

# CERL Security Working Group (SWG)

## Madrid Summer School

08 September 2023

### Review, evaluation and update of facilities in times of cutbacks

Aim: prevent problems/ situations that could generate security risks for the collections

Brian O'Donnell, B.Arch., M.Sc. FRIAI  
Deputy Director  
Head of Estates (& Security)  
National Library of Ireland



# Disclaimer

The following are my experiences and personal thoughts for the purpose of contributing to the CERL SWG Summer School discussions on library security, and explore ideas, and experiences rather than the policy of the National Library of Ireland.

# Introduction

Review, evaluation and update of facilities in times of cutbacks...

Are there any other sort of times?

We need to adapt to survive, and then be ready to take any opportunity for larger investment when the occasion arises.

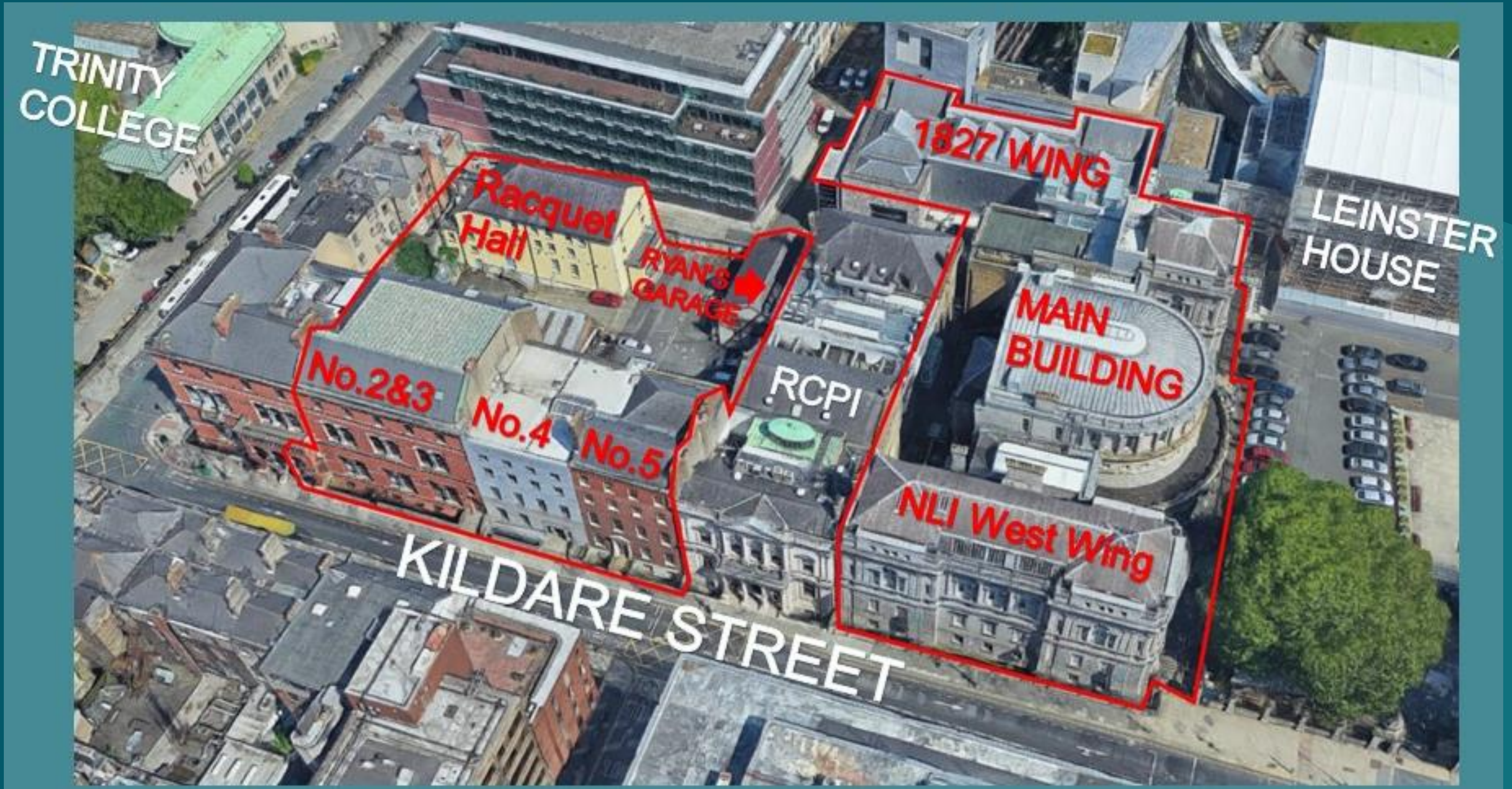
*"Prepare for the worst; expect the best; and take what comes."*

