

CORK LGBT ARCHIVE



# Member Case Study

Digitally preserving a critically  
endangered community archive

dri<sup>∞</sup>

# Digital Repository of Ireland

The Digital Repository of Ireland (DRI) is a Trusted Digital Repository (Core Trust Seal awarded in 2018 and Data Seal of Approval in 2015) that provides long term digital preservation and access to digital collections.

As a national e-infrastructure for humanities and social sciences research data across the education, culture, and public service sectors, DRI content is available for use by the public, students, and scholars.

The Repository links together and preserves historical and contemporary materials held by Irish institutions, providing a central internet access point and interactive multimedia tools.

As a community hub, the DRI facilitates and helps build a network of shared interest to forward the goals of preserving, stewarding, and providing access to Ireland's social and cultural digital heritage.

## Long term digital preservation

Preservation is more than storage, and the DRI offers a range of expertise and technologies to ensure that national and international standards of best practice are met.

Operating under a membership model, the DRI provides long term digital preservation for research data generated by higher education institutions and research centres following FAIR principles, which are an essential part of practicing Open Science.

# Digital preservation of critically endangered community archives

Since 2019, the Digital Preservation Coalition (DPC) has been highlighting the risks posed to intangible digital content generated and held by community archives.

The DPC consider these digital community archive materials as 'critically endangered'<sup>1</sup> and they have highlighted some of the challenges faced by community archives to preserve this content.

Further, the DPC have outlined how many community archives do not have access to agencies who can provide the essential assistance they require when attempting to preserve their materials. This is particularly evident regarding the preservation needs of marginalised or minority collections.

## Case Study

In this case study, Orla Egan from Cork LGBT Archive reflects on some of the issues facing critically endangered community archives.

Orla highlights how working with the Digital Repository of Ireland (DRI) has aided the Cork LGBT Archive's digital preservation journey.

Working together, the Cork LGBT Archive and the DRI have sought to protect and preserve LGBT community-generated content and the digital archives of Cork's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities.

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1. "The Global 'Bit List' of Endangered Digital Species" *Digital Preservation Coalition* (Accessed August 2023) [Bit List - Digital Preservation Coalition \(dpconline.org\)](#)

# Profile: Cork LGBT Archive

Cork LGBT Archive is a community archive that gathers, preserves, and shares information about the history of Cork's lesbian, gay, bisexual, and transgender communities. The archive has a vibrant group of volunteers - mostly young LGBTQ+ people - who assist with the vital work of protecting and preserving materials.

The Cork LGBT Archive has a physical collection, with the Arthur Leahy collection at its core, housed in the Cork Public Museum in Fitzgerald's Park in Cork city. The full Cork LGBT digital archive can be viewed online at: [www.corklgbtarchive.com](http://www.corklgbtarchive.com).

Cork LGBT Archive actively engages in ensuring that LGBT+ histories are accessible to explore - and they continue to engage with people today. The archive routinely publishes work about their collections, take part in exhibitions, documentaries, talks, theatre, and walking tours.

Select publications and exhibitions include:

- Queer Republic of Cork book,
- Diary Of an Activist books,
- Queer Republic of Cork and Cork Queeros exhibitions,
- 'I'm Here, I'm Home, I'm Happy' documentary,
- 'Leaside Lezzies' theatrical performance.

## Author Profile

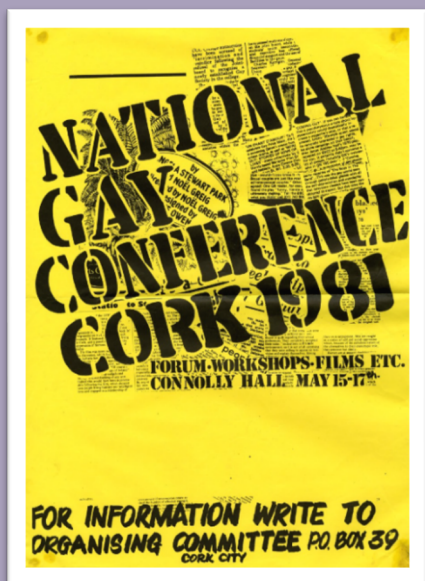
Orla Egan is the Founder of the Cork LGBT Archive and has worked with the archive, primarily on a voluntary basis, for 10 years. She is an activist, author, film director and parent.



