Nora Browne Retires

The Acting Deputy Librarian, Ma Nora de Brún, has retired after more than 40 years of service to the College.

Ms de Brún told the Courier that one of the most enjoyable features of her work was the opportunity of helping students to learn. This, she explains, is because she "was a teacher at heart". In fact, she did originally train as a teacher. After her graduation from UCC with an honours BA in French and English, she took the H Dip in Ed, spending 18 months at South Presentation Convent.

As an undergraduate, Nora had been in the first group of student helps in the Library. When she started to work full-time in April 1951, she found it a fairly old-fashioned institution. (One memory she has which evokes the atmosphere of those days is that of a robin which nested in the English anthology section, and which used to fly out over the heads of the staff as they climbed their ladders.) There were very few, if any, professional librarians: subsequently, she herself became one of the new generation of trained professionals, when in 1969-70 she was sent by UCC to take the Library Diploma in UCD, having already taken her MA degree in French in 1967.

Another feature of the Library in the 1950s was the fact that stock was held on a closed-access basis. This, however, gave scope to her teacher's inclination to assist students as much as possible with their requests for books. As a result, she built up a "great rapport with students".

The changes in the Library that Nora has witnessed are varied and extensive. She mentions in particular the developments which flowed from the appointment of the late Mr Pat Quigg as Librarian in 1973, the professionalisation of the library staff, the introduction of the Dewey decimal system, the growth of user education, the advent of automation, and of course, the whole series of changes in the physical accommodation of library stock, culminating in the 1983 move to the Boole Library. Despite all these changes, there is at least one thing which has remained constant for Nora de Brún: throughout her lengthy service, she says, the College Library was always an enjoyable place to work.