



Comptroller and Auditor General
Report on Value for Money Examination

Department of the Taoiseach

The Irish Genealogical Project

Baile Átha Cliath
Arna fhoilsiú ag Oifig an tSoláthair

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Report of the Comptroller and Auditor General

The Irish Genealogical Project

I have, in accordance with the provisions of Section 9 of the Comptroller and Auditor General (Amendment) Act, 1993, carried out a value for money examination of the Irish Genealogical Project

I hereby submit my report of the above examination for presentation to Dáil Éireann pursuant to Section 11 of the said Act.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'John Purcell', written in a cursive style.

John Purcell
Comptroller and Auditor General

23 December 1996

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Abbreviations

AnCO	An Comhairle Oilúna
APGI	Association of Professional Genealogists in Ireland
CEO	Chief Executive Officer
FÁS	An Foras Áiseanna Saothair
GRO	General Register Office
IFHF	Irish Family History Foundation
IFI	International Fund for Ireland
IGP	Irish Genealogical Project
PC	Personal computer
SFADCo	Shannon Free Airport Development Company

Summary of Findings

A Government task force review of trends in tourism traffic in the late 1980s concluded that there was considerable scope to generate extra tourism business into Ireland by developing 'genealogy tourism'. The level of travel to Europe from countries where there are large numbers of people of Irish ancestry (e.g. the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand) was growing and was considered to have potential for further growth. By emphasising familial connections with Ireland, it was hoped to encourage more tourists to add Ireland to their itineraries. A range of initiatives to encourage genealogy-based tourism was identified. This included the development of existing family history research services.

The Irish Genealogical Project

Research into individual family histories in Ireland draws on a number of record sources compiled for other purposes e.g. church and civil registers of births, marriages and deaths, completed Census of Population forms and a range of registers of property holders. Because the original records are stored in a variety of locations and formats, carrying out family history research by traditional methods is very time-consuming.

The Irish Genealogical Project (IGP) commenced in 1988 with the aim of developing a computerised database of information relevant to family history research in Ireland. It was planned that, once the database was completed, a comprehensive family history research service would be provided based on a country-wide network of centres and independent professional genealogists.

It was envisaged that the database would be compiled in the network of centres by groups of workers on publicly-funded training and work experience programmes. The data compiled would be stored locally on computer systems linked to a common central system maintained by a central co-ordinating agency.

The IGP involves both Irish and Northern Ireland public sector agencies, locally-based voluntary groups and professional genealogists.

Funding by Irish public sector agencies for the project between 1988 and July 1996 is estimated at £15 million. Of this, £12.5 million was provided by An Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS) which paid the participants in the training schemes. The rest of the funding was provided by the Department of the Taoiseach (which co-ordinated the project), Bord Fáilte, the Shannon Free Airport Development Company (SFADCo) and the International Fund for Ireland.

This examination focused on the extent to which the project has succeeded in creating the computer database and in putting in place a system for delivering a family history research service. It also examined the effectiveness of the management of the project.

Creating the Database

The IGP aims to include relevant details of all records from each of the main sources of genealogical information in its database. Accuracy in the capture of such data is a vital consideration.

By the end of July 1996, just over 29% of the estimated 29 million target records had been captured on the IGP computer system although in 1990 it was envisaged that work on the database would be completed within three years. None of the 28 centres participating in the project had completed the task of computerising the target records for their own areas.

Progress on inclusion of the target records in the IGP database has been constrained because

- 13% of the target records relate to geographic areas which are not being served by centres participating in the IGP
- the IGP's computer system has not been installed in some of the participating centres so almost 4.5% of the target records have been entered on to other computer systems
- centres have been unable to secure access to 25% of the target records for practical reasons or because agreement could not be reached between the centres and the relevant civil and church custodians of the records

Examination of a sample of computerised records from six of the centres participating in the IGP revealed that 3.7% of the database records have mistakes which would be likely to prevent a record from being found during research or mislead a researcher. This is over eleven times the rate permitted under the quality control procedures set for the project. In addition, a further 6% of the records sampled omitted details contained in the original records which, according to IGP procedures, should have been captured.

Business Development

Business levels for centres participating in the IGP did not, on average, increase significantly between 1989 and 1995. Some centres are concentrating on the creation of the database and do not yet provide any research service. In the majority of centres, the service offered is limited. Large variations in the prices charged were found when the centres were surveyed.

The business planning for the IGP envisaged the establishment of a central agency which would be responsible for market research, marketing and the development of a range of common products and prices across the network of centres. It was also expected to create and operate a central computerised index of the records held in local centres which could be used to direct potential customers to the appropriate local centre (or centres) or to a professional genealogist. The customer could then consider whether or not to commission family history research.

A company called Irish Genealogy Limited was established in 1993 to act as the required central agency but only began to function in August 1996, following the appointment of its Chairman and a Chief Executive Officer (CEO).

Irish Genealogy Limited intends to develop a marketing plan for the IGP by June 1997. It has also recently set a target of end-1997 for the establishment of a central index in Dublin. However, formal agreements have not yet been reached with the local centres regarding what information will be supplied by them for the creation of the index or how it will operate.

Management of the Project

The very wide range of interest groups involved in the IGP meant that an independent body was required to co-ordinate the project. The Department of the Taoiseach undertook this co-ordinating role until August 1996 when Irish Genealogy Limited assumed the responsibility.

Although FÁS, Bord Fáilte and SFADCO each provided significant funding for the project, they did not take a lead role in developing the project and have not committed substantial resources to it in the medium to long-term.

FÁS's primary interest is in vocational training. Its evaluation of effectiveness of the schemes it funds is explicitly concerned with meeting specific training criteria and standards and in getting positive outcomes in terms of trainees' progression and placement in jobs. Although it is the main contributor to the production phase of the project (the computerisation of the genealogical records), it has not set any overall targets in relation to the completion of computerisation.

It was recognised early in the project that the appointment of a CEO reporting to the IGP co-ordinating committee was vital. It was also envisaged that the day-to-day management tasks would be handled by a number of project officers.

Three project officers with responsibility for development of centres, training and standards and information technology were appointed between 1989 and 1991. Unclear reporting relationships and the delay in appointing a CEO, combined with

ongoing uncertainty about funding for their jobs, undermined the roles played by the officers. By the time the CEO took up office, two of the three project officers had left the IGP, resulting in a loss of expertise and knowledge.

The monitoring of progress in implementing the project has been ineffective. No budget or measurable targets were set and the gathering of relevant management information was sporadic and generally incomplete.

The IGP needs to establish clear targets and periodically to assess progress relative to those targets. Basic information from all local centres regarding progress to date, number of target records computerised, access problems, service and income levels and visitor numbers should allow some estimate to be made of when the planned family history research service will be available, what areas are in need of remedial action and the further investment required to bring the project to completion.

Evaluation of Effectiveness

The IGP was established as a means of stimulating extra tourism business and distributing tourism more widely. No targets have been set for these objectives and no mechanism is in place to measure the tourism impacts attributable to the IGP. Consequently, the likely effectiveness of the project in contributing to tourism growth cannot currently be established.

The Irish Genealogical Project

1 Introduction

- 1 1 Research into individual family histories in Ireland draws on a number of sets of records compiled for other purposes. Many of the records used were assembled by public sector agencies e.g. civil registers of births, marriages and deaths, completed census forms and registers of property holders. In addition, there exists a substantial number of records compiled by church authorities, mainly relating to baptisms and marriages, some of which pre-date civil records.
- 1 2 Carrying out family history research is very time-consuming. The original records are stored in a variety of locations and formats. Gaining access to them at their storage locations also takes time due to the need to ensure their security. Even when access has been achieved, finding the required records often involves painstaking searching of documents (many in manuscript form) which are frequently organised in ways that do not facilitate the search process.

The Irish Genealogical Project

- 1 3 A project to develop a computerised database of information relevant to family history research in Ireland began in 1988. It was planned that, once the database was completed, a comprehensive family history research service would be provided based on a country-wide network of centres and independent professional genealogists. It was intended that the ready availability of a family history research facility would encourage more visits to Ireland by tourists of Irish descent, thus creating employment in providing the research service and other tourism-related services.
- 1 4 The project — referred to as the Irish Genealogical Project (IGP) — involves both Irish and Northern Ireland public sector agencies, locally-based voluntary groups co-operating to form the Irish Family History Foundation (IFHF), the Association of Professional Genealogists in Ireland (APGI) and the Association of Ulster Genealogists and Record Agents.
- 1 5 It was envisaged that the database would be compiled in a network of centres by groups of workers on publicly-funded training and work experience programmes. The data compiled would be stored locally on computer systems linked to a common central system maintained by a central co-ordinating agency.
- 1 6 Work on compiling the database is still underway, although it was estimated in 1990 that it would be completed by 1993.
- 1.7 Funding by Irish public sector agencies for the project between 1988 and July 1996 is estimated at £15 million. Finance has been provided by the Department of the Taoiseach (which co-ordinated the project), An Foras Áiseanna Saothair (FÁS), Bord Fáilte and the Shannon Free Airport Development Company (SFADCo). Assistance for the project was also provided by the International Fund for Ireland (IFI).