# Spotlight on Cork LGBT Archive: National Gay Conference Collection

One of the most vibrant collections belonging to Cork LGBT Archive is their National Gay Conference collection which documents a range of LGBT conference events in Ireland – including the first ever Irish National Gay Conference, held in Cork in May 1981.

In 1981, the Cork Gay Collective, Cork IGRM, the UCC GaySoc, as well as several other individuals came together to organise a conference with the aim of bringing together lesbian and gay activists and organisations from throughout Ireland. The conference also had several British and American LGBT organisations in attendance.



The full collection materials document the period of 1981-1983 and offer an insight into National Gay Conferences held in 1982 at Trinity College Dublin, as well as the 1983 Conference - then titled, the All-Ireland Lesbian and Gay Conference – held at the Crescent Centre in Belfast, Northern Ireland.

Archived materials include posters, packs, and photographs which capture these important moments in Irish LGBT history.

*Organising Committee 1981 National Gay Conference.  
1981 National Gay Conference Cork Poster, Digital  
Repository of Ireland [Distributor], Cork LGBT Archive  
<https://doi.org/10.7486/DRI.bk12nw66n>*

The breadth of the Cork LGBT Archive National Gay Conference collection means researchers, historians, and interested parties in the twenty-first century will have the opportunity to review the progress of the LGBT movement to date in Ireland – and to develop recommendations for future actions

**TRINITY COLLEGE DUBLIN JUNE 18 - 20**

# NATIONAL GAY CONFERENCE

The first national gay conference has been held in the grand hall of Trinity College Dublin, which has been organised by independent lesbians and gay men, hopes to continue, rather than repeat, the tradition of the annual conference. In the past year there have been many events which directly affect us. These include the formation of new groups, the passing of the new continuing attempts to reform the present anti-gay laws, the opening of the Dublin Women's Centre, Liz Noonan's election campaigns, the formation of the National Gay Committee, and Gays Against Imperialism. These gains were more than balanced by the continued discrimination against lesbian teachers, homophobic media coverage of the murder of the murder of Charles Self and subsequent Garda harassment of gay men and finally the lack of a united approach from the gay movement.

These, and many other issues, will be discussed at the conference. It will be structured around four main workshops, and suggestions are invited for the open working session.

Advance registration and details of accommodation requirements would be appreciated as early as possible.

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**FRI.18**  
7-11pm. Reception and films.  
Building No. 6, Trinity College.

**SAT.19**  
10am. Opening coffee session.  
11am-1pm. Coming Out/Personal  
2-4pm. Gays in a patriarchal society.  
4.30-6.30pm. Open workshops.  
Followed by Film/Video/Bookerall.  
8pm. Social Event.

**SUN.20**  
10am-12pm. Gays at work/trade unions.  
12-1.30pm. Picnic.  
1.30-3.30pm. Structures for development.  
3.30-5.30pm. Closing session.

NAME \_\_\_\_\_  
ADDRESS (OPTIONAL) \_\_\_\_\_

DO YOU NEED ACCOMMODATION?  
DO YOU NEED A CROCHER?  
REGISTRATION FEE: £3 UNAGED  
NATIONAL GAY CONFERENCE STEERING COMMITTEE P.O. BOX 1076, DUBLIN 1.

National Gay Conference Steering Committee. 1982 National Gay Conference Leaflet, Digital Repository of Ireland [Distributor], Cork LGBT Archive, <https://doi.org/10.7486/DRI.x920vg82f>

The third National Gay Conference was held in Belfast in 1983, following on from the previous conferences in Cork and Dublin. The Belfast Conference was called the All Ireland Lesbian and Gay Conference and was held in Belfast 4-5 June 1983.

These archived materials add complexity and context to island-wide LGBT activism across Ireland, sparking different interpretations of a shared history which has often excluded minority and marginalised experiences.



