

Request for Tender for the audit of the RDS archives

Introduction

The RDS Library & Archives is seeking to engage a consultant to carry out an archival audit that will inform the development of future strategies for the storage and custodianship of the RDS archival collections.

This document provides the rationale and the terms of reference for the audit of the RDS archival collections, including the following objectives:

- **To ascertain the institutional value of the RDS archival collections as a corporate resource and their value to its reputation and mission**
- **To ascertain the value of the RDS archival collections to the wider national and international research community to date and in the future**
- **To ascertain the current user community and to offer advice on present and future user services and facilities**
- **To offer advice regarding the custodianship of the RDS archival collections**
- **To identify and offer advice on future strategies for the continuing preservation of the RDS archival collections**

The RDS

On June 25, 1731, the Dublin Society held its first meeting in the Philosophical Rooms, now the Old Library, of Trinity College, Dublin. The minutes of the meeting record that the founding aims of the Society were to assist in the improvement of "husbandry [agriculture], manufactures and other useful arts..." in Ireland. (DS: 1731, [p.1]) The Dublin Society advanced these foundation aims through the distribution of grants from the Irish Parliament and its own premium scheme, originally proposed by the Rev. Samuel Madden and outlined in "*A Letter to the Dublin Society*" written in 1739. (Madden, 1739)

The Dublin Society received its first Charter from George II on April 2, 1750 and adopted the title of Royal Dublin Society (RDS) in 1820 in recognition of its patron George IV on his visit to Ireland in the same year. In 1815, the RDS established its headquarters at Leinster House. Here they continued to build on the cultural and scientific interests developed during the previous century, expanding their Library and Museum collections and administering their Drawing Schools and Botanic Gardens.

The Dublin Science and Art Museum act of 1877 saw the transfer of the cultural possessions of the RDS to the State. The RDS Museum and Library collections formed the foundation collections of the National Library and National Museum of Ireland, its Drawing Schools became the Dublin Metropolitan School of Art and its Botanic Gardens the National Botanic Gardens, Glasnevin.

In 1924 the RDS sold Leinster House to the Government of the Irish Free State and moved their headquarters to Ballsbridge, here the RDS continued to expand developing its grounds and exhibition halls that formed the foundation of what is now the largest conference and events venue in Ireland.

Today, the RDS is acknowledged as one of the world's oldest philanthropic societies that continues to support Irish science, arts, industry, agriculture and equestrianism through its work programme, which is overseen by Committees of RDS Members and funded by RDS commercial lettings and charitable fundraising. The RDS Library and Archives has been at the heart of the Society from its foundation in 1731 and continues to provide a lending service to RDS Members and to open its Archives to researchers by appointment.

The RDS Archives

Until the mid-1970s the records that now form the bulk of the RDS archival collections were in the care of the RDS Registrar. There was no written policy of

record management and while the 18th century manuscript minute books were locked in a safe in the Society's Board Room, the remainder of the records were inappropriately stored in an unsecure location. Although the RDS Library held a substantial amount of archival material in its collections, usually received through donation or on permanent loan, the notion of the RDS Archives as an entity distinct from the Library had yet to be conceived.

In 1977 a walk-in strong-room, with a fire-proof safe door, was installed to the rear of the Librarian's office. (RDS, 1977, p. 62.) This area, that now forms part of the RDS Archives storage area, was shelved and used to house the original Dublin Society manuscript minute books, completed RDS Council, Executive Board (Board of Management) and Standing Committee minute books and a full set of the RDS Proceedings dating from 1764. (RDS, 1977, p. 62)

During the mid-1980s the RDS underwent several organizational changes, development works and unforeseen circumstances that brought about a series of reports and discussions on the care, management and custodianship of the RDS Archives. This was precipitated, in part, by the relocation of the RDS administrative offices to another building on the Ballsbridge campus in 1985. (RDS, 1985, p. 9) The bulk of the non-current RDS records, ready for archiving were temporarily housed onsite in a metal storage container. Unfortunately, many of these records were destroyed during the following year due to the flooding of the RDS campus caused by Hurricane Charlie. (RDS, 1986, p. 9)

In 1987 the RDS appointed a new Registrar, who implemented a review of RDS record management practices and brought about the transfer of what remained of the RDS archival records to the Library. (RDS, 1987, p. 8) This process brought about the appraisal and listing of material shelved in the strong-room and of some of the loose paper archival collections by a trainee archivist from the National

Archives who also supervised their transfer to appropriate archival quality boxes. (RDS, 1988, p. 35)

Further developments for the RDS Archives were introduced during the 1990s. In 1996 the addition of an extension to the strong-room provided additional archival storage space, to accommodate more of the boxed loose paper archive collection. (RDS, 1996, p. 25) This period also saw the installation of a new air-conditioning unit that provided appropriate temperature controls in the strong-room annex. (RDS, 1997, p. 30) In 1997 the RDS Registrar retired, he went onto accept the honorary position of RDS archivist, working in tandem with the RDS Librarian to produce regular archive reports and finding aids for parts of the collection. (RDS, 1997, p.8)

In 2009 work began on an extensive project to catalogue the RDS archival collections. (RDS, 2009, p. 29) This is an ongoing project but to date approximately 85% of the RDS archival collections are catalogued with records available via the RDS Library online catalogue.

In 2012 one of the first decisions of the newly formed RDS Library and Archives Committee was to change the name of the RDS Library to the RDS Library & Archives to highlight the presence and the importance of the RDS archival collections. (RDS, 2012, p. 15)

In 2013 the first written RDS archival policy was passed by the RDS Council. The policy included recommendations for a disaster management plan and an archival audit carried out by professional archivist.

In 2014, a Preservation Assessment Survey (PAS) was undertaken on the RDS Library & Archive collections. The survey was carried out on a sample of 400 items from the library and archive collections by a professional conservation and

collection management specialist in consultation with the RDS Collections Librarian. The PAS found that the RDS Library and archival collections were in good general collection but that solutions were needed for longer term storage and preservation requirements.

The PAS also recommended that RDS staff received training in disaster management and planning which was undertaken by 3 staff members with Harwell in 2015. The RDS Library & Archives registered as a priority user with Harwell in the same year.

A comprehensive risk assessed emergency management plan covering individual responsibilities and actions for the RDS archival and Library collections in the event of a disaster was also completed in 2015.

In 2016 the RDS Collections Librarian qualified as a professional archivist through the Department of Information Studies, Aberystwyth University.

Today the RDS Library & Archives remains an integral part of the RDS, with a mission statement that ensures the preservation and development of its collections, with a commitment to providing a permanent resource to researchers interested in the social and cultural history of Ireland since 1731 and an excellent library service to RDS members and that encourages the use of its services through the promotion of its holdings. (RDS, Library & Archives Development Plan, 2017, p. iii)

RDS Archival Collections

The repository for the RDS archival collections is the RDS Library archival storage area that is located to the rear RDS Library building and comprises of a strong-room and strong-room annex. The area measures 128m² and has approximately 500 linear metres (lm) of wooden and metal shelving. (RDS Archival Preservation

Policy, 2013, p. 8) The area has an air-conditioning and humidifier unit installed to maintain the correct temperature and humidity levels for archival material and is fitted with an environmental monitoring system to ensure there are no fluctuations outside permitted values. (RDS Archival Preservation Policy, 2013, p. 14)

Most of the collection has undergone archival processing and appraisal, and has been catalogued for inclusion on the RDS online catalogue. Current RDS Library & Archives policy dictates that archival material is catalogued to MARC21 bibliographical standards, this is the standard used by KOHA, the current ILS system used by the RDS Library for its online catalogue. While this is not the recommended cataloguing standard for archival material it does ensure that a descriptive record exists for each item, for security and retrieval purposes.

The RDS archival collections are comprised of two distinct collections:

RDS Library rare and early printed books: This collection includes all books with pre-1820 publication dates, all limited or numbered editions, all books with a financial value in excess of €5,000. Much of the material in this collection is of Irish interest and a comprehensive collection on and by Irish scientists including early printings of works by Boyle, Tyndall and Kelvin. The collection also includes the Tighe Bequest, gifted to the Library in 1890 (ref) and comprising of a collection of early European printings of Horace, Virgil and other classics that includes examples of the Aldine, Baskerville and Plantain presses and a very fine early fifteenth century humanistic manuscript of Lactantius' *Divinae institutiones*.

RDS archival collections (1731-1990)

This collection is the administrative archive of the RDS and includes material from the foundation of the RDS in 1731 to 1990. The collection is mostly on paper, but includes other formats such as glass plates, photographic prints, negatives, film,

audio and video recordings and textiles. The collection can be broken down into five subject areas:

1. RDS Council and Administrative archive (1731-1990): This collection includes the earliest manuscript minutes of the Dublin Society (1731-1764), the minutes and correspondence of the RDS Council, RDS President and Executive Committee (1750-1990), RDS House and Premises Committees, the files of the RDS Registrar and the printed books connected with the Society including; the RDS printed proceedings by-laws and charters.

2. RDS Membership and Library Archive (1731-1990): This collection includes RDS Membership committee minutes and correspondence (1900 RDS member lists (1731-1990), member publications (newsletters, calendars) ephemeral material (tickets and fliers for member events), RDS Library archive (1819-1990) includes minute books, accession lists, printed and manuscript catalogues.