Scope of the Examination

- 1 8 The value for money examination of the IGP focused on
- the extent to which the project has succeeded in creating the database and in putting in place a system for delivering a national family history research service
 - the effectiveness of the systems and procedures used in managing the project.
- 1 9 The examination was concerned only with the role of the public sector agencies audited by the Comptroller and Auditor General. The role played by the Northern Ireland public sector agencies or the other participants in the project has not been examined
- 1 10 The methodology used in carrying out the examination is outlined in Appendix A

2 Background

- 2.1 During the 1980s, several attempts were made to stimulate tourist traffic into Ireland using genealogical or ancestral themes. Generally, the tourism promotional agencies consider that these ventures failed because they were trying to promote a product — easy and cheap genealogical research — that either did not exist or was poorly delivered and presented.

Origins of the Irish Genealogical Project

- 2.2 A Government Task Force on Genealogy and Tourism was established in 1988. It consisted of representatives of public agencies involved in tourism promotion and genealogy and of relevant private and voluntary sector interests. It was chaired by an official of the Department of the Taoiseach. The Task Force's function was to recommend ways in which the tourism potential of genealogy could be developed.
- 2.3 At the time, family history research services were provided by a small number of full and part-time professional genealogists and by a few voluntary enthusiasts.
- 2.4 Local history groups in many areas had, for a number of years, been undertaking small-scale projects involving the manual compilation of indices of the entries in local church registers. The public sector training authority (AnCO, the pre-cursor to FÁS) supported many of the projects as suitable vehicles for providing locally-based work experience and training in office procedures.
- 2.5 A number of applications for funding for locally-based indexing projects in border areas were made to the IFI in 1988. Some of the applications proposed the use of information technology in a genealogical context. Consultants were appointed to examine the possible use of computer technology for providing genealogical reports and storing genealogical information. The consultants were also asked to examine whether a genealogical computer system could operate on a 32-county basis.¹
- 2.6 The consultants reported that computers were already in use in genealogical research and that the available technology provided an efficient basis for recording and retrieving basic genealogical information. While setting up computer-based genealogical indices would technically be easy, they concluded that local groups who had already devoted much effort to collecting records would probably be reluctant to give them up to a central organisation.

¹ *Details of the terms of reference of consultancy reports carried out on the IGP are set out in Appendix B*

- 2 7 One of the applications for IFI funding² proposed a possible model for a 32-county system. Local heritage centres would compile and maintain their own computerised databases while allowing a central agency to build up a master index of names and other key facts which would act as a 'signposting' device. Initial searches of the master index, which could be carried out at one or more locations, would indicate what local centre was likely to hold the relevant computer records, details of which could only be obtained directly from the local centre.

Objectives of the Irish Genealogical Project

- 2 8 The Task Force concluded that there was potential for exploiting genealogy as a means of promoting tourism, by developing a national genealogical project involving
- the compilation of a comprehensive and accurate computerised database of all the major genealogical records available, covering all geographic areas
 - implementing a system for marketing and delivering a reliable family history research service
- 2 9 The Family History Council of Ireland and APGI made submissions to the Task Force in late 1988 about how the project could be implemented.

Stakeholders in the Project

- 2 10 Successful implementation of the project was crucially dependent on securing the co-operation of the many agencies and groups which had an interest in the project or might be affected by it (see Table 2.1).

Public Sector Agencies

Department of the Taoiseach

- 2 11 The Department of the Taoiseach assumed responsibility for co-ordinating the IGP. The Department's view was that an 'umbrella' group was required to bring the various public funding agencies together in a coherent project so that the planned system could be implemented as quickly as possible and at the least possible cost. The Department chaired the IGP co-ordinating committee until August 1996, when its functions were taken over by a private company (Irish Genealogy Limited), which was formed to perform the project co-ordination role.

² The application for funding was made by the Family History Council of Ireland which was reconstituted as the Irish Family History Foundation in May 1990.

Table 2.1
Stakeholders in the Irish Genealogical Project^a

Public Sector Agencies	Department of the Taoiseach Foras Áiseanna Saothair Bord Fáilte Shannon Free Airport Development Company National Library of Ireland Genealogical Office of Ireland General Register Office National Archives Local authorities/library services International Fund for Ireland
Private/voluntary groups and individuals	Irish Family History Foundation Local heritage/genealogical centres Association of Professional Genealogists in Ireland

Note ^a Excludes Northern Ireland stakeholders

Foras Áiseanna Saothair

- 2 12 FÁS (then known as AnCO) first became involved with the compilation of indices of genealogical records in 1983. Since then, various work experience schemes and training programmes have been used in the indexation of genealogical records.
- 2 13 FÁS stated that its primary interest and participation in the IGP stemmed from the opportunities for vocational training which it provides. The availability generally of good supervisors and computer equipment made the local projects attractive as a vehicle for delivery of training.
- 2 14 To broaden the training provided to participants, schemes supported by FÁS in genealogical centres are required to include activities not directly related to computerisation of genealogical records. For instance, schemes must include prescribed training sessions and other kinds of project work e.g. preparation of booklets on local history, which typically may take up to 50% of the time participants spend on schemes.
- 2 15 The value for money obtained from expenditure on training and work experience schemes is enhanced if the work done provides social and economic benefits other than those gained by the participants themselves. Use of FÁS trainees and workers in genealogical computerisation projects was intended to result in the creation of a reliable and durable computer database which would be of public value.

Bord Fáilte and SFADCo

- 2 16 Bord Fáilte and SFADCo participated in the IGP co-ordinating committee. They also provided development grants to 12 of the 28 centres participating in the IGP and funding for central management and development costs of the project.
- 2 17 SFADCo directly funds a genealogical and archival centre in Limerick which is part of the IGP.

General Register Office

- 2 18 The General Register Office (GRO) has custody of all civil records of births, marriages and deaths which were registered since registration began in 1845. The GRO facilitates genealogical research as much as possible, consistent with carrying out its main function of maintaining the public records.
- 2 19 GRO officials participated in IGP co-ordinating committee meetings until 1993.

Genealogical Office/National Library of Ireland

- 2 20 The Genealogical Office of Ireland is part of the National Library. Both institutions have holdings of genealogical material which are regularly used by family history researchers.
- 2 21 The National Library believes that implementation of the IGP could result in a reduction in the number of genealogical researchers using the Library and Genealogical Office, thereby releasing resources for other activities.
- 2 22 Both the head of the Genealogical Office (the Chief Herald) and the Director of the National Library became members of the IGP co-ordinating committee when it was established. The Director of the National Library was appointed Chief Herald in September 1995 and continues to participate in the IGP.

National Archives

- 2 23 The primary functions of the National Archives are to preserve public records and make them available to the general public. The Director of the National Archives attended meetings of the IGP co-ordinating committee as an observer from 1992 to 1994.

Other Stakeholders

International Fund for Ireland

- 2 24 The IFI is an international body established by the Irish and British governments with the objectives of promoting economic and social development and encouraging contact, dialogue and reconciliation between communities in both parts of Ireland. The Fund is financed by contributions from the EU and from the governments of the United States of America, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. Ten main programmes are administered by the Fund secretariat, involving activities ranging from investment companies to community relations. Assistance to the IGP was made under the Fund's tourism programme.

Irish Family History Foundation

- 2 25 The IFHF was established in May 1990 by local genealogical and heritage centres, including centres in Northern Ireland. Its objectives include the setting of standards for computerisation projects being carried out by centres which are participating in the IGP and for the provision of genealogical research services.

Association of Professional Genealogists in Ireland

- 2 26 APGI represents individual genealogists who provide family history research services on a commission basis. APGI functions as a regulatory body to set standards for the conduct of genealogical research by its members and to protect the interests of clients. In addition to undertaking research, APGI members act as consultants to an advisory service provided by the Genealogical Office.
- 2 27 Representatives of the IFHF and of APGI participated in the co-ordinating committee for the IGP and now serve on the board of directors of Irish Genealogy Limited.

Northern Ireland Stakeholders

- 2.28 Public agencies in Northern Ireland were involved in funding IGP activity in four genealogical centres covering all geographic areas in Northern Ireland. Representatives of the agencies participated in IGP co-ordinating committee meetings and attend board meetings of Irish Genealogy Limited as observers.
- 2 29 IGP activities in Northern Ireland and the role of agencies there were outside the scope of this examination.

Public Funding

- 2 30 The amount of public funding provided for the IGP since 1988 by the principal funding agencies amounts to £15 million. The breakdown of this amount is detailed in Table 2.2. The amount of expenditure by other stakeholders, including local authorities, is not known.

Table 2.2
Public Funding of the IGP^a January 1988 - July 1996

Source of Funding	£m
Department of the Taoiseach	0.25
Foras Áiseanna Saothair	12.48
Bord Fáilte Éireann	0.68
Shannon Free Airport Development Company	0.41
International Fund for Ireland ^b	1.13
Total	14.95

Notes ^a Further public funding was provided by local authorities and by public sector agencies in Northern Ireland.

^b Used to commission consultancy reports and to purchase computer equipment for the IGP. The figure shown excludes expenditure on equipment supplied to centres in Northern Ireland.

- 2 31 Besides facilitating the computerisation of genealogical records, the expenditure by FÁS of £12.5 million on the IGP resulted in the provision of training and other work experience to participants in FÁS schemes. FÁS has also funded similar schemes in genealogical centres not participating in the IGP.

- 2 32 Expenditure on the IGP by SFADCo over the period 1988 to 1996 includes

- part of the funding for the Limerick Regional Archive and Genealogical Centre which is attributable to genealogy
- funding for the salary of one of the IGP's management staff over the period 1989 to 1992
- grants under the 1989-1993 Tourism Operational Programme in the SFADCo region to the centres which are participating in the IGP

In addition, SFADCo has provided office accommodation at its own offices in Limerick for an IGP project officer since 1989.

- 2 33 The EU-funded Operational Programme for Tourism 1994-1999 includes measures to support the development of tourism products. The programme envisaged the provision of funding for the IGP for project development and marketing, subject to appropriate proposals being prepared. However, the level of funding was not fixed and no funds have yet been provided for the IGP under the programme. SFADCo has approved the payment of a grant of £233,000 under the programme to a genealogical research centre in Kerry which is not participating in the IGP.

3 Creating the Database

- 3 1 The IGP database must include relevant details of all records from each of the main sources of genealogical information if it is to be used to provide a reliable and comprehensive family history research service. Accuracy in the capture of data is also a vital consideration.

Number of Genealogical Records

- 3 2 There are six major sources of records which provide family history details on a national basis (the 'universal sources'). The universal sources are

- church records (mainly from Roman Catholic and Church of Ireland parishes) of births/baptisms, marriages and (less usually) deaths, mostly commencing in the late eighteenth or early nineteenth centuries
- civil records of births, marriages and deaths registered since 1864³
- the original Census of Population forms completed in 1901
- the original Census of Population forms completed in 1911
- details of landholdings and their occupiers contained in Griffith's Primary Valuation of Tenements (1848 to 1864)
- landholding records contained in Tithe Applotment Books (1823 to 1838)

- 3 3 The IGP aims to include all church and civil records up to 1900, along with all records from the other universal sources in its database. In addition, the IGP intends that a wide range of miscellaneous genealogical sources, some unique to particular areas, will be added to the local centres' databases. These additional sources include gravestone inscriptions, estate rental records, emigration lists, local and fragmentary census material and collections of school enrolment registers.

- 3 4 The total number of records from the universal sources to be captured by the IGP database is estimated to be around 29 million (see Table 3.1). This estimate is based on the results of a survey of genealogical centres carried out during this examination, supplemented by independent research where individual centres could not supply estimates.

³ Civil registration of non-Roman Catholic marriages began in 1845

Table 3.1
Target Number of Records for the IGP Database, by Type

Type of record	Estimated number of records (millions)
Church records of births, marriages and deaths	14.5
Civil records of births, marriages and deaths	6.4
1901 Census of Population entries	3.2
1911 Census of Population entries	3.1
Griffith's Valuation records	1.1
Entries in Tithe Applotment Books	0.7
All universal records	29.0

Progress in Compiling the Database

- 3.5 A 1990 plan for the IGP envisaged that the creation of the database would be completed by 1993. The survey of genealogical centres attempted to establish the progress that centres have made in computerising the target records. Based on the survey, it is estimated that 29% of the target records had been captured on the IGP computer system by the end of July 1996. None of the local centres had completed the task of computerising the target records.
- 3.6 The reasons why computerisation of the target records for the IGP database has not been completed include
- some geographic areas are not being served by centres participating in the IGP
 - some centres started compiling their databases later than others
 - there are general and localised problems about access to some types of record
 - resources (mainly computer equipment and workers) were unavailable in some centres
- 3.7 Table 3.2 details the position in July 1996 in relation to progress of computerisation of the target records.

Table 3.2
Progress of Computerisation of Target Records, July 1996

	Estimated number of records (millions)	Percentage of total number of records
Records on the IGP computer system ^a	8.5	29.3%
Records on other computer systems	1.3	4.5%
Records in areas not covered by the IGP	3.8	13.1%
Inaccessible records	7.3	25.2%
Accessible records not yet on the IGP system	8.1	27.9%
Total target records	29.0	100.0%

Note ^a *Excludes records other than those from universal sources*

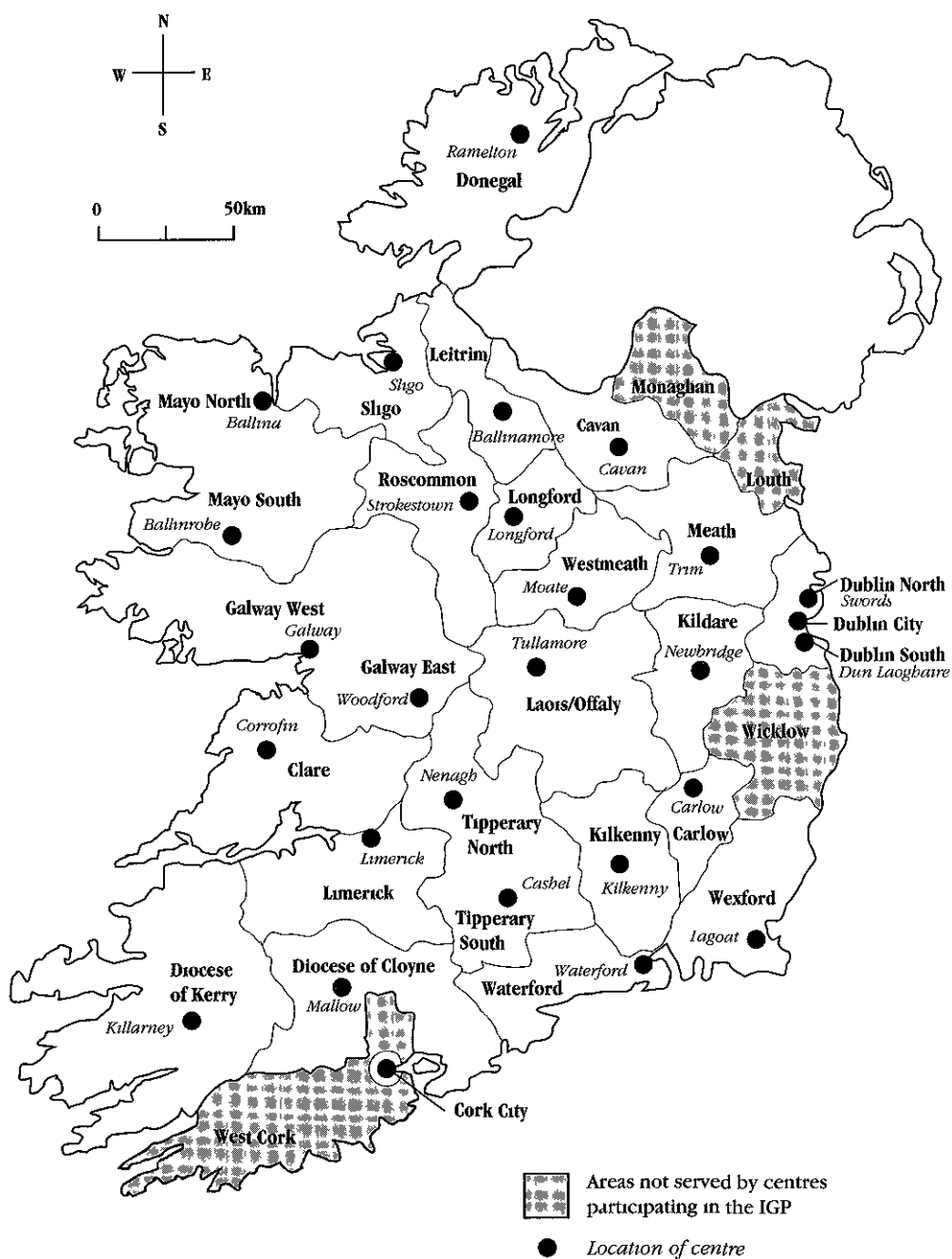
Geographical Coverage

- 3.8 The IGP aims to provide a nationwide genealogical service through the provision of a network of genealogical centres
- 3.9 Figure 3.1 indicates the location of the 28 centres currently participating in the IGP and the areas they serve. In most cases, centres serve county areas. One local centre has a catchment area covering two counties (Laois and Offaly), while four counties are served by two local centres each. Dublin city and county are covered by a total of three centres. Two centres, developed under the auspices of the Roman Catholic authorities, cover dioceses rather than counties.
- 3.10 West Cork and the counties of Louth, Monaghan and Wicklow are not served by centres involved in the IGP. A local centre engaged in the computerisation of genealogical records operates in Wicklow. The group is sponsored by the county council and operates using FÁS trainees but is independent of the IGP.
- 3.11 Areas not served by the IGP account for an estimated 13% of the target records for computerisation.

