

Liatroim Library's Irish Language Book Loans 2012 -2013

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THE RESULTS OF the 2011 Census shows that Liatroim has a population of 31,800 with 12,644 (43%) saying they can speak Irish and another 1,162 stating they speak it on a daily or weekly basis. There are two Gaelscoils in Liatroim, with 92 attending in Cluainín and 205 in Cora Droma Rúisc. There are two Naíonras (Irish language creches), one in Béal an Átha Mhóir and one in Cora Droma Rúisc.

There are four Gaelic youth clubs in the county; three run by Cumann na bhFiann with a regular attendance of 18 in Cluainín, 32 in Béal an Átha Mhóir and 80 in Droim Seanbhó. Spleodar attracts 15 to their youth club in Cora Droma Rúisc. There are three committees registered for the 'Glór na nGael' competition and five Irish language conversation groups countywide in Droim Dhá Thiar, Achadh an Mheasa, Béal an Átha Mhóir, Droim Dhá Thiar and Cluainín

So how is all this Irish language activity being reflected through the loans of Irish language book's in Liatroim's county libraries?

As would be expected children's books are being borrowed in highest volumes in the libraries where the *Gaelscoileanna* and *Naíonras* are located. Parents and grandparents of *Gaelscoil* and *Naíonra* pupils are further supporting their kids learning through Irish by reading Irish books to their offspring. Noreen

Lunney, grandmother of Matthew Connolly who is in Ranga 4 in *Gaelscoil Chluainín* said: "It's great to see all the kids reading in Irish. I learned Irish very well in school but I didn't find a way to put it to use after I left, but now I read these books to my grandchildren who are at the Gaelscoil and they talk back to me 'as Gaeilge'; I love it".

Liatroim libraries have plenty of wonderful Irish children's books, but there are very few Irish books for teenagers. "It is crucial that the older kids begin to read books by themselves because a teenage reader is what will make an adult reader" said Caroline Farrell from *Leabharlann Chluainín*. Interestingly, Droim Seanbhó has the highest number of teenagers attending an Irish language youth club in the county but have no registered Irish book loans from their adult section where the teenage books might be. Barra Mac Tighearnáin who runs the *Cumann na bhFiann* youth clubs in Liatroim, said that "Part of *Cumann na bhFiann's* mission is to show teenagers that they can access the language outside the school environs" and he added that "a visit to the libraries is something he will definitely include when the clubs start up again in September".

Retired county librarian Seán Ó Súilleabháin said that "mixing teenage and adult books in the same section may have been an oversight",

but explained that "it is very difficult ascertain what a teenager might wish to read". In *Leabharlann Chluainín* there are excellent titles in Irish in every category imaginable from poetry to history, learning material to short stories, there are encyclopedias, novels for teenagers, adults and adult learners, and anything from religious titles to erotic fiction. But because they are generally presented as one section with no subheadings it might prove difficult to browse for what you might want. Seán Ó Súilleabháin, who also runs the very well attended Irish conversation group in Béal an Átha Mhóir, noted that "Having the '*Ciorcal Comhraí*' in the library definitely added to the high amount of Gaelic book loans by adults" but he agreed that "there could be more loans if the Irish book section in the libraries were separated into their various categories".

While the total amount of book loans has increased since 2012, five of the nine libraries show a downward trend. To counteract this it would be necessary for the librarians to take some positive action like, displaying the Irish books more prominently, using dividers to differentiate the book's categories, exhibiting the Irish book selection during *Seachtain na Gaeilge*, inviting local authors to do readings, inviting the local primary and Irish language teachers to include book loans as part of their Irish class or hosting an Irish language book club. But what seems to increase the Irish adult book loans most dramatically is the hosting of a regular Irish language conversation group.

The implementation of these measures should see the number of loans increase again next year.

Leabharlann	Children 2012	Children 2013	Adult 2012	Adult 2013
Cluainín	237	312	30	33
Cora Droim Rúisc	314	234	43	29
Béal an Átha Mhóir	106	178	34	61
Coillte Chlochair	54	136	0	2
Maothail	99	95	22	22
Droim Seanbhó	80	61	5	0
Droim Dhá Thiar	58	51	0	1
Carraig Álainn	33	33	5	0
Cionn Locha	39	26	0	0
Iomlán	1020	1126	139	148

Total Gaelic Book Loans in Liatroim 2012 = 1,213 2013 = 1,274