

Public Information Note:

Strategic review of IReL (Irish Research eLibrary)

What is IReL?

The Irish Research eLibrary (IReL) is a shared service that delivers access to over 30,000 electronic journals, databases and ebooks to staff and students in participating institutions. IReL resources range from multidisciplinary flagship journals, to society publications, to collections from university presses, to publications via publishers and aggregators.

Facts about IReL...

- Membership of IReL currently comprises Ireland's seven universities, which have full access to all IReL resources, and the Royal College of Surgeons in Ireland (RCSI), which has access to STEM resources only. The Institutes of Technology have access to two journal collections via IReL. The Dublin Institute of Technology (DIT) will participate fully in IReL deals from mid-2018 onwards.
- IReL is funded through a combination of top-sliced funding from the Department of Education and Skills, via the Higher Education Authority (HEA), a grant from the Department of Business, Enterprise, and Innovation, and IReL member contributions. The bulk of the top-sliced funding is in the form of a voluntary top-slice from the overall HEA core grant allocation to the University sector. Total current expenditure via IReL on access to journals and databases is approximately €10 million per year.
- IReL is managed by the Irish University Libraries Collaboration Centre (IULCC). The Governance Committee of the IULCC is chaired by Professor Philip Nolan, President of Maynooth University (the current host institution), and the Maynooth University Librarian serves as Director of the IULCC. The IReL Steering Group and Monitoring Group consist of library staff from the seven universities, the IReL office, DIT and RCSI.

The Governance Committee and Director of IULCC are committed to ensuring that IReL offers a high-quality service and value for money. They have received expressions of interest from various research performing organisations to join the IReL consortium. They are also mindful of: European Commission goals and policies in relation to Open Access by 2020, which have been shaping international negotiations with publishers; and actions committed to in Innovation 2020 *vis-à-vis* Open Access at a national level. This changing context highlights the importance of setting a clear future strategy for IReL.

What is the purpose of the Strategic review?

On the invitation of the Governance Committee of the IULCC, the HEA has initiated an independent strategic review of IReL, with support for the review from across government. The review is being overseen by a Steering Group consisting of national stakeholders and international experts (membership below).

This review will clarify the opportunities and challenges that face IReL, set out best practice in the provision of national research e-library services, and propose strategic options for the future. The ambition is that IReL will grow to become a national research e-library, and this strategic review will be an important step in translating this ambition into a realisable and sustainable strategy.

Ireland is not alone in reviewing its national strategy in relation to journal subscriptions. New approaches are being progressed by the Netherlands, Germany and Sweden, among others, and developments in this area are receiving media interest¹.

What is the timeframe of this review?

Stakeholder consultation will take place during July – September 2018. This will consist of face-to-face meetings with key stakeholders, an online institutional survey submission, a wider survey for researchers/academics, and a stakeholder workshop to discuss findings in September 2018. A final report is envisaged for October 2018.

Steering Group Members:

- Dr Gemma Irvine (Chair), HEA
- Mr Tim Cullinane, Department of Education and Skills (DES)
- Mr Marcus Breathnach, Department of Business, Enterprise and Innovation (DBEI)
- Irish Universities Association (IUA):
 - Mr Cathal McCauley, University Librarian, Maynooth University
 - Mr Liam Cleere, Senior Manager, Research Reporting & Analytics, University College Dublin
- Technological Higher Education Association (THEA):
 - Dr Joseph Ryan, CEO, THEA
 - Dr Philip Cohen, Head of Library Services, DIT
- International experts:
 - Mr Robert van der Vooren, Open Access Project Adviser, Association of Dutch Universities (VSNU)
 - Ms Janet Peters, Director of Libraries & University Librarian, Cardiff University

Where can I get further information?

Any queries about the review should be directed to IReLReview@hea.ie.



¹ Recent media coverage of international approaches to journal subscriptions may be of interest. For example, see samples of news relating to France ([Springer](#)), Germany ([Elsevier](#)), the Netherlands ([Oxford University Press](#), [Springer](#) and [Royal Society of Chemistry](#)), and Sweden ([Elsevier](#)).