Establishment of Centres

- 3.12 Twenty one of the centres currently participating in the IGP were established before the project started. Most were manually compiling genealogical records and alphabetic indices to assist in carrying out family history research. Eight centres had started manual indexing before 1986. When IGP computer systems became available, the centres began entering the existing manually recorded details onto the database.

Figure 3.1
Location and Geographical Coverage of Participating Centres, July 1996



- 3 13 Five centres began compiling records around the time the IGP started. Two centres were established more recently — one in 1994 and one in 1995.

Access to Records

- 3 14 Access to original records was recognised at the outset as a key factor in ensuring the success of the IGP. Centres participating in the project do not have access to an estimated 7.3 million records for the areas they serve. This represents around a quarter of the target records. There are general problems of access to the 1911 Census forms and to civil records of births, marriages and deaths. In addition, certain centres have access to only some of their target religious records.

1911 Census

- 3 15 The original 1901 and 1911 Census of Population forms are stored in the National Archives in Dublin, where they can be examined free of charge under controlled conditions.
- 3 16 All the 1901 Census forms have been microfilmed for security reasons and to increase access. Copies of the microfilm are available to local centres (and other interested parties such as local libraries) at a price reflecting the cost of reproducing the microfilm.
- 3 17 Microfilming of the 1911 Census forms (about one million in total) has only recently commenced and is expected to take at least three and a half years to complete. The forms are being microfilmed on a county-by-county basis. Consequently, computerisation of the 1911 Census records could begin soon in some centres but cannot be completed until the beginning of the next century.

Civil Records

- 3 18 The General Register Office (GRO), which is a statutory office under the aegis of the Department of Health, maintains a central record of all births, marriages and deaths recorded since general registration commenced in 1864 and of non-Roman Catholic marriages since 1845. The central record is currently located in Dublin but is due to be relocated to Roscommon in the year 2000. The original registers are maintained in 365 registration districts and in superintendent registrars' offices under the supervision of the health boards.
- 3 19 GRO records are held in the original manuscript form and on microfilm. While they are public records, they are not openly available for public scrutiny to protect the privacy of individuals. Certified copies of records are provided to members of the public who can specify sufficient details about the events concerned to establish the

validity of their right to access the information recorded. The GRO maintains a set of bound indices containing some of the recorded details to assist it to pinpoint accurately the records sought. Copies of the indices are on open access to members of the public.

- 3 20 The GRO proposed that it would make microfilm copies of the civil records available to centres for inclusion in the IGP database. To ensure that the work was carried out systematically and efficiently and that the database created would be immediately usable, the GRO proposed that individual centres would compile the civil records for particular years for all areas, rather than each centre compiling only those records which related to its own catchment area. However, according to the GRO, this proposal was not acceptable to the centres.
- 3 21 Subsequently, the GRO agreed with one of the centres participating in the IGP to provide microfilm of the civil records relating to the centre's catchment area only, for inclusion in the centre's database. The records covered by the agreement are an estimated 3% of the civil records targeted by the IGP.
- 3 22 The GRO is aware that some local centres have reached agreements with the relevant health boards regarding access to locally-held civil registers. It is concerned that original records might be damaged in the process of compilation of the database. The GRO is also concerned that the confidentiality of the records should be protected and that agreement would be reached with centres on protocols governing access, use and ownership of the databases created.
- 3 23 Fourteen of the centres participating in the project claim to have full access to all the target civil records for their areas. A number of these plan to include civil records of events which occurred after the IGP cut-off date of 1900 — including one which plans to include all civil records up to 1995. A further four claim to have access to some civil records. On the basis of these claims, centres participating in the IGP have access to around 47% of the target civil records. Ten centres indicated they have no access to civil records for database compilation purposes, or had no current plans to include civil records in their databases.
- 3 24 To facilitate its relocation from Dublin to Roscommon, the GRO has commenced the development phase of a project to computerise all its indices of civil records from the start of registration to date i.e. an estimated 15 million records. It is proposed that the compilation of the GRO's database will be done using scanning equipment and software which recognises typed characters and handwriting, rather than manual recording and validation methods such as are being used in the IGP.

Local Access to Religious Records

- 3 25 Church registers are, in most cases, private records which are the property of the church authorities⁴. Religious records account for around half of the target records for inclusion in the IGP database. They are a particularly useful source of family history information because they generally include details of events which pre-date civil records, in some areas by as much as a century.
- 3 26 Some centres participating in the IGP state that they have secured full access to all relevant religious records. Others state that they have secured access to only some of the target records for their areas. On the basis of these claims, the centres have access to 84% of their target religious records.
- 3 27 Roman Catholic registers are normally held in the parishes to which they relate and are under the control of the parish priest. As with civil records, public access to the registers is controlled to protect the privacy of the individuals whose details are recorded.
- 3 28 The IGP's manual of procedures for dealing with religious records specifies that local centres should enter into legal contracts with the relevant custodians of records regarding access to church registers. The contracts cover issues such as the security, manner of handling and return of the registers. They also deal with access to and use of the databases created. Further agreement with local clergy is also required.
- 3 29 Fifteen of the centres participating in the IGP claim to have agreed contracts with the relevant Roman Catholic bishops⁵ and to have full access to all the target parish registers. Twelve centres have access to some but not all parish registers in their areas. One centre has reached no agreement with the bishop and as a result has no access to any Roman Catholic records.
- 3 30 The National Library of Ireland holds microfilm copies (made in the 1950s) of Roman Catholic parish registers for most dioceses for all years up to and including 1880. These are frequently used by family history researchers, including professional genealogists. Since the IGP started, a number of individual bishops have instructed the National Library that access to the microfilms relating to their dioceses is to be restricted to those who can produce an authorisation from the bishops' offices or

⁴ *Some Church of Ireland registers dating from the time when it was the established church, and thus a State institution, are public records for which the National Archives is responsible*

⁵ *Because dioceses do not coincide with county boundaries, individual centres may require agreements with a number of bishops to have access to all registers for the county area*

from the relevant parish priest. One bishop has instructed that no access is to be allowed to the microfilm relating to his diocese.

- 3 31 Original Church of Ireland parish registers are kept in a variety of locations. Some have been microfilmed. Permission for local genealogical centres to have access to records may be required from a variety of sources including the National Archives, the GRO, the Representative Body of the Church of Ireland, the relevant bishop and the local clergy.
- 3 32 Fourteen centres participating in the IGP state that they have gained full access to all relevant Church of Ireland records. Twelve centres have gained partial access. Two centres have no current plans to capture details of relevant Church of Ireland parish records.

Availability of Resources

- 3 33 The main resources required in carrying out the computerisation task are premises, computer systems and equipment and supervisory and data processing staff. In general, premises are provided by group sponsors which, in many cases, include the relevant local authority.

Computer Systems

- 3 34 IFI funding of £1.13 million⁶ for the IGP was used mainly to purchase computer equipment for individual centres and a central database system and to pay for the development of specially designed software.
- 3 35 Equipment has been supplied to 25 of the 28 centres participating in the IGP. Each of the 25 centres has its own stand-alone processing unit linked to a number of terminals (an average of six per centre) which are used to input data and to search the database for relevant records. Centres were also supplied with one printer each.
- 3 36 In addition to IGP computer equipment, most centres have local-office networks of personal computers (PCs) used for office administration and to broaden the range of computer skills of trainees.
- 3 37 Computerisation of records in the three centres that have not been supplied with IGP computer equipment is being undertaken on local-office PC networks. Around 1.3m records (4.5% of the target records) have so far been captured on these systems.

⁶ A further £600,000 was provided by the IFI for IGP activities in Northern Ireland.

3 38 Individual centres have pointed out that

- the IGP system is slow and suffers from capacity constraints at less than the design levels
- the number of available terminals limits the level of data input
- the IGP system is becoming obsolete and a PC-based system would be more suitable

Staffing of Centres

3 39 In July 1996, a total of 432 persons were involved in computerisation of records at centres participating in the IGP. In addition, there are a small number of voluntary and contract workers in centres. More than 90% of the participants were paid by FÁS — 337 engaged in training or work experience schemes and 57 others, mainly acting as scheme supervisors.

