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## Future of Ulster University's historic Troubles archive still shrouded in uncertainty

3 minutes

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The CAIN internet service (standing for Conflict Archive on the Internet) is a vast repository of speeches, murals, treaties, death records and more, covering decades.

It is entirely open to the public and is run by the University of Ulster – but last year the university said funding pressures meant its future was in jeopardy. It now refuses to shed light on its current funding status as the clock ticks down to a decision deadline.

In a statement on June 19, 2019, the university said it was trying to secure “funding for two to three years” by the end of April 2020.

If it cannot be found by that date, the CAIN service will be reduced to a “static archive” – meaning there will be no staff to add to it, update it, or amend it – with all funds for staff ultimately running dry by the end of July 2020.

The News Letter has sought to learn what progress has been made since then towards finding the cash needed.

The university responded that “some external funding has been secured, and the team is actively progressing other funding applications, as a priority”.

It turns out two grants were given last year, both from the Republic of Ireland.

One, in September, was from the “reconciliation fund” of Dublin’s Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade. This was to process records from the Irish National Archives. Another was awarded in December, also from the “reconciliation fund”, in order “to digitise the speeches, statements etc of John Hume”.

However, the News Letter pressed the university on exactly what the value was of the funding which has been secured, and how far it would go towards covering its running costs.

Initially, its press office said “we are looking into this”, but then after a week of silence it said “we will not be issuing any funding figures”.

It added “it would not be appropriate for us to disclose details of grants secured or any that are being developed/in progress”.

CAIN is used frequently by journalists; for example, it was used as part of the research for a News Letter story last weekend about how many people the IRA murdered since the 1998 peace deal.

Brian Feeney, a co-author of the book *Lost Lives* (which records all Troubles killings), has previously described the university's unwillingness to continue funding CAIN as “shameful”, adding: “The University of Ulster have got their priorities all wrong. CAIN makes a greater impact on conflict studies internationally than anything else it does.”