

Introduction

EDITORIAL BOARD

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We are delighted to launch the *Irish Journal of Arts Management and Cultural Policy*. As a peer-reviewed, open access e-journal, this platform will publish original research on the arts and cultural sector in Ireland. We hope it will serve as a gathering place for critical thinking and constructive debate on the challenges and opportunities facing arts professionals in Ireland. This inaugural issue is only the start of what we hope will be a shared discussion on a wide spectrum of topics encompassing arts and cultural management; governance; policy decisions/outcomes; cultural economics; arts education; social practices and cultural production. While democratic governments will always need the freedom to respond tactically to circumstances, policy decisions that are concerned with equity, integrity and credibility, must also be rooted in longer-term analysis, critique and a transparent articulation and consideration of principles. As we continue to face new challenges, we hope the *Irish Journal of Arts Management and Cultural Policy* will serve not only to inform these circumstances but also act as an educational resource for arts management and cultural policy professionals and students.

Our challenge, as scholars and shapers of Irish culture in all its forms, is precisely this: to find the ideas, language and vision that will inspire and inform new directions in policy and practice.

An initiative based at the School of Art History and Cultural Policy, University College Dublin (UCD), the *Journal* aims to provide a readable and engaging discussion of recent arts management and cultural policy relating specifically to an Irish context. One of the goals is to encourage new research directions in the sector and offer a platform for aspiring researchers and writers. For this inaugural issue, we cast the net widely to embrace a variety of policy and management topics. This, we will continue to do. We welcome submissions from those working and researching in the fields of Irish cultural policy and arts management. We understand that some issues raised by the contributing authors may be contentious and we welcome this. It is our intention to provide a considered space for research and informed reflection. We hope the *Journal* may provoke lively debate amongst those who understand that there is a need for independent-minded research that is more than purely academic.

As funding tightens, the impulse may be to retract and narrow the scope of our cultural ambitions and aspirations. Our challenge, as scholars and shapers of Irish culture in all its forms, is precisely this: to find the ideas, language and vision that will inspire and inform new directions in policy and practice. Our pragmatic political culture tends to be more comfortable with policies that arise from deal-making, tactical response and improvisation. In 1992 Professor Ciarán Benson, once an officer of the Arts Council and later its chairman, wrote in an issue of *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* that actual cultural policy in Ireland tended to emerge in decisions taken, rather than from published strategies and statements of principle.¹ We hope this e-journal may help to fill, and inform, the gap to which Professor Benson has referred.

We would like to thank the authors, peer reviewers, and advisory board who have supported this first issue. We welcome you as readers, and future contributors, to join us in growing a vibrant Irish research environment that allows for the exchange of constructive critical ideas that will shape the future of Irish cultural policy.