3 40 The remaining 38 participants in the project, of whom half work part-time, were employed by the sponsoring groups.

3 41 Most centres use personnel funded under FÁS's Community Response Scheme. Other centres used personnel funded under either the Community Youth Training Programme, the Community Employment Programme or the Teamwork Scheme.

3 42 The amount of staff time available for compiling genealogical records depends on the amount of time FÁS trainees must spend in formal training and in other project work. This varies from scheme to scheme and affects the amount of progress which centres can make in completing the database. Local centres reported that, on average, trainees are available for database compilation for around 50% of the time they attend in centres. The time available for computerisation work ranged from 30% to 80% of attendance time.

3 43 In most cases, trainees are recruited for six-month periods and centres apply to FÁS for funding of each group. The availability of FÁS trainees is subject to interruption because commitment of funding for schemes cannot be made more than a year ahead. Centres are also in competition with non-genealogy applicants for training schemes and work experience grants, particularly from those areas which may not have had schemes for a period.

3 44 One centre pointed out that the allowances paid by FÁS are inadequate to attract sufficient supervisory staff of the calibre required for work of this kind.

Completion Timetable

- 3 45 There is no current overall target date for completion of the task of compiling a database of the genealogical records which the IGP aims to cover.
- 3 46 Individual centres will not be in a position to start work on the 1911 Census records until microfilming of the forms for their areas is completed. In addition, some centres have no current plans to capture certain types of records. Leaving these issues aside, centres were asked how long they estimated it would take to complete the planned task.
- 3 47 The information provided by the local centres shows that they are generally aware that database compilation will need to continue for some considerable time. Only seven centres expect to have computerised all their target records (excluding the 1911 Census forms) by the year 2000.
- 3 48 Table 3.3 shows how many of the 28 existing centres expect to have completed computerisation of individual types of records by 2000. One centre envisages computerisation of religious records in its catchment area taking at least ten years more at current activity levels.

Table 3.3
Local Centre Target Progress by 2000, by Record Type

Record types	Number of centres aiming to have all records computerised
Church records	18
Civil records	13
1901 Census entries	18
Griffith's Valuation entries	14
Tithe Applotment Book entries	14

Accuracy of Data Capture

- 3.49 The accuracy of the IGP database will determine the usefulness of the family history research service provided by the participating centres. From the beginning, it was recognised that common standards of accuracy and quality control procedures needed to be adopted.

Setting Standards and Procedures

- 3 50 An IGP procedures manual was issued to participating centres in 1991. The procedures outlined in the manual include
- instructions about handling, storing and protecting manuscript sources e.g. original parish registers
 - standard procedures for ensuring consistency in the transcription of records and for the verification of all such work
 - standard procedures for the computerisation of the records and the verification of all such work
- 3 51 The manual deals only with procedures in relation to the computerisation of religious records. It was intended that supplements would be issued covering capture of other types of records. However, these supplements have not been produced although computerisation of other types of records has started in a large number of centres.
- 3 52 The existing procedures manual states that verification of records should be carried out by random checking of entries against the original records while they are still available in the centre. It accepted that no database could be compiled completely free of errors at a reasonable cost.
- 3 53 The manual defines a critical error as an error which is likely to prevent a given record from being found in research, or which misleads or is likely to mislead subsequent research. Examples of critical errors are incorrect recording of a name or the year of an event, or omission of data. Supervisors are required to test records on a sample basis and where the critical error rate exceeds 10 in 3,000 records (a rate of 0.3%), the batch of work from which the sample is drawn should be completely redone.

Sample Survey of Database Records

- 3 54 As part of this examination, a sample of Roman Catholic baptism and marriage records was extracted from the databases in six centres participating in the IGP to check for accuracy levels. A total of 2,659 records were examined against the microfilm version of the original registers held in the National Library.
- 3 55 Over 6% of the records extracted could not be located on the microfilms. This may be due in some cases to errors in the computer database but there are a number of further possibilities which do not relate to the accuracy of data input. Possible explanations are

- Some parish registers were not microfilmed in the 1950s because they could not be found at the time or because they were in bad condition Centres compiling databases use the original registers as the source for their inputs and so may have captured more records than the microfilms
- There is a difficulty in finding some parish registers on the microfilm because they were not copied in strict chronological order

3 56 Of those records which could be identified on microfilm, it was found that nearly 10% have critical errors It was clear that, in some cases, there was a systematic pattern of errors e.g omission of certain types of information, such as the names of marriage witnesses. It may be that the records in question were compiled before the standard IGP procedures were put in place

3 57 Systematic errors apparent in the sample may or may not be reflected in the database as a whole If errors of omission are excluded from the calculation of the sample error rate, the revised figures show a total error rate equivalent to 111 errors in 3,000 records which is eleven times the rate that the quality control procedures allow

Conclusions

3 58 The IGP is less than one third of the way towards creating the comprehensive database of genealogical records it requires as the base for the family history research service it aims to provide

3.59 If the project is to be brought to completion the following matters will have to be resolved

- the required resources will have to be identified and sourced
- the network of centres participating in the IGP will have to be extended to cover geographic areas not yet covered
- microfilming of the 1911 Census forms will have to be completed
- the project sponsors will have to reach agreement with all the custodians of the religious and civil records about access to the original records
- all centres will have to use a common computer system or at least use systems which are compatible or have common functionality
- the level of critical errors in the computer records will have to be identified and reduced to an acceptable level

4 Service Delivery

- 4 1 The main objective of the IGP is to stimulate extra tourism business, particularly from countries where there are large numbers of people who have Irish ancestry e.g. the United States, Canada, Australia and New Zealand. In the late 1980s, travel from these countries to Europe was growing and was considered to have potential for further growth. One of the strategies devised to encourage such tourists to add Ireland to their itineraries was to develop 'genealogy tourism' options which emphasise familial connections with Ireland. These include organised clan gatherings and genealogy-derived products (family crests, histories of family names, etc.) as well as family history research services.
- 4 2 A further element of the genealogy tourism strategy relates to tourists who know they are of Irish descent but who may have little or no knowledge of the area(s) from which their ancestors originated. Such tourists tend to visit the more renowned tourist areas only. By developing greater awareness of places of origin through clan meetings and personal family history research, it was hoped that this category of tourist would be encouraged to visit those areas, thereby spreading the benefits of tourism.

IGP Service Delivery Model

- 4 3 The IGP's potential market consists primarily of tourists who are likely to commission family history research before, during or after a visit to Ireland or who themselves wish to engage in research of original genealogical records while in Ireland. Customers may or may not already be aware of the place(s) of origin of their ancestors.
- 4 4 The model adopted by the IGP for service delivery includes a central agency linked to a network of local genealogical centres and professional genealogists. It envisaged that as a result of advertising and marketing initiatives, potential customers would make contact first with the central agency. Having carried out preliminary research using a central index, the agency would direct the customer to the appropriate service provider i.e. the local centre (or centres) holding the relevant genealogical details on the IGP database, or to a professional genealogist.
- 4 5 The key tasks to be undertaken by the central agency included
- provision of marketing and market research
 - standardisation of product quality and price
 - creation of the central 'signposting' index

Marketing and Market Research

- 4 6 The number of persons of Irish ancestry living outside Ireland is variously estimated at between 50 million and 70 million worldwide, mainly living in the United States, Canada, Australia and the United Kingdom. However, as very few of them would normally be interested in commissioning family history research, mass-marketing of the service is not an efficient approach.
- 4 7 Very little data is available on the characteristics of the market for Irish genealogy. The information available provides, at best, some broad market indicators and is inadequate for designing a detailed product launch programme. As a consequence, product development for the IGP will require original market research to identify potential customer profiles and market testing of products. No market research for the IGP has yet been undertaken.
- 4 8 A number of centres have their own separate marketing strategies. The services on offer are brought to the attention of potential clients through advertisements in newspapers, special interest magazines and journals and the dissemination of promotional literature. The tourism organisations also produce publicity material which promotes genealogy and carry lists of centres, agencies and individual researchers. A number of centres have also recently begun advertising on the Internet.

