Three Leaps of Faith and Four Giant Steps:
Developing Interpreter Training in Ireland

Lorraine Leeson & Teresa Lynch
CIT 2008
Some Background: Ireland

- Most westerly state in EU
- Irish Sign Language (ISL) indigenous
  SL - not officially recognized in
  Republic of Ireland despite EU (1988,
  1998) and Council of Europe
- Historical link to LSF
- Some 5,000 sign language users
- Currently approx. 50 interpreters,
  giving ratio of 1:100 ISL users.
  (Finland 1: 10, UK 1: 140)
Ireland

[Map of Ireland with regions labeled: Connaught, Ulster, Leinster, Munster, Connacht, Ulster, Leinster, Munster, Mayo, Sligo, Galway, Clare, Limerick, Tipperary, Waterford, Cork, Kerry, Louth, Meath, Westmeath, Offaly, Kildare, Wicklow, Carlow, Wexford, Waterford, County Down, County Antrim, County Tyrone, County Derry, County Fermanagh, County Monaghan, County Tipperary, County Waterford, County Cork, County Kerry, County Limerick, County Clare, County Galway, County Sligo, County Mayo.]
The 3 Leaps of Faith


2. IASLI - the birth of a profession (1993-2007)
   - Currently no SLI professional organisation, but many are members of ITIA.

3. Establishing the First Interpreting Agency (Sign Link (1997-2007))
   - Registration/ assessment/ training
   - Other agencies now established.
The 1980s & SLIs in Ireland

- In 1981, EU Year of Disabled People, NUI Maynooth offered Deaf people scholarships to the university.
- They couldn’t take up those places due to the complete lack of professional interpreting services.
- This situation continued until 1994 when the first ISL/English interpreters graduated from the EU Horizon Programme funded programme (TCD-Uni of Bristol).
- EU funding as crucial lynch-pin to establishing SLI training and services (1992-4, 1998-9).
Our Four Giant Steps

• **Step 1: HORIZON I (1992-4)**
  - Trinity College Dublin (IRE), University of Bristol (UK) & Irish Deaf Society

• **Step 2: The SLIDE Program (1994)**
  - National Association for the Deaf (IRE), Royal National Institute for the Deaf (UK)

• **Step 3: Cork: The European Union Goes South!**
  - NUI Cork (IRE), University of Bristol (UK) & Cork Deaf Enterprises (IRE)

• **Step 4: CDS- A Home for Deaf Studies at TCD**
Centre for Deaf Studies

- Established 2001
- 3 Undergraduate diplomas
  - Deaf Studies
  - ISL/English Interpreting
  - ISL Teaching
- From 2009, 4 year degrees in these domains, with e-learning content (SIF II)
- Research mandate
- