UCD Irish Centre for Nursing & Midwifery History

Annual Report for the year ending 31 December 2009
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INTRODUCTION

The *UCD Irish Centre for Nursing & Midwifery History* was established in early 2009 with a grant from the Irish Research Council for the Humanities & Social Sciences (IRCHSS). The Centre is an academic centre of University College Dublin (UCD) and is based at the UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery & Health Systems. It is aligned with the Centre for the History of Medicine in Ireland and is part of the European Nursing History Group. The Centre is a locus for research and education in the history of nursing and midwifery in Ireland. A programme of research is being conducted at the Centre in three distinct project areas, namely a history of hospital sanitation, aspects of nursing disciplinary development and identity, and a history of the General Nursing Council for Ireland. Further projects are in planning.

The aims and objectives of the Centre are to:

(i) facilitate and promote historical research and scholarship in nursing, midwifery and healthcare
(ii) develop and maintain a resource for historical research through the collection and preservation of historical materials
(iii) develop the capacity for and improve the quality of historical research and scholarship in nursing, midwifery and related health care
(iv) develop and disseminate new knowledge of nursing, midwifery and healthcare history through publications, curriculum innovations, and through inter-disciplinary collaboration.

The Centre provides opportunities for graduate research training to study aspects of nursing and midwifery history to master’s and doctoral level and welcomes inquiries from those interested in pursuing graduate research in association with the Centre. This Report describes the Centre’s development and principal activities in its first year of operation.

CONSTITUTION AND GOVERNANCE

Following the signing of the research contract with the Irish Research Council for the Humanities & Social Sciences (IRCHSS) in late 2008, an application was made to the UCD Academic Council seeking approval for the establishment of the Irish Centre for Nursing & Midwifery History as an academic centre of University College Dublin (UCD). The proposal to
establish the Centre was approved by UCD Academic Council in February 2009 and Gerard Fealy was appointed Director of the Centre by UCD Vice President Dr Philip Nolan. With the granting of approval as an academic centre, the Centre became the UCD Irish Centre for Nursing & Midwifery History.

Alignment

In recommending the establishment of the Centre, the Academic Council Committee for Academic Centres indicated that the Centre should align with the existing Centre for the History of Medicine in Ireland. To that end, the terms of alignment with the latter Centre were agreed with Professor Mary Daly, Principal of the College of Arts & Celtic Studies, and Dr Catherine Cox, UCD Director of the Centre for the History of Medicine in Ireland. Alignment provides for important synergies between historians of nursing and medicine in Ireland and presents opportunities for collaboration in the areas of teaching, research and public events.

Advisory Board and International Advisory Group

The terms for approval as an academic centre required the establishment of a formal governance structure for the Centre. Therefore an Advisory Board was formally constituted to ‘act in an advisory capacity to promote and advance the Centre’s aims and objectives’. The membership of the Advisory Board is partly prescribed in the UCD Policy on Approval on Academic Centres,¹ and requires representation of relevant internal and external stakeholders. The Advisory Board members are Professor Gerard Fealy (Centre Director), Dr Martin McNamara (Principal Associate Investigator), Dr Michelle Butler (Dean and Head of School), Professor Pearl Treacy (Professor of Nursing), Dr Judith Harford (UCD School of Education), Dr Catherine Cox (UCD Director of the Centre for the History of Medicine in Ireland), Dr Brian Caulfield (nominee of the UCD Head of Research & Innovation), Dr Anne-Marie Ryan (Chief Education Officer, An Bord Altranais), and Ms Mary Brosnan (Director of Nursing & Midwifery, National Maternity Hospital).

A three-member International Advisory Group (IAG) was appointed to advise on international dimensions of the Centre’s aims and activities. The members of the IAG are Dr Christine Hallett

(Reader in History and Director, UK Centre for the History of Nursing & Midwifery, University of Manchester), Professor Julie Fairman (Director, Barbara Bates Centre for the History of Nursing, University of Pennsylvania), and Professor Tom O’Donoghue (Professor of Education, University of Western Australia).

Ms Carol McCubbin, University of Kingston, UK, was a named research coinvestigator with the Centre and was appointed special advisor on oral history. Ms Ruth Geraghty is the Research Assistant at the Centre.

INFRASTRUCTURE

A key aim of the Centre is to develop and maintain a resource for historical research through the collection and preservation of historical archival materials. This will result in the development of a national nursing and midwifery history archive, containing documents, artefacts and memorabilia and it will also incorporate an oral history archive. The nursing and midwifery archive will become a national resource for researchers and scholars.

