

Online Troubles archive CAIN gets a year to find future funding



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An acclaimed Troubles web archive that was earmarked for closure has been handed a 12-month reprieve in order to find further funding (stock photo)

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An acclaimed Troubles web archive that was earmarked for closure has been handed a 12-month reprieve in order to find further funding.

For years academics around the world - as well as journalists, writers and historians - have used the Conflict Archive on the Internet (CAIN).

Earlier this year, it was reported that the comprehensive resource based at Ulster University's Magee campus in Londonderry was to close.

The immediate threat of closure, however, has been lifted following the outcome of a consultation carried out by the university, published recently.

It emerged yesterday that CAIN has secured short-term funding to cover staff costs for 12 months from August.

The funds have been obtained from ARK, a fellow online resource which records Northern Ireland social policy, and the Executive Dean of the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences.

However, it comes with the provision that core funding for two to three years must be secured within the next nine months in order for CAIN to continue beyond next summer.

If long-term funding cannot be confirmed by May 2020, then a "three-month transition programme" will kick in, resulting in CAIN becoming an "unstaffed static archive", effectively closing the archive down by July 2020.

"The aim during that (nine-month) period is to secure funding for two to three years that would permit work to be done on the further development of the CAIN archive and the supporting technology," said the statement.

The consultation outcome notes a total of 103 individual responses - as well as a 'joint letter' signed by 439 academics - were received by the university.

"The responses were overwhelmingly positive about the value and trustworthiness of the CAIN archive," the statement added.

"Many people outlined how they use and depend on the resources.

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"The majority of respondents urged the university to maintain CAIN as a live archive with dedicated staff to add new materials, carry out updates and answer queries."

The university added staff had been left "impressed" by the archive's global reach and the "respect with which it is held by many academics and others".

Thanking those who had engaged in the consultation process, it was revealed CAIN and the university will be holding workshops over coming months to glean "lessons that can be learned" from archivists at institutions across the world.

Although it stressed it will consider short-term funding applications, the preference is longer-term, citing benefits that could be made to the archive.

"Funding would allow a major overhaul of the technology of the CAIN website and a wide range of updates to be carried out to the primary information and source materials on the site," it said.

Updates on obtaining funding will be published on the CAIN website.

Belfast Telegraph

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