company limited by guarantee and registered as a Charity with the Charities Regulatory Authority, the Archive will secure adequate and stable funding to achieve its ambitions, and will implement the highest standards of corporate governance and oversight.

We will have succeeded because the Archive will be securely funded, managed by a proactive and engaged board, membership and executive, with clean audits and full compliance with all relevant codes and standards.

FROM LEFT

Rowan Collection of Architectural Publications (2017/50)

Rolled drawings store room

Photograph box files, reading room

Passive archival store room











Be accessible

The Archive will be open and welcoming, and will encourage and facilitate the widest possible public access to its collections and its building.

1. Make our holdings available through the online catalogue

The Archive will catalogue its holdings to the highest international standards and will ensure that the catalogue software and public interface is updated and improved as required. (See also under Be digital page 10).

We will have succeeded because an increased percentage of the Archive's holdings will be accessible via the catalogue and because the catalogue itself will be robust and user-friendly.

2. Provide direct public access to the collections

We will continue to provide free public access to all in the Reading Room in No. 45 Merrion Square. We will strive to ensure that barriers to access are kept as low as possible. The Reading Room will be permanently staffed by knowledgeable invigilators who will assist users in accessing material.

We will have succeeded because the Reading Room will be a well-used, universally-accessible, welcoming place, used by a broad and diverse readership, with appropriate opening hours, and with an atmosphere conducive to study and exploration.

FROM LEFT
Architecture Gallery
Reading room
Book launch, first floor
Reading room
Guided tour











3. Promote the collections through our exhibitions programme

The exhibitions programme – particularly that for the Architecture Gallery – will draw primarily on the contents of the Archive. Our holdings will be presented in accessible and meaningful exhibitions which address diverse audiences and promote and encourage more in-depth engagement with the primary collections. We will bring these exhibitions to venues outside Dublin.

We will have succeeded when our exhibitions draw the audiences they deserve

4. Open our building

The Archive is fortunate to occupy one of the finest Georgian houses in Dublin. We will encourage the widest public access to No. 45, both generally as a heritage property, and by making the first floor suite of rooms available for public and private events.

We will have succeeded when No. 45 is a widely recognised landmark on the cultural landscape of Dublin.

5. Maintain and extend the Dictionary of Irish Architects

The Dictionary of Irish Architects remains a game-changer for Irish architectural history. The Archive will ensure that this resource continues to be accessible and will expand the range backwards from 1720 to 1600 and forwards from 1940.

We will have succeeded when the range of information in the Dictionary of Irish Architects begins at 1600 and runs beyond 1940 into the latter part of the twentieth century.



Be relevant

The Archive should be relevant. In an ever-evolving, diverse society, its engagement activities should reflect contemporary concerns while its collections should constitute a vital, current, public resource for culture, education and policy development.

1. Collection development

Within the broad remit of its primary focus on architecture and the built environment, the Archive's collecting activities should reflect contemporary societal, sectoral and educational concerns, as well as researcher needs and priorities. The Collection Development Committee should be cognisant of these issues and the Archive should seek out and acquire collections which address existing or emerging absences.

We will have succeeded when contemporary societal concerns and diversities are fully and properly reflected in the holdings of the Archive.

2. Recording

The Archive's active photographic survey programme will ensure that the most relevant architecture, contemporary or historical, and the built environment generally are properly recorded.

We will have succeeded because the photographic survey programme will be rich, deep and comprehensive.

FROM LEFT

Alternative Histories installation, first floor Hawkins House, Dublin, IAA Survey Photograph, 2020 Fitzwilton House, Dublin, IAA Survey Photograph, 2019



3. Exhibitions

The Archive's exhibitions programme for the Architecture Gallery, while drawing on the strength and depth of the collections, will be curatorially curious and outward looking. The programme for the first floor rooms, which primarily house incoming and loan exhibitions, will be open and inclusive.

We will have succeeded because the exhibitions in the Archive will resonate with a wide public audience, will contribute to public discourse, and will encourage conversation.

4. Sectoral relevance

The Archive, while retaining its policy of being a non-contentious body which does not involve itself in planning or conservation issues, will nurture recognition across construction industry, including planning, engineering, and development, and cultural sectors by providing services and functions that are appropriate, appreciated and valued by those sectors.

We will have succeeded when the Archive is integrated into sectoral policy making and valued for its role as a repository and unbiased information resource.

The architectural archives of the future are being created now by Irish architects using highly complex and sophisticated digital design tools. In parallel, digital access is already central to popular engagement with culture and heritage. It is driving new forms of participation, and is enabling new creative uses of digitised cultural assets. In response, the Archive will engage across a broad front, from digitising its collections to embedding linked data, to meet the challenges of this digital environment.





Appendices



Be digital

1. Digitise our collections

The Archive will engage in an active digitisation programme informed by preservation and access issues, to create digital surrogates of selected elements of the collections.

We will have succeeded when digital surrogates exist for vulnerable and appropriate portions of the collections.

2. Acquire born-digital material

The Archive will acquire, accession and catalogue born-digital design records.

We will have succeeded when we have developed a successful workflow and robust methodology to allow the acquisition and manipulation of the digital output of CAD and BIM systems.

3. Implement a digital preservation strategy

The Archive will devise and implement a digital preservation strategy which will guarantee the long-term preservation of its own digitised assets and donated digital collections.