Standardisation of Product and Price

- 4 9 The ability to offer a reliable standard of service required the proposed co-ordinating agency to set and monitor standards for compilation of the database. It was also envisaged that it would co-ordinate the quality of output from centres and standardise the prices charged for carrying out family history research.
- 4 10 As a business venture, the IGP has been production oriented i.e. it offers what it can produce best or most easily. Consultancy reports on the IGP in 1990 and 1993 emphasised the need for the project to be more customer oriented. They also found that
- there was a lack of consistency in the quality, price, content, shape, packaging and delivery of genealogical research to customers
 - potential related merchandising opportunities by developing complementary products (surname histories, heraldic research and artwork, etc.) are not generally promoted

Creation of a Central Signposting Index

- 4 11 The creation of a central signposting index is a critical element for the IGP in resolving problems of identification of locality of family origin and speed of response. The required central index has not yet been established.
- 4 12 The hardware and software required to operate the central index has been available since 1992. Sets of test data needed to create an index were extracted from the local computers in a number of centres and used to test the central index computer software which, it was concluded, was functional. The data was then deleted because there was no agreement on the operation of the central index.
- 4 13 The Genealogical Office currently acts as an initial central contact point for those seeking to research their family history. It disseminates basic information to the public regarding sources of genealogical reference material (including details of local genealogical centres) and facilitates the provision of a personal consultancy service by members of APGI who are paid a fee for their work. In 1995, the Genealogical Office dealt with 450 personal and postal consultations.

Irish Genealogy Limited

- 4 14 A company called Irish Genealogy Limited was incorporated in 1993 to function as the IGP's central co-ordinating agency. It did not begin trading until August 1996, when a Chief Executive Officer (CEO) was appointed. The company intends to develop a marketing plan for the IGP by June 1997. It has also recently set a target of end-1997 for the establishment of a central signposting index in Dublin. However, formal agreements have not yet been reached with the local centres regarding what information will be supplied by them for the creation of the index or how it will operate.

Business Levels

- 4 15 Despite the operation of the IGP and the partial development of the computerised database, the level of annual business handled by local centres participating in the IGP has not, on average, increased significantly since 1989.
- 4 16 It was estimated in a 1990 business plan that 6,800 commissions for family history research were undertaken by local centres (including those in Northern Ireland) in 1989. These generated revenue estimated at £122,000 or approximately £18 per commission. It was anticipated that, by 1995, commissions would reach approximately 15,000 a year, generating income of £750,000 for centres i.e. £50 per commission.

- 4 17 As part of the survey for this examination, local centres were asked about the number of family history research commissions serviced and the revenue associated with them. Approximately 6,700 commissions were serviced in 1995, with total research revenues amounting to an estimated £140,000 or an average of almost £21 per enquiry
- 4 18 Visitor numbers to the genealogical centres⁷ were also collated. An estimated 9,700 overseas tourists visited the genealogical centres in 1995. A further 3,100 visitors to centres were resident in Ireland. In addition, centres received an estimated 11,400 enquiries by post, fax and telephone
- 4 19 According to the figures provided, the conversion rate from enquiries to commissioning of genealogical research is approximately 28%

Type of Research Service Offered

- 4 20 The family history research services offered by local centres are classified as
- **full service**, which means that the centre undertakes family history research covering whatever records are relevant, even if the necessary records are not yet computerised or available locally
 - **partial service**, which involves the local centre carrying out research on whatever records they currently have computerised or to which they currently have access at their premises
- 4 21 The local centres were asked to describe whether they offered full, partial or no research service in relation to each of the universal record sources
- 4 22 Excluding research of the 1911 Census forms because of the difficulty of access, it was found that nine centres claim to provide a full research service⁸ while seventeen centres claim to provide a partial research service. Two centres provide no family history research service.
- 4 23 The type of service provided is related to the date local centres began compiling records. The two centres which provide no research service started computerisation of records only in 1994/95. All of the centres which offer a full service commenced the compilation of genealogical record information before 1989

⁷ *Some centres form part of a wider tourist attraction. In such cases, centres were asked to identify separately the visitors who made relevant enquiries about family history research*

⁸ *Three centres offering a full service include searches of the 1911 Census, where appropriate*

Service Charges

- 4 24 There are very considerable differences in prices charged by the local centres participating in the IGP, although it was planned that the IGP would offer a standardised product at a uniform price. Variations occur even though the IFHF has set a scale of prices to be charged by centres, all of which are IFHF members, for undertaking family history research.
- 4 25 For example, in relation to complete family history research, the prices charged at the centres which offer a full service ranged from £15 to £75 for preliminary reports and from £50 to £170 for full family history reports. The IFHF pricing structure for a full search of all the major record sources (excluding the 1911 Census) implies a maximum cost of £105, but five of the nine centres offering a full service charge more, depending on the amount of work involved.
- 4 26 The prices charged for searches and reports on individual family events such as a birth or a marriage were also found to vary greatly. In some cases, centres were charging five times the rate at other centres. A number of centres also charged hourly rates for researching records which were not computerised, while other centres did similar work at a flat rate.

Service Delivery Time

- 4 27 Where centres offer a full service, the delivery time from enquiry to producing a research report can be considerable. An overseas visitor calling to a local centre cannot usually receive research findings immediately unless what is sought is confirmation or elaboration of family details which are already known.
- 4 28 Some IGP customers formed the erroneous impression from available publicity material that the family history research they required could be carried out during their trip to Ireland and that they would receive relevant local information and orientation. This was impossible given the current state of development of the project and led to frustrated expectations and complaints by the tourists concerned. In the event, the research commissioned was sent on to the tourists some time after they had left the country.

Conclusions

- 4 29 The ability of the IGP to meet its primary objective of increasing tourism numbers is contingent on its being able to deliver genealogy-based products, particularly family history research, to its target market. The establishment of a central agency to carry out market research, marketing, product development and quality control was planned at the outset but has only recently been activated.

- 4 30 Business levels for centres participating in the IGP have not increased to the projected levels. The ability to offer a standard range of services at common prices, identified as a business development priority in 1990, has not yet been achieved.

5 Management of the Project

5 1 The central tasks in ensuring efficient management of the IGP were

- establishing clear ownership of the project from all stakeholders
- putting in place a suitable project management structure to implement the project plan
- reviewing and monitoring progress on implementation

Project Ownership

5 2 The diverse, and sometimes conflicting, interests of the parties involved in the IGP dictated that an independent entity not aligned to a particular group of stakeholders was required to co-ordinate the IGP. The Department of the Taoiseach elected to undertake this central role as a continuation of its chairmanship of the Task Force on Genealogy and Tourism. Central co-ordination of the project transferred to Irish Genealogy Limited when it began to function in August 1996.

5 3 The IGP had a co-ordinating committee on which the following organisations were represented

- | | |
|-------------------------------|----------------------------------|
| ● Department of the Taoiseach | ● Genealogical Office of Ireland |
| ● FÁS | ● GRO |
| ● Bord Fáilte | ● National Archives |
| ● SFADCo | ● APGI |
| ● National Library of Ireland | ● IFHF |

In addition, relevant public and private sector interests from Northern Ireland were represented on the committee

5 4 No formal terms of reference were set for the co-ordinating committee. Meetings of the committee and sub-committees set up to deal with specific issues were held regularly up to mid-1993. Meetings were held less frequently thereafter and no meeting of the co-ordinating committee was held between May 1994 and October 1995.

5 5 Records of co-ordinating committee meetings suggest that while many of the participants were committed to the idea of the IGP, they considered themselves primarily as representing the interests of their own sponsoring bodies. As a result, co-operation and compromise on many issues were very slow to emerge.

5 6 The repositories of genealogical records (the National Library, the National Archives, the Genealogical Office and the GRO) were all involved with the IGP in an advisory capacity and to represent the general public interest. They had no financial resources

to contribute to the project and could not be described as the major driving force behind it

- 5.7 Three semi-state bodies (FÁS, Bord Fáilte and SFADCo) have provided significant funding for the project and participated in co-ordinating committee meetings from the inception of the project. FÁS and Bord Fáilte are represented at board meetings of Irish Genealogy Limited as observers. However, neither of these agencies is taking a lead role in developing the project or has committed substantial resources to it in the medium to long-term.

FÁS

- 5.8 FÁS considers that overall responsibility for the setting and achievement of strategic goals for the IGP lay with the Department of the Taoiseach, with FÁS contributing operational resources within its own terms of reference and funding criteria. Even though FÁS is the main contributor to the production phase of the project, it did not set any overall targets in relation to the computerisation of genealogical records.
- 5.9 Short-term production targets for schemes are set as part of the funding agreements between FÁS regional managements and individual centres but FÁS has stated that due to the annual nature of its planning cycle it cannot commit itself to funding the full completion of the database. It does not provide management information in relation to the project and has not estimated the total resources required for completion.
- 5.10 FÁS's primary interest is in vocational training and its evaluation of effectiveness of schemes is explicitly concerned with meeting specific training criteria and standards and in getting positive outcomes in terms of progression and placement in jobs. In that context, it supports schemes in local genealogy centres irrespective of whether or not they are participating in the IGP.

Tourism Agencies

- 5.11 Bord Fáilte and SFADCo regard the IGP as contributing to an overall strategy for developing genealogy-based tourism. However, they played no formal role in the detailed planning and management of the project. Although they view the IGP as still being in the development phase, neither agency has committed itself to indefinite funding of the development or management costs of the project.

