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# Public engagement

**Trinity engages with the public through a myriad of activities, including public lectures, exhibitions, events and social media to showcase research, and welcoming visitors. Trinity features on all lists of Ireland's Top 10 visitor attractions and pre-Covid over two million people visited the University each year.**

**RIGHT** – Members of the public enjoying Science Gallery Dublin's exhibition PERFECTION.

These include dignitaries on state visits to Dublin; visiting fellows, lecturers and speakers at academic symposia and student societies; tourists and visitors to campus attractions; and the exceptional individuals who are conferred with honorary degrees each year.

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## Outreach activities

Many of Trinity's outreach activities are organised in partnership with national and international organisations and festivals.

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## Annual/recurrent events

Each year the public are welcomed to campus for Culture Night in September, Open House Dublin in October while Front façade lights up green to celebrate New Year's Eve and St Patrick's Day and red to welcome in the Chinese New Year. A visible eclipse is not an annual event, but it has become tradition to host stargazers in Front Square when exceptional planetary or solar activity is happening. For ECLIPSE 2015, hundreds of people gathered to use high-tech telescopes and special shades to catch the partial eclipse. The following year, hundreds gathered again on 9 May to use telescopes to witness the Mercury transit – the solar system's smallest planet moving across the sun. The rare event was streamed to a plasma TV from NASA's Solar Dynamics Observatory. This year, due to Covid-19 restrictions, astrophysicists brought June's partial solar eclipse to the public via livestream.

A man with short dark hair, wearing a dark sweater with a white geometric pattern, is looking down at a display. The background is a teal color with a fine grid pattern.

→ Since opening in 2008, Science Gallery has welcomed more than three million visitors (340,000 annually) to 49 unique exhibitions, ranging from design and violence to light and love, and from contagion and biomimicry to the futures of the human species and play.



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'PROBE: Research Uncovered' is a pop-up festival of talks, experiments, and interactive workshops showcasing the best of Irish research. It takes place annually as part of European Researchers' Night in September. Some 3,000 visitors annually join live research experiments and workshops on campus. In 2020, it was renamed START (Start Talking about Research Today) and went online due to Covid-19 restrictions.

2014 was the inaugural year of the Trinity Walton Club – a not-for-profit STEM education programme subsidised by Trinity and supporters, including the Bank of Ireland, which invites secondary school students to attend STEM learning environments in Trinity labs on Saturdays and summer camps during school holidays.

### Decade of Commemorations

The 'Decade of Commemorations' [2012–2022] has been an occasion for remembrance, memorialising and reflection across the country and Trinity has participated fully.

Over 6,000 people attended the World War I roadshow of pop-up talks and activities in 2014, hosted by Trinity in partnership with RTE Radio 1 and the National Library of Ireland. The 'Family History Collections Day of World War I memorabilia' invited people to bring in war-related items, letters and mementos for digitisation and archiving by a team of experts.

In March 2016 the college hosted a Proclamation Day Symposium, '*The 1916 Proclamation in its national and international context*' showcasing leading historians and scholars.

Over 10,000 people visited the campus to participate in talks, debates, exhibitions, performances and vintage tennis matches during RTE's *Reflecting the Rising*, a free family event which took place throughout Dublin city centre on Monday 28 March 2016.

Rare and previously unpublished material held in the Library was made accessible globally, thanks to an online collaboration between Trinity and Google. *Dublin Rising 1916–2016*, an interactive Google street view tour lets visitors virtually explore streets, events and people who shaped history 100 years ago.

*Changed Utterly: recording and reflecting on the Rising 1916–2016*, an exhibition in the Old Library examined the way the Rising was recorded at the time; how it was commemorated 50 years later; and how it was reassessed in 2016. Key artefacts on display included: the Library's copy of the Proclamation, torn from the walls of the GPO, along with a WWI recruitment poster pasted to the back; photographs of British troops in Front Square; the scrapbook of Elsie Mahaffy, daughter of the then Trinity Provost; and the casing of a bullet which pierced the roof of the Library during Easter week.