The IRCHSS grant funding schedule provides for the establishment of infrastructure equipment to support this key aim. The infrastructure will include a physical space to preserve documentary materials and other sources and a website. A room with environmental (temperature and sunlight) controls has been designated at the UCD School of Nursing, Midwifery & Health Systems to house the Centre. At the time of reporting, planning for the fitting out of the room was ongoing and this work is informed by insights gleaned from a visit undertaken by the Centre Director to the Centre for Nursing Historical Inquiry at the University of Virginia in February 2009.
Website

The Centre’s website was designed and developed over the summer and autumn period and was launched in early November. In order to ensure that the website will become a key element of the Centre’s infrastructure, much planning went into its design. A web development company was engaged to build the website and the work was conducted in close consultation with the web development branch of UCD IT Services and the UCD Library and Archives staff. The website provides information on all research activities associated with the Centre and it also functions as a portal to online collections and resources. As the Centre grows, the website will also grow to become a repository for online digital archival materials for researchers and scholars. The website manager is Research Assistant Ms Ruth Geraghty and the website can be accessed at: http://www.ucd.ie/icnmh/

Initial responses from Irish and international users of the website indicate that the website is both user friendly and informative.

Scoping project

A national scoping project commenced in the autumn among Irish hospitals, with the dual aims of ascertaining the extent and availability of catalogued and non-catalogued archival materials associated with the history of nursing and midwifery in Ireland and of securing historical materials and artifacts for the proposed archive associated with the Centre.

The first stage of this process is the compilation of an inventory of historical, documentary and other materials currently retained by hospitals in Ireland. This involves the conduct of a survey of the major Irish hospitals seeking information on materials and artifacts retained by them. To date the survey instrument, a short questionnaire, has been administered to all the major hospitals that formerly contained a nursing or midwifery training school and the Centre has begun to compile the inventory from returned questionnaires. The next stage of the scoping
project will involve follow-up contacts with respondent hospitals to ascertain the availability of
selected historical materials for consultation in the course of academic research.

The outcome of the inventory will contribute to the future development of a short online
directory of sources for the study of nursing and midwifery history in Ireland. It is anticipated
that a subsidiary outcome of the national scoping exercise will be to raise awareness among
hospital officials of the need to preserve historical materials.

**RESEARCH PROJECTS**

A programme of research, comprising three distinct projects, is being conducted in the two-year
funding period 2009–2010, as follows:

*Project 1 A history of hospital sanitation and sanitary reform in Ireland
Project 2 Health care disciplines in Ireland: Historical development, identity and subject areas
Project 3 Institutional history*

Additional projects are in planning, including a study into maternal and child health and a
digitising project.

**Project 1 A history of hospital sanitation and sanitary reform in Ireland**

Project 1 examines aspects of the history of hospital sanitation and infection control in Irish
hospitals.

*Study 1 ‘The health of institutional: Sanitary arrangements and sanitary reform in the Dublin
hospitals, 1858–1898’ (Lead researcher: Professor Gerard Fealy).*

Study 1 examines hospital sanitary reform in the nineteenth century and is based on the annual
reports of the Board of Superintendence of Dublin Hospitals and other documentary primary
sources, including the archives of a number of Dublin hospitals. Study 1 was completed in July
and a manuscript based on the study has been submitted to the *Journal of Clinical Nursing*. At
the time of reporting, the manuscript had been peer reviewed and revisions that were sought be
the manuscript assessors have been submitted.
Study 2: ‘Cultures of control: A historical analysis of the role of the infection control nurse in Ireland’ (Lead researcher: Dr Martin McNamara).

Study 2 examines the developments in hospital infection control in the twentieth century following the introduction of the infection control nurse role in the 1970s. The study involves biographical interviews with the first cadre of infection control nurses in Ireland. The interviews are based on the biographic-narrative-interpretive method (BNIM) proposed by Wengraf and Chamberlayne and in preparation for the data collection phase of this study, the Principal Associate Investigator, Dr Martin McNamara, undertook a five-day intensive training course in the BNIM method, facilitated by Wengraf and Chamberlayne. The biographical data generated from the interviews will be complemented by primary and secondary sources related to hospital infection control and related nursing roles. At the time of reporting, ethical approval to conduct the oral histories had been granted by the UCD Human Research Ethics Committee, key informants have been identified and recruited into the study, and the individual biographical interviews had commenced.

