

Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Statement

National Irish Visual Arts Library (NIVAL) is the internationally recognised and trusted custodian of Ireland's record of art and design from 1900 to the present day. NIVAL is committed to making our collections accessible to everyone for exploration, education and research. NIVAL's artistic policy is situated in how it sustains its collections through active collaboration with artists, designers and cultural organisations.

NIVAL was formally established in 1997 with the aim of documenting 20th and 21st century Irish art and design and providing public access to the collection to enhance knowledge and facilitate research. The Library is designed to foster interest in Irish visual culture and promote Irish art and design across a broad range of constituencies. Importantly, NIVAL aims to benefit artists by providing a secure and permanent place for the deposit of visual and textual information related to their work.

Policy Statement

NIVAL is committed to promoting equality of opportunity and participation in the contemporary arts for everyone. The aim of our Equality, Diversity and Inclusion Policy is to outline our commitments to achieving equality of access, participation and opportunity for everyone engaged with our organisation - from creative practitioners, scholars, students, staff, board members to our public audience both in the library and online. This policy and its associated plan of implementation seeks to ensure we are open, accessible and inclusive for persons of all backgrounds and abilities.

At NIVAL, we adhere to the basic principle that access to information is a universal right. We believe that everyone's story is unique and deserves to be held and safeguarded within a culture of consultation and consent. We value the diversity of perspectives that contribute to our cultural landscape and enrich the environment in which we work, learn and grow and the audience we serve.

We embrace the plurality of experience and aim to ensure that all persons employed or engaged with the library are treated as individuals, with fairness and dignity. We endeavour to regard all persons with respect and openness, regardless of gender, civil status, family status, sexual orientation, religion, age, disability, ethnic or national origin, membership of the Traveller community, social and economic background.

This policy is structured across four key areas outlined in NIVAL's *Strategy Statement 2020-25 Strengthening Relationships / Building Trust*. The policy is specific to the environment of a working library and compliments both the *Equal Opportunities and Diversity Policy* and the *Equality Statement* of the National College of Art & Design.

Our Vision

To serve the needs of artists, designers and the arts community in the collection, preservation and provision of public access to visual arts documentation for the benefit of all.

Our Mission

Promoting the value of arts documentation as a key resource in the building of cultural memory;

Developing the collection by forging relationships with depositors of material through outreach, dialogue and collaboration;

Encouraging investigation into Ireland's art, design and craft history for the development of knowledge and innovative scholarship;

Growing our community of users at home and internationally through diverse means of engagement with the collection;

Strengthening relationships with funders and policy makers to secure the infrastructure necessary to sustain best standards for the care of collections.

Our Plan

NIVAL has grown from a small local initiative to a research library of international importance. This maturity is reflected in the size and scope of the collections, the scale and frequency of deposits and the widespread recognition by artists of the essential value of NIVAL as a living archive.

There have been significant changes in the information landscape in the twenty plus years since our foundation. There are many new forms of documentary material and multiple ways to stimulate engagement with collections. Awareness of the value of arts documentation for research and legacy building has grown substantially throughout the arts community. The idea of the archive has become a central theme in the work of artists and in curatorial practice and the line between art and document is increasingly blurred.

Responsive action is needed to meet the demands of this changing landscape.

Key areas of development driving our actions over the next five years:

Custodial care

We have a duty of care to the collections placed in our trust. That duty is two-fold: to ensure physical safety in a stable environment and to guarantee availability of access to future generations. Timely management of these collections through descriptive and preservation actions is required. Storage in appropriate conditions is essential to facilitate longevity.

Stakeholder relations

An increasing number of mature artists and designers who have been at the centre of our collections have entered their twilight years. Many bring their concerns about legacy and posterity to NIVAL. Estate relations leading to the acquisition of personal archives is now a regular function. We must respond with professional guidance and support to assist in the preparation of collections for permanent deposit.

Digital landscape

Our operational priorities have been transformed to reflect changes in information communication and the demands for access to material by a community of highly educated and technology-savvy researchers. The management of paper-based archives is now one of a number of priorities in the delivery of custodial services as born-digital and digitised information resources become a mainstay of our collecting policy.

Sustainable resources

NIVAL is one of a small number of organisations responsible for the preservation of the record of Ireland's creative practitioners through the collection of self-generated arts documentation. As specialist archives, we provide cross-sectoral support to the arts, education, and cultural heritage. We are strategically important to the national arts infrastructure yet neither the Arts Council nor the Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media have a policy for the sustainability of our collections and services. We will seek consultation with national bodies on the alignment of our goals to better ground our role in ensuring a sustainable environment for universal public access to artists' heritage material.

2025: Priority Actions

DEVELOPMENT AREA	GOAL	ACTION
Custodial care	Collection management	Increase spatial capacity onsite for ease of movement and accessibility through the transfer of non-unique and low demand collection material to offsite commercial storage.
	Preservation	Increase by 20% the number of digital assets freely available on the website improving opportunities for remote

		engagement and the use of digital tools to increase audio visual accessibility.
	Building Trust	Develop a digital toolkit for the deposit of artist-generated documentation through a process of consultation with a diverse grouping of art and design practitioners.
Stakeholder relations	Participation	Initiate a major rebranding exercise as a key response to feedback from unrepresented artists and designers; to communicate more effectively with diverse audiences and address concerns regarding the 'right to belong' in a national collection.
	Education	Offer a pre-visit page to public audiences through the website outlining what you need to know to make best use of the collections and services; including information on the physical premises and technical support available onsite.
	Communication	Enact new publicity plans and leverage the popularity of artists' books to promote NIVAL at festivals, including public talks at Muine Bheag, Kilkenny Arts, The Liberties, and Dublin Art Book Festival.
Digital landscape	Audiences	The launch of our digital toolkit for artists will lead to specific online interactions on our website from artists interested in building their own archives.
	Capacity and skills	Completion of the second phase of the website development project with the addition of an enhanced interface/discovery layer providing integration with the digital collections stored in the collections management system CONTENTdm.
	Communication	Visibility and clarity of communication is a primary goal in this period. A public event is planned to launch the website redesign.
Sustainable resources	Collaboration	Explore options with strategic partners for a collaborative centre for research in art and design to improve public visibility and access to unique collections through a resource sharing model.
	Facilities	An accessibility audit was conducted in 2024. Account is taken of disability access issues in the planning, acquisition, arrangement and physical accessibility of collections and stock. Improve accessibility of the physical environment: wheelchair ramp, wayfinding signage, visible labels, Irish language and braille to room signage.