Steering Group All Ireland Lesbian and Gay Men Conference. (2019) 1983 All Ireland Lesbian and Gay Men Conference Belfast Leaflet, Digital Repository of Ireland [Distributor], Cork LGBT Archive, <https://doi.org/10.7486/DRI.q237xb901>

Other materials in the Cork LGBT Archive include posters such as the image below, which advertises the 1982 Gay Pride celebration in Ireland. Notable in this image is the inclusion of the pink triangle symbol which in the late 20<sup>th</sup> Century was reclaimed by LGBT communities as a positive symbol.



Gay Pride Ireland. Gay Pride Poster 1982, Digital Repository of Ireland [Distributor], Cork LGBT Archive [Depositing Institution], <https://doi.org/10.7486/DRI.f475q270n>



# Orla Egan: Digitally Preserving Cork LGBT Archive

“In 2016 I attended a Digital Preservation Coalition conference in London. Here I learned that digital preservation is a complex and time-consuming process. Most community archives - including the Cork LGBT Archive - do not have the resources (time, people, technology) or technical skills to ensure long-term digital preservation of our materials.

This presented a real challenge for us in our efforts to preserve our collections.

Ensuring robust digital preservation is difficult for community archives - not to mention the workload and additional learning that is needed to ensure long-term digital preservation.

“I learned that digital storage is not the same as digital preservation.”

One of the biggest challenges for a community archive is the poor availability of funding which predominately results in a lack of funding for core staff in community archives – creating barriers that impact our ability and opportunity to ingest and preserve materials.

I had always hoped to find a way to ensure that Cork LGBT Archive could:

- Preserve our digital materials safely for the long-term,
- Adhere to FAIR data principles to ensure shareability,
- Increase visibility and awareness of the materials.
- Break the financial barriers that impede digital preservation.

We are lucky in Ireland to have an organisation with the resources and skills to help us achieve our goals: **the Digital Repository of Ireland.**”

# Addressing the Challenge

In 2019, Cork LGBT Archives applied for and won the inaugural DRI Community Archive Scheme and began to ingest some of their collections into the Repository to ensure the **safe storage of their digital materials for the long-term.**

Together with the thriving education and outreach programme run by the DRI, as well as hands-on support, Cork LGBT Archive were able to learn how to successfully batch ingest a collection into the Repository.

Cork LGBT Archive’s digital materials were also **aggregated to Europeana through DRI.** This ensured that the precious digital materials relating to the history and experiences of LGBT people from Cork (and further afield) took their place with **maximum visibility** alongside over 3,600 cultural heritage institutions in the EU.

Cork LGBT Archive also regularly use the **DRI resource guides**, which provide detailed knowledge on topics ranging from API Documentation to instructional videos - as well as offering advice and instructions related to organising collections.

For Orla Egan, “it was very reassuring to know that our materials will be preserved and kept safe. We currently have around 1200 items on our Cork LGBT Archive website, of which 824 are public. 169 of these items are now available in the DRI, and we look forward to adding to these collections soon.”

“Partnership with the DRI has ensured that Cork LGBT Archive collections will be preserved for the long-term in a Repository that is Core Trust Seal-certified and adheres to best practice standards.”

# DRI Viewpoint: The Importance of the Work of Cork LGBT Archive

“The work that Orla is doing to digitally preserve and share these collections means that the vibrant history of Cork’s LGBT community can be accessed for future generations of Irish people. These collections are a great example of why community archives are important. They knit regional activities into wider Irish social history. There’s huge European and international interest in them as well as they help to tell the story of the global LGBT movement. We are proud to work with Orla and the Cork LGBT Archive. We have learned a lot from our partnership, and we look forward to continuing this work.”

*Dr. Lisa Griffith,  
Interim Director of the Digital Repository of Ireland*

“The Digital Repository of Ireland staff have provided fabulous support and guidance to the Cork LGBT Archive.

With their assistance, we have successfully ingested 169 items into the Repository.

DRI have also helped with our winning applications for funding from the Heritage Council. This funding is vital as it gives us the invaluable gift of time – enabling us to work towards achieving our digital preservation goals.”

*Orla Egan,  
Cork LGBT Archive*

For membership queries email  
[members@dri.ie](mailto:members@dri.ie)



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