



Irish Language Scheme under Section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003

*To cover the period:
15 June 2008 – 14 June 2011.*

1. Introduction and Background

This scheme was prepared under section 11 of the Official Languages Act 2003 (“the Act”) by the Chester Beatty Library.

Section 11 provides for the preparation by public bodies of a statutory scheme detailing the services they will provide

- through the medium of Irish,
- through the medium of English, and
- through the medium of Irish and English;

and the measures to be adopted to ensure that any service not provided by the body through the medium of the Irish language will be so provided within an agreed timeframe.

2. Preparation for the Language Scheme

The Library circulated a notice under Section 13 on 11 October 2006 to all members of the Library’s database, which includes visitors, patrons, and various other stakeholders. 3 submissions were received.

3. Commencement date of Scheme

This scheme has been confirmed by the Minister for Community, Rural & Gaeltacht Affairs. The scheme is commenced with effect from 15 June 2008 and shall remain in force for a period of 3 years from this date or until a new scheme has been confirmed by the Minister pursuant to *section 15* of the Act, whichever is the earlier.

4. Overview of the Chester Beatty Library

Situated in the heart of the city centre of Dublin, the Chester Beatty Library is an art museum and library which houses the great collection of manuscripts, miniature paintings, prints, drawings, rare books and some decorative arts assembled by Sir Alfred Chester Beatty (1875-1968). The Library's exhibitions open a window on the artistic treasures of the great cultures and religions of the world. Its rich collection from countries across Asia, the Middle East, North Africa and Europe offers visitors a visual feast. The Library was awarded the title European Museum of the Year in 2002, the first and only time an Irish museum has been granted this honour.

The Library has been well known to scholars for more than three quarters of a century as a repository of some of the most important Early Christian, Islamic and East Asian manuscripts of many kinds. It is acknowledged as a vital resource for the understanding of the textual history of sacred scripture from many of the world's great religions.

Upon Beatty's death in 1968, the collection was bequeathed to a trust for the benefit of the public. It is generously supported by the Government of Ireland and is one of Ireland's National Cultural Institutions. His priceless collection lives on as a celebration of the spirit and generosity of Chester Beatty.

The Chester Beatty collections consist of more than 6,000 manuscripts on paper, vellum and other media, together with about 4,000 fine and early printed books, and some hundreds of items of decorative arts interest. Amongst the most important treasures of the Library are the biblical and Manichaean papyri, the great collections of Islamic manuscripts (including over 300 complete or fragmentary copies of the Holy Qur'an), and many works of philosophy, liturgy and spiritual belief from China, Japan, Southeast Asia and non-Islamic India. The Christian collections include illuminated manuscripts from Egypt, The Levant, Byzantium, from Western Europe, Ethiopia, Russia and Serbia, and an interesting archive of documents relating to the Christian Missions to East Asia in the seventeenth and early eighteenth centuries. The Islamic collections include over 2,700 manuscripts of scholarship, Islamic law, prayer and commentary on the life of the Prophet, medicine, mathematics, science and books of pilgrimage. In addition to those, which are illuminated with abstract ornament, there are the very finely illustrated codices from Persia, Turkey and the Mughal Court of India. Clearly the Library holds within its collections important material bearing on the history of Christianity and of Christian thought, of Islam and Islamic learning and spirituality, and of East Asian traditions including Daoism, Confucianism, Zen Buddhism, Buddhism, Jainism, Sikhism and many more. The collection is also rich in works of art which do not have a specifically religious character but represent a very important resource for the history of writing and of the book throughout the Old World.

In addition to the items on display from its permanent collection, the Library mounts special temporary exhibitions. It also runs an event-filled public programme which includes conferences, lectures, workshops and demonstrations.

5. Visitors

The Library welcomes visitors and researchers from all over the world; over 250,000 persons visited in 2007.

6. Functional Areas of the Library

The Library functions primarily as an art museum with two floors of exhibition galleries. Visitors enter the Library via the garden at Dublin Castle. The glass-roofed entrance hall is a fine modern space that links the 18th-century building with the new, purpose-built exhibition galleries. On the ground floor, visitors can enjoy an audio-visual presentation on the life of Sir Alfred Chester Beatty and his great art collection. There are also a lecture theatre, restaurant and shop on this level.

The exhibition galleries are situated on the first and second floors. The *Artistic Traditions* Gallery has recently been refurbished to encompass a new permanent exhibition *Arts of the Book* which will open to the public in May 2008. Here, visitors will view books from the ancient world including the world famous Chester Beatty Love Poems (c.1160 BC), Egyptian Books of the Dead and beautifully illuminated medieval European manuscripts and fine European printed books, as well as Old Master prints. The exhibition will explore the richness of the Islamic manuscript tradition - illustrations and illuminations, calligraphy, and exquisite bindings from across the Middle East and India will be on display. Highlights from East Asia include one of the finest collections of Chinese jade books in the world, Japanese picture-scrolls depicting fables and legends, and deluxe woodblock prints. Audio-visual programmes will complement the exhibition, helping the visitor to learn more about the arts of the book throughout the world.