We will have succeeded when we are able to store, preserve and access over time large quantities of digital material, be it the output of internal digitisation programmes or acquired born-digital assets.

FROM LEFT
Large format scanner
Redundant digital technology





1. Our Collections

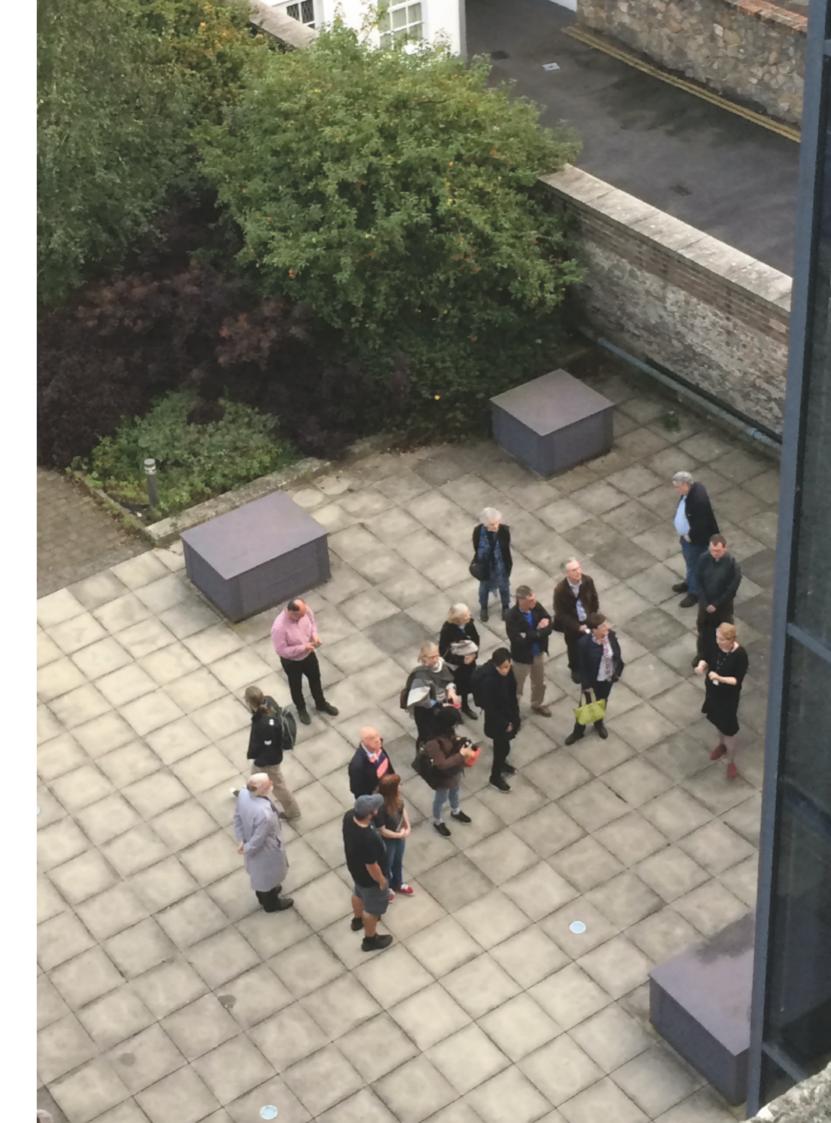
The collections housed by the Archive comprise the largest body of historic architectural records in Ireland and as such constitute a vital national cultural resource. They include the most significant body of historic Irish architectural drawings in the world, with in excess of 2.5 million drawings and related documents ranging in date from the late seventeenth to the early twenty-first centuries. Also housed in the Archive are over 500,000 photographs, making it one of the largest collections of photographs in Ireland, and an extensive reference library, with more than 30,000 items of printed matter. The holdings of the Irish Architectural Archive contain material - primary or secondary - on every notable Irish architect, on every important Irish building period or style, and on most significant buildings in the thirty-two counties of Ireland.

2. Our Users

Thousands of research visits are made to the Archive annually by people searching for information on Irish buildings and architects for educational, environmental, and conservation purposes. Readers include students, teachers, historians, local authority, heritage and tourism officials, planners, architects, builders, film makers and members of the public engaged in private research.

The Archive's Reading Room is open to the public from 10am to 5pm, Tuesdays to Fridays, with access provided on Mondays by appointment. All legitimate researchers are welcome. Access is free and members of the Archive staff are always on hand to assist readers and provide direction in identifying relevant material.

The Archive engages directly with the public via its outreach activities, social media, and exhibitions. The Archive's Architecture Gallery is the only exhibition space in Ireland purpose-designed and permanently dedicated to the display of architecture. The Archive maintains an ambitious and versatile exhibitions programme, primarily based on material in its holdings. Over sixty exhibitions have been presented since January 2005. Most exhibitions are accompanied by free public lunch-time lecture series, and several have travelled to venues in Ireland (Belfast, Boyle, Cork, Killarney, Laois, Letterkenny, Limerick) and further afield (including Copenhagen, Tromso and Sydney). Over 100,000 visits were made to No. 45 Merrion Square in the past ten years.



RIGHT

Culture night tour, 2019

www.iarc.ie wwwdia.ie