'Beyond 2022: Ireland's Virtual Record Treasury' is an Irish Research Council funded collaboration led by Trinity with four archival partners: The National Archives of Ireland, The National Archives (UK), The Public Record Office of Northern Ireland and The Irish Manuscripts Commission. The project will digitally recreate the building and contents of the Public Record Office of Ireland, destroyed by fire at Dublin's Four Courts at the outset of the Irish Civil War.

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**LEFT** – Provost Patrick Prendergast views the near-total solar eclipse in Front Square at ECLIPSE 2015.

**BELOW** – ‘PROBE: Research Uncovered’ saw members of the public enjoying hands on experiments and interactive workshops.

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This initiative has potential to transform how we understand Ireland’s past and is of particular interest to those tracing their Irish roots. In December 2019 the project was awarded €2.5 million from the Government under Project Ireland 2040.

### Public lectures

Trinity’s research institutes, centres, and schools host regular public lectures. The Trinity Long Room Hub is particularly active, with lectures, exhibitions, seminars, and symposia on cultural, political and social issues. Among its thought-provoking public programmes in recent years are the *Annual Edmund Burke Lecture*, *Behind the Headlines*, *What does it mean to be Human in the 21st Century?*, *Out of the Ashes: Collective Memory*, *Cultural Loss and Recovery*, *Annual Humanities Horizons Lecture*, *Trinity and the Changing City* and *Women’s Stories*.

Co-discoverer of the DNA double helix, James Watson, was the guest, together with five Nobel Prize winners at the symposium, *Schrödinger at 75 – the Future of Biology*, held in Trinity and the National Concert Hall, marking the 75th anniversary since Erwin Schrodinger gave his seminal *What is Life?* lectures in Trinity College in 1943.

The annual Trinity Week is a public programme of lectures, symposia and activities, hosted by the three faculties in turn, with a different theme each year. Recent themes include *Silence*, *Energy and Memory*.

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### The Library

Visitor numbers to the Old Library and Book of Kells have more than doubled since the Provost started his term of office, from 558,000 in 2011 to 1.14 million in 2019 – an increase of 105%. The Library is a key exhibition space and the exhibitions are online too, some recent examples include:

- *Forever Begin* – commemorating Brendan Kennelly’s life in poetry;
- *Rockaby, baby*: building on Trinity’s collection of Beckett’s literary archives;
- *Illuminating the Middle Ages* – a treasure trove of medieval Latin manuscripts;
- *Drawing Your Attention: Four Centuries of Political Caricature*;
- *Director’s Choice Uncut* – highlights of the collections of the Library of Trinity College Dublin and their fascinating history;
- *From Decadence to Despair*, the first major Irish exhibition on Oscar Wilde.

An ambitious digitisation initiative, *Virtual Trinity Library*, was launched this year. It will conserve, catalogue, curate, digitise and research the Library’s unique collections, making them accessible to a global audience.



The annual *Bookmarks* exhibition displays some 70 handmade books in the Long Room, written and illustrated by Dublin primary schoolchildren over a two-month period with the help of authors, artists and children’s book specialists. This initiative, organised by Trinity Access, the Library and the School of English, aims to inspire children to become the next generation of Irish authors, illustrators and publishers.

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### Science Gallery

Science Gallery Dublin draws on the expertise of scientists, researchers, students, artists, designers, inventors, creative thinkers and entrepreneurs to develop its programme of exhibitions and events. Since opening in 2008, Science Gallery has welcomed more than three million visitors (340,000 annually) to 49 unique exhibitions, ranging from design and violence to light and love, and from contagion and biomimicry to the futures of the human species and play. A further two million visitors have participated in a Science Gallery exhibition abroad, making Science Gallery Dublin one of the largest non-profit cultural exports of Ireland.

Over the past decade the Science Gallery Network has grown to nine members across four continents: Dublin, London, Melbourne, Bengaluru, Berlin, Venice, Detroit, Rotterdam and Atlanta. Each gallery is known for its innovation and vision.