The *Sacred Traditions* Gallery is dedicated to the great religions of the world including Judaism, Christianity, Islam, Buddhism and Hinduism. Audio-visual programmes explore the Muslim pilgrimage to Mecca, the lives of Christ and the Buddha, and rites of passage – birth, marriage and death – in different belief systems. Outstanding exhibits in these galleries range from great illuminated copies of the Qur'an dating from the 9th to the 19th century AD; ancient papyri, including the famous Egyptian love poems of around 1100 BC; and some of the very earliest Gospel and other New Testament texts, dating to c.200 AD. The Chester Beatty collection of New Testament texts is a fundamental source for early Christianity and the Qur'an manuscripts represent the finest expressions of Islam in calligraphy and ornamental detail. Also on display are fine scrolls and other religious artworks from China, Japan, Tibet, and South and Southeast Asia.

The Library also contains a reading room with a large and growing collection of reference books. Visitors (who must first apply for a reader's ticket) can work in this beautiful room on the first floor of the original Clock Tower building, which incorporates the fine lacquered ceiling in Chinese style that Chester Beatty had originally created for his London home. The mahogany bookcases were made in 1950 by Hicks of Dublin.

7. Assessment of extent to which services are already available through Irish

Leaflets:

- The main information leaflet for the Library is available to the public in Irish in a separate cover. From time to time, the Library produces leaflets for temporary exhibitions (2-3 months duration) but it will not be possible to translate these into Irish, due to time and commercial considerations.

Language Skills:

- Staff has attended a variety of Irish Language Skills courses. A further 5 members of staff attended Irish language courses in 2007 and courses will continue to be offered to staff at all levels.

Tour Guide:

- One Volunteer Tour Guide is available to give tours of the Library in Irish on request and has provided a tour in Irish each St Patrick's Weekend for the last number of years.

Information Panels:

- All introductory panels in each section of the Permanent Exhibition Galleries are in both Irish and English. New bi-lingual panels have been added to our refurbished gallery and permanent exhibition *Arts of the Book* re-opening to the public in May 2008.

Invitations:

- All invitations to exhibition openings include an Irish Language translation.

Email:

- The standard disclaimer on all emails is available bilingually.

8. Over the period of this Scheme, the Library is committed to the following:

Staff:

Members of Attendant Staff (who operate as receptionist / switchboard operators on a rostered basis – 12 members) will continue to be offered and encouraged to attend Irish language classes in order to ensure that by the end of the scheme, standard Quality Customer Service (QCS) practice applies in the area of receptionists/switchboard operators which is that:

- Reception/switchboard staff will be able to give the name of the Library in Irish
- They will be familiar with the basic greetings in Irish.
- A knowledge of the Irish language will be listed as an 'advantage' in future recruitment of Attendant and/or other staff.
- Suitable arrangements are in place so that members of the public can be put in contact with officers responsible for delivering services in Irish, where available.

E-Guide:

- The Library's multi-media tour will be made available in Irish.

Publications:

- The Library will publish its main Guide to the Collections in Irish.

Press Releases:

- All press releases will be provided in Irish and sent to relevant Irish Language media.

Exhibitions:

- All alterations to our Permanent Exhibition Galleries will continue to include Irish Language graphic panels at ratio of 50:50.

Website:

- The following sections of the Library's website covering the general information for potential visitors and researchers will be available bilingually by 30 June 2009: *About Us, Plan a Visit, Support the Library*, and particular sections of *Education, Exhibitions, Shop & Collections*.
- We currently have one online form for the Library shop – this will be made available in Irish and any future online forms will enable visitors to submit their details in Irish if they so wish. The existing website does not contain interactive services. If any interactive services which allow the general public to make enquiries online are provided during the course of the scheme, they will be made available in a bilingual format.

Computer Systems:

- All Library computer systems are currently compatible with the Irish language and any new systems being installed will also be compatible. The Library will be introducing a new Collections Management System which will be compatible with the Irish Language.

Training:

- The Library will continue to up skill Attendant/Receptionist and other staff by continuing to offer a variety of Irish Language courses.

9. Monitoring and Revision

The Director and Operations Manager of the Library will keep the effective operation of the scheme under review.

The day-to-day monitoring function will be carried out primarily by the Operations Manager who will report on a regular basis to the Director and Board of Trustees.

10. Publicising of an Agreed Scheme

The contents of this scheme along with the commitments and provisions of the scheme will be publicised to the general public by means of:-

- Circulation to appropriate agencies and public bodies;
- Website.

In addition, once the Library is in a position to deliver services as outlined, this will also be publicised in the manner outlined above.

A copy of this scheme has also been forwarded to Oifig Choimisinéir na dTeangacha Oifigiúla.