(Benjamin Disraeli, 1833)

# MOTIVE, MEANS & OPPORTUNITY



# National Library of Ireland (main campus)







Leabharlann Náisiúnta na hÉireann  
National Library of Ireland

# NLI ESTATE (cont'd)



Moli, Museum of Literature Ireland  
UCD/ NLI Partnership, UCD Buildings



Bank of Ireland Cultural Centre  
Westmoreland Street  
Seamus Heaney, Listen Now Again  
BOI/ NLI Partnership,  
BOI Buildings.



National Photographic Archive, Temple Bar.  
Exhibition space, photographic collection storage  
& reading room. Separate tenant to upper floors.



TCD Santry Storage Facility  
TCD/ DCC/ NLI shared facility.  
86%:11%:3%



Leased Warehouse Storage Facility  
Parkwest NLI / NGI shared facility.  
66%:33%



Contract with commercial storage provider,  
Glenbeigh Records Management (GRM)





National Library of Ireland Main Reading Room



# General Background / Context

Each organisation needs to adapt according to its own

- circumstances,
- building types
- organisational structures
- & funding arrangements

Hopefully some lessons we have learned in the NLI in pursuing improvements could be adapted to your situation

# General Background / Context

- NLI, as an Irish National Cultural Institution, is provided with a maintenance service by the state property service – The Office of Public Works (OPW).
- NLI pay our own security & energy bills, our furniture and I.T. costs, but not our maintenance costs.
- However, we still need to manage the relationships to ensure our needs are addressed as OPW have a never ending list of requests for resources from central government departments and other cultural institutions, including other libraries!
- Having our maintenance outsourced (to a government body) means we are never trying to balance whether to buy a collection or repair a roof!
- But outsourcing removes the level of control, decision making and prioritisation to others.
- Difficult to identify an ideal structure.

# Review - 'Fresh Eyes'

In presenting our library particularly when showing an external colleague around, I see what they see (what I may have stopped noticing on a day to day basis), such as:

- The doorstops wedging open a door (fire risk)
- Ignoring the buddleia and other weeds at parapets and valleys
- The poor outdated work environment (compared to the modern commercial office accommodation adjacent)

Also being aware of poor practices that can develop such as:

- Staff not engaging when tailgating occurs on entering/ leaving building or staff areas.
- Poor disciplinary practices and rewards in public sector employment (where hard work is generally not differentiated or rewarded from average, or even poor work)

All these can contribute to low staff morale -opening a bigger potential for motive to diverge from loyal duty.

# Review & Evaluate

Important to re-appraise your buildings regularly with fresh eyes, as if it was your first time seeing them.

Consider what is achievable to show improvements (step by step, room by room)

We demonstrate the value we place in our staff by investing in their office environment

Review the range of options for improvements available

Evaluate potential range improvements

- Rank them in order of importance (impact if completed)
- Rank them in order of likelihood of support (management & funding)

# Evaluation -distinguish between

- minor upgrades
  - Revised (more efficient) furniture layout, possibly with redecoration (painting)
  - Above with new furniture, carpet, and lighting
  - New support areas- eg tea stations (we do not have a staff café)
  - Simplest & quickest
- Works requiring building contractors
  - Above with changes to partitions/ fire rating etc
  - Requiring some level of design supervision and 'sign –off' for compliance with Building Regulations
- Larger Infrastructure Projects
  - As above but on a much larger scale of impact (& budget)
  - & much greater time to complete



# Evaluation

- Waiting for the Big Project takes time
- And a lot of patience...
- So we set about a strategy of 'doing what we can, when we can'
  
- Create a logical strategy (with loads of phases)
- No phase too big to scare approval being granted
- Working towards a known goal

# Evaluation

Understand the sources of financial support and the relationship between them

Own resources (within Institution Budget)– limited occasional funds (depending on pressure by other departments) typically c.€50,000-€100,000 / year

## Government Department Funding

- Suitable for Large Infrastructure Support
- Suitable for Special Interest Support (where the Minister may want to make a Public announcement of support)

## Government Property Agency (Office of Public Works)

- Maintenance Projects (not betterment projects)
- Small Improvement Projects (betterment)
- Local Supervisor –separate from the above