3. RDS Science archive (1731-1990): This collection includes minutes and correspondence of the RDS Committees of Chemistry, Botany and Natural Philosophy (1800-1890), minutes of Committees of Science and its applications and Science and Technology (1890-1990), exhibition catalogues, glass plates, photographic prints and negatives, material relating to scientific lecture series, material relating to the RDS Radium Institute news-clippings, and a substantial collection of scientific correspondence relating to the history of Irish science.

4. RDS Agricultural archive (1731-1990): This collection includes minutes and correspondence of the RDS Committee of agriculture, pamphlets, show catalogues, photographic prints and negatives, news-clippings, the archives of the RDS Spring Show (1831-1992) and the Dublin Horse Show (1868-1990)

5. RDS Art and Manufactures archive (1731-1990): This collection includes minutes and correspondence of the RDS Fine Arts and Manufactures Committees

(1800-1990) It includes exhibitions catalogues, photographic prints and news-clippings.

RDS archival collections 1990-2012

The paper records of the RDS dated 1990-2012 are awaiting archival processing and appraisal for inclusion in the RDS archival collections or disposal in accordance with current RDS record management policy. They are stored in two different locations on the RDS campus. The Pembroke store holds the non-confidential paper records of the RDS commercial, marketing and foundation departments on approximately 300lm of wooden shelving. The RDS Main Office store holds the confidential paper records of the RDS CEO, Registrar, finance, commercial, marketing and foundation departments, on approximately 100lm of metal shelving. There are box lists available for the material stored in both locations.

Rational for an audit of the RDS archival collections

In 2013 the RDS archival policy identified the need for significant improvement to the current storage facilities to ensure the continuing preservation of the RDS archival collections. The current archival storage area located in the RDS Library is now at total capacity and the collection is currently exposed to associated risks of inadequate shelving and storage space. There is also no further room to develop the collections in this storage area. The Pembroke archive is not suitable as an archival storage space due to its location and its unsuitable environmental conditions.

The RDS Library & Archives committee has formulated 4 potential solutions for the future preservation of the RDS archival collections:

- **Construction of a new purpose-built archive and museum building**

- **Expansion of the current RDS archival space into the area currently occupied by the Irish Reserve Collection**
- **Offsite storage with a records management company such as Iron Mountain**
- **Donation of the RDS archival collections to a heritage or academic institution such as the NLI, National Archives, TCD or UCD.**

An initial report on the costing and construction of a new RDS archive and museum building was carried out in 2016. This report recommended that a comprehensive feasibility study should be carried out on the potential new build. Due to the considerable costs incurred by a feasibility study the RDS Foundation board has requested that an independent audit of the RDS archival collections should be undertaken to inform their decision making.

Terms of reference

The archival audit will be executed by a professionally qualified archivist with proven experience in archival surveying and auditing.

The audit will be carried out across the entirety of the RDS archival collections, based on a physical assessment of the collection with reference to the RDS online library catalogue, RDS archival policy and PAS where appropriate.

The objectives of the archival audit are:

- **To ascertain the institutional value of the RDS archival collections as a corporate resource and their value to its reputation and mission**
- **To ascertain the value of the RDS archival collections to the wider national and international research community to date and in the future**

- **To ascertain the current user community and to offer advice on present and future user services and facilities**
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The audit will not include recommendations on conservation of the collections as these are addressed by the 2014 PAS survey.

The audit will not include any archival management or planning recommendations as these are addressed by the RDS archival policy (2013) and the RDS Library & Archives Emergency Plan (2015)

TIMELINE

The timeline for this project is tight and will be as follows:

Issue of tender: **29 January 2018**

Deadline for submission of tenders: **16 February**

Appointment of contract: **February 2018**

DELIVERY

Delivery: 26 February – 21 March 2018. Tenderers are requested to provide a suggested timeframe for delivery in relation to key dates.

Tenderers must identify (including relevant experience) the programme principal/team lead/co-ordinator. Tenderers must identify (including relevant experience) personnel involved in the delivery of the programme or any proposed arrangements to sub-contract out development and delivery.

BUDGET

Budget should cover all anticipated costs and include a breakdown of fees, any other associated expenses.

ADVERTISEMENT OF TENDER AND SELECTION CRITERIA

Request for tender will be advertised through the Archivists & Records Association (UK & Ireland) and Schools of Archival Studies in the UK and Ireland.

The successful tenderer will be required to provide a current Tax Clearance Certificate and all appropriate insurances. Tenders must be able to demonstrate prior relevant experience in the successful execution and delivery of equivalent design projects.

| | Criteria | Weighting |
|----|--|------------------|
| 1. | Understanding and interpretation of the brief. | 25 |
| 2. | Relevant prior experience detailing relevant key expertise | 25 |
| 3. | Price | 30 |
| 4. | Methodology | 20 |
| | | 100 |

Further information about the RDS Library & Archives is available at www.rds.ie/library or the Library & Archives catalogue is available at <https://library.rds.ie>

Queries relating to the submission can be directed to the persons listed below in writing.

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