

## **PRESS RELEASE**

February 11, 2004

# **Emory University and Boston College Complete Delmas Foundation Project to Make Irish Literary Archives Accessible**

Two of the most important repositories of Irish literary archives in the United States have completed a two-year grant from The Gladys Kriebel Delmas Foundation to digitize collection descriptions and develop a searching interface that allows scholars both on- and off-site to explore the collections and quickly find materials relevant to their research.

The Irish Literary Collections Portal (<http://irishliterature.library.emory.edu>) provides access to a fully searchable array of finding aids for the Irish literary manuscript collections held by Emory University's Robert W. Woodruff Library Special Collections and Boston College's John J. Burns Library of Rare Books and Special Collections. By electronically bringing together two of North America's finest collections of Irish literary manuscripts, this site enhances public access to these important and complementary collections.

The Irish Literary Collections Portal presents a wide range of materials from the Irish literary renaissance to the present. Both Emory and Boston College maintain complementary W.B. Yeats, Abbey Theatre, Seamus Heaney, and Derek Mahon collections. Because the Irish literary revival writers and the contemporary Irish poets constitute rather closely knit communities, the Emory and Boston College archives are highly cross-referential.

Emory's Irish literary collections focus on two main areas: the correspondence, manuscripts and related papers of W.B. Yeats and his circle, as well as the literary archives of many of Ireland's finest contemporary poets. The Yeats collection contains an extensive correspondence with Lady Gregory, including manuscript drafts of various poems and plays. Supporting the Yeats materials are T. Sturge Moore and Lennox Robinson collections, the Gregory family papers, and Lady Gregory's personal literary papers, which include diaries, manuscripts, and many books from her own library. These holdings are further complemented by the Maude Gonne collection and the Gonne-Yeats letters, along with an important Abbey Theatre and Cuala Press collection. Building on the Irish literary renaissance materials, Emory houses the literary papers of a large number of contemporary Irish poets including Ciaran Carson, Peter Fallon, Thomas Kinsella, Michael Longley, Derek Mahon, Medbh McGuckian, Paul Muldoon, Desmond O'Grady, Frank Ormsby, Tom Paulin, and James Simmons. The Ormsby papers also contain many materials relating to his editorship of *The Honest Ulsterman*. Connected to the Fallon collection are the papers of the Gallery Press, which has published most of the major contemporary Irish poets. The finding aid for the recently-acquired papers of Seamus Heaney will soon be added to the portal.

The Burns Library of Boston College has strong holdings of books, pamphlets, manuscripts, newspapers, periodicals, and landholding records documenting Irish history, culture, and society from the late 1500's to the present. Irish literary collections included in this project concentrate on the major Irish literary renaissance figures and the contemporary poets. The Burns Library has the largest collection of the manuscripts, notebooks, and letters of William Butler Yeats outside Ireland,

including manuscripts of *Memories* and Yeats's autobiography. The fine collections of Yeats family materials include manuscripts, correspondence, and drawings by John B. Yeats, Jack B. Yeats, and from Elizabeth Corbett Yeats. Boston College also has significant Lady Gregory, George Moore, George Russell, Oliver St. John Gogarty, Sean O'Casey, and Abbey Theatre collections. The Library's collections of Samuel Beckett letters and manuscripts have materials in four subcollections: Robert Pinget, Samuel Israel, Alan Schneider, and Barney Rosset. In addition, Boston College has important collections of Flann O'Brien, as well as personal papers of Ethel Mannin, Sean O'Faolain, and F.L. Green. Recent acquisitions include books and manuscripts of George Bernard Shaw, and the papers of contemporary Irish poets Gerald Dawe, John F. Deane, and Nuala Ni Dhomhnaill. Much of Ni Dhomhnaill's material is in Irish.

Extensive book holdings bolster all the manuscript collections. The Burns Library's collection of more than 20,000 books supports research on all the major historical and literary movements and figures of Ireland. Its collections include major holdings of the Dun Emer, Cuala, Three Candles, and Dolmen Presses, and other Irish fine print publishers.

This project uses Encoded Archival Description document-type definition (EAD-dtd) to electronically render the finding aids in such a way that their information may be collected in a database that is then fully searchable. This technology not only gives researchers on-line access to full-text collection descriptions but it allows users of the Irish Literary Collections Portal to do both simple and complex searches of individual or groups of finding aids. The Portal offers scholars a unique research tool to facilitate the use of these valuable materials.

To further enhance the study of Irish literature and culture, the project envisions the eventual incorporation of finding and research aids from other repositories of Irish literary materials.

The Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation supports excellence in scholarship and the performing arts, particularly projects that promote wide access to research library collections and institutions that transmit our cultural heritage.

###