# A few small projects completed while awaiting Large Capital Project Update of Facilities – A former staff tea station

For a department of c.20+ staff



BEFORE



BEFORE



# Update of Facilities – New staff tea station

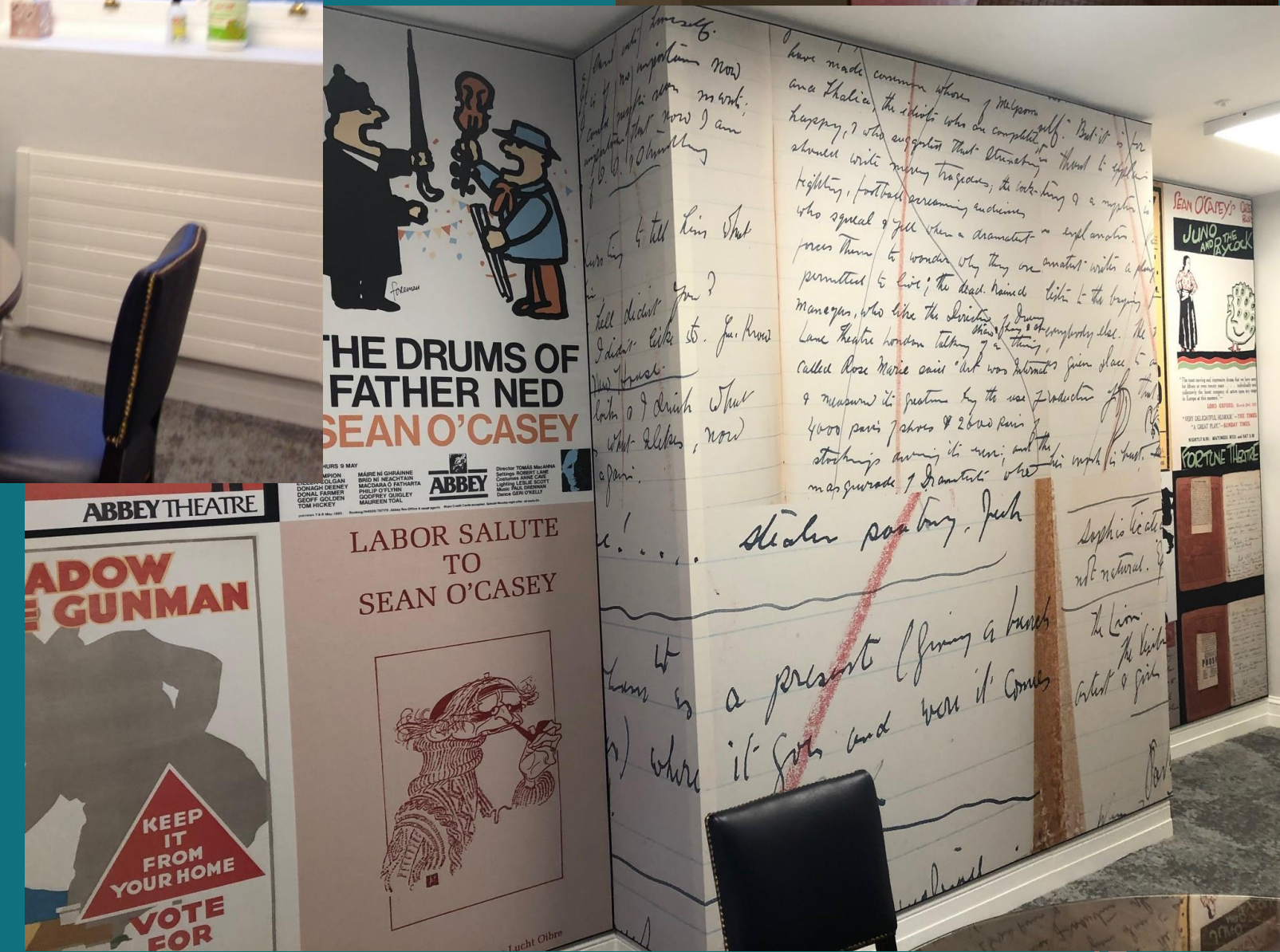
For a group of departments of c.50+ staff  
(using space saved by making more efficient office layouts adjacent)



After: Graphic from collection conceals acoustic panelling, re-use furniture, new cabinets, lighting and flooring



# Update of a former staff tea station & a male toilet To create 2 'Zoom Rooms'



Elizabeth Rivers Room (Collection inspired graphics cover acoustic cladding)

Sean O'Casey Room



# Update of Facilities – Large Art Book Room

Re-evaluation of spaces

- Large Art Book originally a reading room, then office space , then ad-hoc storage!



