

News from IPDA Ireland Branch

The second annual conference of the Ireland branch of IPDA was held in St Patrick's College, Drumcondra, Dublin on Saturday March 21st 2009. Taking the theme of "The Creative Professional", (in keeping with the European Year of Creativity and Innovation 2009), and a format that included invited presenters as well as an open call for papers, the conference attracted participants from a wide range of educational and artistic institutions both North and South. Delegates were welcomed by Maureen Killeavy, UCD, Co-Chair of IPDA Ireland, and Arthur Rice, St Mary's University College, Belfast, outgoing treasurer of IPDA Ireland. Ken Jones, Swansea Metropolitan University, IPDA president, provided a context for the work of the whole organisation, a *raison d'être* for continuing professional development and a dynamism to sustain an audience of dedicated professionals throughout a most inspiring day¹.

In her opening keynote address, Dr Pamela Burnard, University of Cambridge, challenged participants to think of the places and spaces *where* creativity occurs and *how* it occurs, and the types of professional practices that inspire creativity. Dr Mary Shine Thompson, Dean of Research at St Patrick's College, welcomed delegates on behalf of the host institution with sparkling metaphors triggered by the poetry of Austin Clarke, and leading us to consider what these can mean in our everyday professional lives.

Concurrent sessions during the day continued on the theme of creativity and professional development, encompassing such topics as reflective practice, teacher learning, creative identity and citizenship, and teacher-artist collaborations in schools. Other dimensions included creativity and innovation in mobile phone technology, innovations in moving image education, drama education and poetry in curriculum settings. Building on the strand begun last year, the session on classroom innovations in action research led by three practising primary teachers (all with doctorates) provided a strong focus on practitioner inquiry while a paper based on a/r/tographical methods also provoked creative thought on professional practice.

The day concluded with a deeply moving keynote address from The Duchess of Abercorn where she recounted her experiences of coming to live in Northern Ireland as a child in the 1960s, and what led her to the founding of The Pushkin Trust in 1987. As the Trust states, the Pushkin Programme is about "freedom of the imagination to create realities that can enrich our everyday existence. It is also about integration of heart and head, of thought and feeling, it is about finding a voice - our own true voice - and of giving it the opportunity to be expressed by creative means." The sharing the personal and reflective insights brought a heartening, impassioned and fitting end to what was indeed a remarkable meeting of Northern and Southern Irish colleagues in the field of professional development.

Regina Murphy and Maureen Killeavy IPDA Ireland Co-Chairs

¹ Ken was one of the few Welsh people in Dublin on the day that Ireland would meet Wales in Cardiff to decide the winner of the rugby union Six Nations Championship. A closely fought contest eventually saw Ireland emerge as victor, and winner of the Grand Slam for the first time in 61 years.

Images from IPDA Ireland Conference, March 21st 2009



Ken Jones and Arthur Rice



Pamela Burnard with Regina Murphy



Ken Jones discussing the journal's evolution



Pamela Burnard addresses delegates



Mary Shine Thompson



Mingling and networking



Bernard McCloskey, Norther Ireland Screen



Delegates



The Duchess of Abercorn



Donna Murray



Expression of thanks