Project 1: Projected outputs

The projected outputs for Study 1 are a peer-reviewed journal article and a conference abstract. The target conference is the European Association of Urban Historians 10th International Conference on Urban History, Ghent, Belgium (1–4 September 2010). Study 2 will result in a peer-reviewed journal article and a conference abstract. The target conference is Perspectives in Nursing History Conference, at Windsor, UK (14–16 September 2010).

Project 2: Health care disciplines in Ireland: Historical development, identity, and subject areas

Project 2 examines the development of nursing in Ireland with particular reference to identity, inter-disciplinary relationships and nursing’s development as an academic subject area. It comprises two distinct studies.

Study 1: ‘Where is nursing in academic nursing?: The visibility of the discipline on the websites of higher education institutions’ (Lead researcher: Dr Martin McNamara).

This study examines disciplinary identity through a critical discourse analysis of the websites of higher education institutions providing nursing education in Ireland. Along with selected historical materials, these web-based materials constitute ‘texts’ that will be subjected to critical
discourse analysis informed by the work of Wetherell, Fairclough and Gee. At the time of reporting, the major element of data collection for Part 1 was completed and a framework for data analysis was devised and data analysis was ongoing. The focus of analysis is on revealing subject positions that construct nursing identity in particular ways.

**Study 2: ‘Nursing an academic discipline? Tutors' tales of transition’** (Lead researcher: Dr Martin McNamara).

This study is concerned with the emergence of academic identity and the place of nursing in the academy. It examines the experiences of neophyte nursing academics as they negotiated a new career trajectory and a new identity within the academy and critically examines their experiences with reference to Maton’s legitimation code theory, which builds on the sociological approaches of Bernstein and Bourdieu and the philosophical ideas of critical realism. It involves oral history interviews among a sample of nursing academics who were appointed to Irish higher education institutions as part of the wholesale transfer of nursing education and training from the hospital to the higher education sector in 2002. Ethical approval to conduct the oral history interviews has been granted by the UCD Human Research Ethics Committee and the interviews will commence in early 2010.

**Project 2: Projected outputs**

The projected outputs for Study 1 are a conference abstract and a peer-reviewed journal article. An abstract based on the study has been accepted at the *3rd International Nurse Education Conference*, Sydney, 11-14 April 2010. An abstract based on the findings of study 2 will be submitted to the *Perspectives in Nursing History* Conference, at Windsor, UK (14–16 September 2010). The target journal for both Study 1 and Study 2 is the *International Journal of Nursing Studies*.

**Project 3: Institutional history**

**Study 1: The General Nursing Council for Ireland: The first thirty years of professional self-regulation** (Lead researcher: Professor Gerard Fealy)

This study will provide a history of the General Nursing Council for Ireland from its inception in 1920 until 1950, when it was replaced by a new regulatory authority, An Bord Altranais. It examines the early development of professional self-regulation of nursing in Ireland by describing the role and functions of the Council, the work and ideas of the Council's key
members and the challenges faced by the new profession in establishing and consolidating professional self-regulation. The study is set against the background of the development of the fledgling new Irish Free State and its efforts to develop a modern health service for its people. The archives of the Council are preserved at the UCD Archives and at the time of reporting a bibliography of primary sources was prepared and access to the archives successfully negotiated. The research and preparation of the monograph for Project 3 will be take place throughout the second year of the grant period.

Project 3: Projected output
Study 1 will result in the preparation of a single monograph of c. 40–50,000 words.

RELATED ACTIVITIES

Recruitment of postgraduate students

At the time of reporting, one graduate research student had been recruited and commenced the PhD programme in September. However the student was in receipt of a Cochrane Fellowship and was obliged to withdraw from the history strand. An advertisement appeared in the Autumn Newsletter of the National Council for the Professional Development of Nursing & Midwifery, inviting applications for graduate studentships at the Centre. The Centre’s website also contains details of graduate research traineeships available at the Centre.