BEFORE



# Update of Facilities – Large Art Book Room

Now a Visual Collections Reading Room and Reception Space for Donors, small events etc..

## Works Included:

- Decant Collection
- Industrial steel shelving relocated for re-use
- New Lighting, CCTV, power & data
- New UV film, blinds & blackout Blinds
- Refinished hardwood floor (found under carpet)
- Redecoration
- (new sofas otherwise re-used furniture)

## Budget:

€50,000 (from Ministry)

+ local maintenance supervisor support





# Update of Facilities – Staff Offices - Before



Collection of unmatched dated oak veneer furniture laid out in a seemingly random layout, with filing cabinets and plan chest creating a maze effect and aged carpet.



# Update of Facilities – Staff Offices

## Special Collections Sorting Office

### Works Included:

- Re-plan room including bank of plan chests
- New 'white' sit/ stand desks
- New LED Lighting,
- New carpet
- Secondary glazing (added later)
- Re-Painting
- Graphic walls to back of plan chests

### Budget:

c. €50,000

+ local supervisor support



# Update of Facilities – Summary of Benefits

## Aims:

- Reduced energy use (projects included switch to LED lighting, provision of secondary glazing, thermostatic radiator valves (TRVs))
- Reduce sick leave (from poor morale and reduction in draughts with secondary glazing)
- Opportunity to re-organise (& re locate) departments to improve logical workflows and breakdown department 'silos'
- Demonstrate investment in the staff and their work areas
- Improved work environment
- Staff retention



# Update of Facilities – Summary of Benefits

## Does it Work?

- Very positive feedback by each team affected
- After c.80% of staff having spaces upgraded, or with simply redecoration and revised layouts – without any dissent or union obstruction
- Departments reorganised
- Greater belief the bigger infrastructure projects will actually happen.
- Gets the staff disruption caused by new infrastructure tackled ahead of the disruption of caused by the larger Capital Project work
- Improved work environment

## Difficult to sample from a small group and short study period

- Reduced sick leave (from poor morale and reduction in draughts with secondary glazing)
- Staff retention

# Understand the Sources of Funding

Understand the thresholds that each layer has approval for ?

- What is within someone's authority? / What has to be submitted further up the system?
- Consciously select the projects that need to be done, seek appropriate approval and engage with staff about planned changes
- But, consider where projects can be broken down into constituent parts to enable progress a piece at a time (within the approval thresholds in-house or from the local works supervisor)

# Juggle

Keep a good few balls in the air  
Some projects will progress  
Some will stall

Do what you can, when you can!

# Change Management - creating change mind-set

- Socialising Change with small projects where change has not been occurring
- Show benefits of change
  - Benefits for staff
  - New Desks: Sit/stand? White to replace oak or vice versa?
  - New Decoration / carpets / graphic walls
  - New Meeting Rooms (for Zoom meetings and Online Events)
  - New Tea Room
  - A new updated office environment

# If at first you don't succeed....

- Keep asking!
- Re-think & re-present
- Be persistent – with a smile rather than being alienating
  - Seek change for sake of the collection
  - Seek change for sake of Public Service improvements
  - Seek change for accessibility improvements
  - Seek change for Climate Change Reasons
  - Seek change for staff welfare!

# Identify the Problem – push for a solution

- Agree solution in-house (as far as in-house skills can go)
- You should be the subject matter (brief) experts!

## For Larger Projects:

- Focus the design team support where you need it (if you can develop a thorough brief – do it!)
- Focus the design team support designing to your set brief



# Conclusion/ Summary

- A new carpet or a new desk will not win over an alienated, disaffected staff member
- But showing your staff you appreciate them and want to invest in them and their space, boosts morale and, I think, motivates loyalty to the organisation
- Make progress where you can, when you can
- Big projects fix big things but often for only parts of the organisation, and they can be stopped at any time
  - Keep nibbling away on the small stuff
  - While waiting for the big stuff to happen
- However, every organisation
  - Needs to find the solutions that matches their circumstances
  - Needs to find their path to enhancement



BEFORE



AFTER



Entrance Hall to main administration 1748 Building





Former Manuscript Reading Room (first floor)





Conversion of inaccessible (by all) exhibition space to New Manuscript Reading Room (ground floor)



# Thank you

Brian O'Donnell

[bodonnell@nli.ie](mailto:bodonnell@nli.ie)

National Library of Ireland