Project Management

- 5 12 Strong project management is particularly important when there are many agencies or stakeholders involved. Ideally, there should be one agency with overall responsibility for setting and monitoring project targets and one individual with responsibility and authority to deliver the project to specification, time and budget.
- 5 13 It was recognised early on in the project that the appointment of a CEO reporting to the IGP co-ordinating committee was vital. It was envisaged that the day-to-day management and development tasks would be handled by a number of project officers each with different responsibilities set by the CEO.
- 5 14 Three project officers were appointed between 1989 and 1991.⁹ The officers were assigned individual responsibilities for development of centres, training and standards and information technology. Officers were required to report to the co-ordinating committee of the IGP, the board of the IFHF and various executive committees which these bodies established from time to time.
- 5 15 Recruitment consultants were appointed by the IGP in 1992 to recruit a CEO. Advertisements were placed in January 1993 seeking suitably qualified candidates. However, following the short-listing of candidates, the recruitment process was abandoned because funding for the appointment could not be secured by the IGP.
- 5 16 Lack of funding for the appointment of a CEO continued until August 1996 when a CEO took up employment with Irish Genealogy Limited under a two-year contract.
- 5 17 The funding and reporting arrangements arising from the operation of the IGP and the non-appointment of a CEO undermined the roles of the project officers. There were delays in securing funding for their continued employment which caused frustration among the officers. In some cases, the officers found themselves reporting to the agencies that they were, in theory, employed to oversee.
- 5 18 By the time a CEO was appointed, two of the three project officers had left the IGP because of the lack of funding or frustration at the lack of progress on the project, resulting in a loss of expertise and knowledge.

⁹ *A fourth project officer was appointed to oversee IGP activity in Northern Ireland.*

Monitoring of Progress

- 5 19 The monitoring of progress in implementing the IGP has been ineffective. No project budget or measurable targets for overall achievement were set, so there is very little to measure progress against. Systems put in place to gather relevant management information have not succeeded in doing so. As a result, the project has tended to proceed without an overall direction or a sense of the priority areas that need immediate attention.
- 5 20 At various times, the project officers attempted to report to the co-ordinating committee on the progress and performance of the various local centres participating in the project. However, some of the centres did not provide the information sought or supplied it in a format which was not suitable for planning purposes.
- 5 21 The last report by project officers to the co-ordinating committee on operational progress was produced in July 1993 and covered the six months to December 1992. The production of these reports lapsed as a result of the combination of project officers leaving and a reduced frequency of co-ordinating committee meetings in 1994 and 1995.
- 5 22 Some of the project officers were required to report periodically to the public sector agencies which had funded their employment. These reports usually amounted to a statement of the tasks undertaken since the previous report and a summary of the tasks to be undertaken before the next report. Such information was of no real assistance in monitoring progress.
- 5 23 The performance of local centres in providing research services to customers was never reported to the co-ordinating committee. At various stages, attempts were made to collate business levels of the local centres. However, the information produced was usually incomplete and income levels were never reported.
- 5 24 In order to monitor progress properly, the IGP needs to establish clear targets and assess the current level of progress relative to those targets. Basic information from all local centres regarding progress to date, number of target records computerised, access problems, service and income levels and visitor numbers should allow some estimate to be made of when the product will be available and what areas are in need of remedial action.

Evaluation of Effectiveness

- 5 25 The IGP was established as a means of stimulating extra tourism business and distributing tourism more widely. No targets have been set for these objectives and no mechanism is in place to measure the tourism impacts attributable to the IGP. Consequently, the likely effectiveness of the project in contributing to tourism growth cannot currently be established.

Recent Management Developments

- 5 26 In July 1996, the Board of Directors of Irish Genealogy Limited appointed a Chairman and agreed to establish an Executive Committee to deal with strategic management and policy formulation. Since then, the company has

- appointed a CEO who reports to the board
- set up an office in Dublin
- established sub-committees to deal with customer service/development and a marketing strategy

- 5 27 The CEO is required to carry out the following tasks by mid-1998

- complete the preparation of the product for product launch
- draw up and secure agreement for a business plan which will attract adequate funding for the project
- arrange for market research to be carried out and for the implementation of a marketing strategy for the product to be commenced
- ensure the establishment of the central signposting index.

Appendices

Appendix A

Examination Methodology

The examination was conducted by staff of the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General with assistance from consultant archivists, ARCLINE Archives and Records Management

Interviews and Information Sources

Representatives from the following departments, agencies and organisations were interviewed and provided information during the examination

- Department of the Taoiseach
- Department of Tourism and Trade
- Foras Áiseanna Saothair
- Bord Fáilte
- Shannon Free Airport Development Company
- National Library of Ireland/Genealogical Office of Ireland
- National Archives
- General Register Office
- Irish Genealogy Limited
- Irish Family History Foundation
- Association of Professional Genealogists in Ireland.

Examination of Files

During the examination, files from the Department of the Taoiseach and the Department of Tourism and Trade were examined

Sample Survey of Database Records

A random sample of Roman Catholic baptism and marriage records was extracted from the databases in six centres participating in the IGP to check for accuracy levels. The sample was chosen by selecting the first two baptism and marriage records on the database on specific dates each year for the period 1810 to 1880.

Extracted records were compared with a microfilm of the original church register entries held at the National Library of Ireland. Due to the specialised nature of the process, the consultant archivists engaged by the Office of the Comptroller and Auditor General carried out the comparisons of records.

Survey of Genealogical Centres

Following a piloting exercise involving two genealogical centres, a questionnaire was issued in August 1996 to 30 centres involved in the computerisation of genealogical records (of these 28 are participating in the IGP). A copy of the questionnaire is included overleaf. Replies were received from all centres surveyed but some centres were unable to provide answers to some of the questions asked.

Estimation of the number of target records for each centre was based on replies given in the questionnaires. This was supplemented, where necessary, by estimates prepared by the consultant archivists.

Survey of Genealogical Centres

August 1996

Purpose of the Survey

The purpose of this survey is to gain an impression of how far genealogical centres have progressed in relation to the indexing and computerisation of the identified universal genealogical sources necessary to provide a comprehensive genealogical research service

Structure of the Survey

The questionnaire is divided into the following sections

Section A	General information
Section B	Genealogical records
Section C	Equipment
Section D	Employment/training
Section E	Visitor facilities
Section F	Visitor numbers and levels of enquiries and service
Section G	Service offered
Section H	Charges for research and reports

Answering Certain Questions

You may find that some of the questions are not relevant to your centre. Please respond to such questions (or parts of questions) by using the phrase "not applicable"

Where the information requested is not readily available without undue work or research, please indicate the position by answering 'not available'

If you have not got enough space on the questionnaire, please continue any answers on a separate sheet

Abbreviations Used

IGP	-	Irish Genealogical Project
BMD	-	Birth, marriage and death records

Name of
Centre

A General Information

- 1 Name of sponsoring group _____
- 2 When was the group established? _____
- 3 What is the legal status of the sponsoring group (i.e. company, trust, etc)? _____
- 4 Are the following bodies involved with the centre?
- | | <i>Please tick (✓)</i>
Local Authority | <i>Please tick (✓)</i>
County Library | |
|------------------------------|---|--|-----------------------------|
| YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> | YES <input type="checkbox"/> | NO <input type="checkbox"/> |
- 5 If YES in what capacity? _____

- 6 What other organisations or supporting groups are involved with the genealogical centre? _____

- 7 Is the centre a member of the Irish Family History Foundation? YES ☐ NO ☐
- 8 Is the centre participating in the Irish Genealogical Project? YES ☐ NO ☐
- 9 What geographical area does the centre cover in indexing genealogical records? _____

B Genealogical Records

- 10 Please indicate **up to what year** you intend to index each of the following types of record (e.g. all Roman Catholic birth records up to 1900, etc)

Category	Record Type			
	Roman Catholic	Church of Ireland	Other Religions	Civil
	Year	Year	Year	Year
Births				
Marriages				
Deaths				

- 11 In relation your centre's catchment area, please indicate the number of individual records you estimate are in the categories listed below

Category	Record Type			
	Roman Catholic	Church of Ireland	Other Religions	Civil
	Number	Number	Number	Number
Births				
Marriages				
Deaths				

- 12 What percentage of birth, marriage and death records for your centre's catchment area do you currently have access to? (Note: If you have no agreement on access for a particular category, indicate '0%' and if you have access to all records in all parishes and districts indicate '100%')

	Roman Catholic	Church of Ireland	Other Religions	Civil
Percentage (%)				

- 13 In relation to the centre's catchment area, how many genealogical records do you estimate are in the following categories?