Digitising project

During 2009, the research team at the Centre engaged in discussions with the Irish Nurses Organisation (INO) with the aim of initiating a history of the INO under the auspices of the Irish Centre for Nursing & Midwifery History. To that end a grant application was made in early November to the Irish Research Council for the Humanities & Social Sciences (IRCHSS) under its Strand 5 Targeted Co-fund Initiative. The application proposed the conduct of an authoritative history of the Irish Nurses’ Organisation in conjunction with the full digitising and online cataloguing of the Irish Nurses’ Journal and the Irish Nurses’ Union Gazette, which are retained by the INO. The proposal represents two distinct projects and their concurrent conduct is aimed at enabling the building of a knowledge transfer relationship between the Irish Nurses’ Organisation and UCD by applying expertise in an initiative that is meaningful to the
development of a collaborative relationship and a sustainable knowledge transfer. The Principal Applicant was Professor Gerard Fealy and the associate investigators were Dr Martin McNamara, UCD Irish Centre for Nursing & Midwifery History; Marie Burke, Irish Virtual Research Library and Archives (IVRLA) and Susan McGann, Archives Manager, Royal College of Nursing Archives, Edinburgh. If successful, the two major outputs of the project will be a single monograph presenting a history of the INO and the establishment of the first online digital archive of an early nursing journal in Ireland. It is anticipated that the history element will also lead to the development of additional journal articles and conference abstracts on focused aspects of the history of the Irish Nurses’ Organisation. Additional outputs will emerge from the digitising project, including a conference abstract in the field of library and information studies.

RELATED SCHOLARSHIP

History of Ireland’s first nurse training school

To mark the 150th anniversary of the School’s founding, the Adelaide Hospital Society commissioned Gerard Fealy to write a commemorative history of the School. The work on the book commenced in March 2008 and involved research in the Adelaide Hospital archives, which are presently preserved at the Library of Trinity College Dublin. The book was completed and launched in May 2009. With a Foreword by the noted historian and academic Dr Fergus O’Ferrall, the book provides a detailed social history of the Adelaide Hospital and its nursing school and is the first comprehensive history of an Irish hospital nursing school. The book relates important milestones in the history of the Adelaide, including the role that it played in the early development of modern nursing in Ireland and the contribution of Adelaide nurses to the two world wars, and the book also contains short biographical studies of many of the hospital’s former matrons. (Gerard M Fealy (2009) The Adelaide Hospital School of Nursing, 1859–2009: A Commemorative History, Columba Press: Dublin: ISBN: 9781856076555 (hard back)).
The author was featured as a guest speaker on the radio programme *Talking History* (Newstalk 106FM), in July 2009.

**Guest editor of special themed issue of JCN**

In October the *Journal of Clinical Nursing* (JCN) published a special issue on the theme of historical scholarship. Dr Christine Hallett (Reader in History and Director, UK Centre for the History of Nursing & Midwifery) and Professor Gerard Fealy (Director, UCD Irish Centre for Nursing & Midwifery History) compiled and edited the special issue, which contains eleven articles commissioned from some of the leading international scholars in the field. In their editorial, Hallett and Fealy commented on power brokerage in the history of nursing and suggested that nursing’s power brokers could have a profound influence on both clinical practice and disciplinary development. The *JCN* is one of the highest ranked journals in its class.

**Conference: ‘International Perspectives on Nursing History’, London 2010**

Gerard Fealy, Centre Director, is a member of the Conference Planning Committee and is a member of the Scientific Committee for the London 2010 conference entitled *International Perspectives on Nursing History*. This landmark international history conference is being jointly organised by the European Nursing History Group (of which the Centre is a member) and the American Association for the History of Nursing. The conference takes place from 14–16 September 2010. The venue is the Royal Holloway University. The conference scientific programme will take place over three days, from 14–16 September, 2010 and will comprise plenary sessions, concurrent sessions on pre-specified themes, and poster presentations. Guest speakers include Dr Afaf Meleis, Margaret Bond Simon Dean of Nursing at the University of
Pennsylvania School of Nursing and Mark Bostridge, author of *Florence Nightingale: The Woman and her Legend*. The scientific programme will be built around five broad conference themes as follows: ‘Profession, identity and ideology’; Systems of care and ways of working’; Biography and place; Military history, power and conflict; Technology and the patient.

Preconference workshops on aspects of historical method will be held on 13 September. A call for abstracts and details of registration are available at the conference website, at: [http://www.nursesvoices.org.uk/conference/](http://www.nursesvoices.org.uk/conference/)

**PUBLICATIONS 2009–2010**

**Books & book chapters**


**Refereed articles**


**Editorials & reviews**


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2 Publications listed are related directly or indirectly to the work of the Centre.
Conference abstracts


CONCLUSION

The establishment of the first academic centre for the study of nursing and midwifery history in Ireland is a major milestone in the development of historical scholarship for health disciplines in Ireland. In its first year, the necessary governance structures for the Centre have been set in place and the project team has been judiciously planning and building the Centre’s infrastructure and has completed some major elements of the Centre’s programme of research. The project team has also begun a scoping exercise aimed at securing historical materials and artefacts and three additional projects are in planning, including a project to digitise the *Irish Nurses’ Journal*.

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