Category	Griffiths Valuation	Tithe Applotment Books	Census 1901*	Census 1911*
Number of records				

* Your estimate in relation to Census records should be *for individual family members* not households

- 14 Please indicate, *by placing a tick (✓)* in the appropriate box, the format (or formats) in which the following record types are held at the genealogical centre

	Books (including published indices) or photocopies of originals	Transcript/ Index card	Computer Index	Microfilm/ Microfiche	Other (Please specify)
Civil Records					
Census 1901					
Census 1911					
Griffith's Valuation					
Tithe Applotments					

- 15 In the following categories of genealogical records, how many records have been *transcribed manually* (i.e. onto cards/record sheets) at the end of July 1996?

Category	Religious Records			Civil Regis	Population Records		Land Records	
	Roman Catholic	Church of Ireland	Other	BMD records	1901 Census	1911 Census	Griffith's Valuation	Tithe Books
	Number							

- 16 In the following categories of genealogical records, how many records have been *entered and validated* on the genealogical centre's computer system at the end of July 1996?

Category	Religious Records			Civil Regis	Population Records		Land Records	
	Roman Catholic	Church of Ireland	Other	BMD records	1901 Census	1911 Census	Griffith's Valuation	Tithe Books
	Number							

- 17 For the following categories of genealogical records, please indicate the approximate date when you had or expect to have all relevant genealogical records entered on the computer system?

Category	Religious Records			Civil Regis	Population Records		Land Records	
	Roman Catholic	Church of Ireland	Other	BMD records	1901 Census	1911 Census	Griffith's Valuation	Tithe Books
	Year							

C Equipment

- 18 Please indicate how many pieces of the following types of equipment are located at the genealogical centre

Equipment	Number
Microfilm reader(s)	
Photocopier(s)	
Fax Machine(s)	
IGP Digital Computer System Terminal(s)	
IGP Digital Computer System Printer(s)	
Other Personal Computers (PCS) Terminal(s)	
PC Printer(s)	

D Employment/Training

- 19 When did the indexing of genealogical records commence in your area?

- 20 Were/are FAS training schemes or work programmes used for indexing purposes?

YES

Please tick (✓)

NO

- 21 If YES, please identify the type(s) of training scheme or work programme used

Please tick (✓) as appropriate

Community Response/Local Training Initiative

Community Youth Training Programme

Community Employment

Teamwork

Other (please identify below)

- 22 Has the genealogical centre continuously availed of FAS training or work schemes since indexing started?

YES

Please tick (✓)

NO

- 23 If NO, please advise of the periods when FAS courses were not availed of and the reasons for this

- 24 How many persons are *currently* involved in genealogy indexing and researching at the centre?

Category

Number

FAS trainees/workers

FAS supervisors

Other FAS (if appropriate)

Sponsor Group Employees - Full-time

Sponsor Group Employees - Part-time

- 25 If there are additional workers employed in the genealogical centre, please provide details of the numbers and their employment status (i.e. voluntary, contract etc)

- 26 If FAS trainees/workers are employed on the indexing of genealogical records, please indicate the percentage of their time which is spent on indexing records and receiving training

Activity	Percentage of time spent on activity
Indexing records	%
Training	%

- 27 How many people are authorised to answer research enquiries?

E Visitor Facilities

- 28 In relation to visitor reception facilities, please indicate which of the following best describes those available at the genealogical centre

Please tick (✓) one box only

Stand-alone visitor reception facilities separate from all other activities on the site of the centre (i.e. centre's own reception/customer service/waiting areas)

Visitor reception facilities which share a common space with other activities

No designated visitor reception facilities

Other

- 29 If you indicated 'other' to the above question, please describe briefly the visitor facilities available

- 30 If you provide services other than the family history research service, please describe these other services

F Visitor Numbers and Levels of Enquiries and Service

- 31 Please provide details of visitor numbers to the genealogical centre in the year 1995 and for the current year to the end of July 1996

Year	Total	Ireland	UK	USA	Australia	Other
1995						
Jan-July 96						

- 32 Please provide details of genealogical enquiries in the following periods

Year ended December 1995						
Enquiry Origin	Total	Ireland	UK	USA	Australia	Other
Postal/Fax						
Telephone						
Internet/e mail						
Visitor						
1 January 1996 to 31 July 1996						
Enquiry Origin	Total	Ireland	UK	USA	Australia	Other
Postal/Fax						
Telephone						
Internet/e mail						
Visitor						

- 33 Please provide details of the number of family history reports and individual searches completed as a result of these enquiries and the amounts of income generated

Period	No of Family History Reports	Related Income	No of Individual Searches	Related Income
Year end Dec 1995		£		£
Jan to 31 July 1996		£		£

G Service Offered

- 34 Please indicate below the type of genealogical research service you offer in relation to *each* of the following records sources (For the purposes of this survey, a 'full' service is a search of all known genealogical records of the type in question, whether available in your centre or not)

	Full (✓)	Partial (✓)	None (✓)
Roman Catholic - BMD			
Church of Ireland - BMD			
Other Religions - BMD			
Civil Records - BMD			
Census 1901			
Census 1911			
Griffiths Valuation			
Title Applotment Books			

H Charges for Research and Reports

- 35 What charges (if any) apply to the following record searches and related family history reports?
If the structure below does not suit or represent accurately your pricing structure, please provide these pricing details on a separate sheet

Record Searches	Computerised or Indexed	Non Computerised Non Indexed
Church Records		
one record (birth/death/marriage)	£ _____	£ _____
one family (births)	£ _____	£ _____
Civil Records		
one record (birth/death/marriage)	£ _____	£ _____
one family (births)	£ _____	£ _____
1901 Census		
per household	£ _____	£ _____
1911 Census		
per household	£ _____	£ _____
Tithe Applotment Books		
per parish	£ _____	£ _____
per county	£ _____	£ _____
Griffiths Valuation		
per household	£ _____	£ _____
per parish	£ _____	£ _____
per county	£ _____	£ _____

If applicable

Complete Family Research Reports	
Preliminary Reports	£ _____
Full Reports	£ _____

Note. If prices vary please indicate the range of fees involved

- 36 Does your centre charge for the following? Please tick (✓) YES or NO as appropriate.

Service	YES	NO	If YES How much?
General information about the centre's service			£
General information about the research services in Ireland			£
Unsuccessful or 'negative' searches			£

Other Comments

Please add any other comment you have regarding the questionnaire or the IGP here

Appendix B

Consultancy Reports on the Irish Genealogical Project

1 The IFI Report (1988)

A report on *Computer-Based Genealogy Services for Ireland* commissioned by the International Fund for Ireland was produced in December 1988

This report examined the feasibility of using computer technology for the storage and dissemination of genealogical information to tourists. In addition, the suitability of specific projects, including the application from the Family History Council of Ireland which was the original outline of the IGP, for grant assistance from the Fund was considered. The report focused mainly on the proposals presented by the grant applications.

2 The Conlan Report (1990)

The Irish Genealogical Project: Marketing Strategy and Business Plan was produced by Conlan International Consultants Limited in March 1990 at a cost of £18,450

The consultants were required to report on

- the marketing strategy to optimise the level of family history enquiries from visitors to Ireland, from people of Irish extraction in other countries and from Irish people living in Ireland
- the optimum level of enquiries and commissions that could be expected over a period of years
- a strategy to develop secondary products for national tourism and for local centres, given the reality of product life cycle
- a business plan to realise the returns both
 - directly in terms of research commissions
 - indirectly in terms of 'roots related' tourism to the country as a whole and to the regions
- how the local and national services should operate

3 The Department of Finance Report (1991)

A report on the Irish Genealogical Project by the Analysis and Operations Research Section of the Department of Finance was produced in August 1991. There was no charge to the IGP for the report.

This study was undertaken at the request of the Department of the Taoiseach. No specific terms of reference were fixed. The report of the study aimed to provide a general background to genealogy in Ireland, the emergence of the IGP and the service which it hoped to provide, the problems it was likely to face and finally the project's viability.

4 Tourism and Leisure Partners Report (1993)

A report entitled *Irish Genealogy Limited: Strategic Proposals and Outline Business Plan - Choice and Consequence* was completed by Tourism and Leisure Partners Ltd in December 1993. The report cost £10,636.

The authors were commissioned to review the business proposition and to prepare a business plan.

The terms of reference for the business plan stated that the plan should

- determine the nature and range of Irish Genealogy Limited products and their effective delivery to the customer in the light of market demand
- define a marketing strategy with tasks, targets and timetables
- devise a product development strategy in conjunction with all providers and stakeholders
- examine the financial relationship between the centres, professional genealogists and Irish Genealogy Limited (i.e. suggest a pricing structure aimed at the recovery of overheads) and determine realistic revenue and costs, based on a number of scenarios over a three year period including projected profit and loss account, balance sheet and cashflow statement
- address both the short-term and the long-term viability of the company and its dependency on public agency support
- examine current staffing and advise on the most effective structure
- assess the potential overall economic and social impact of the IGP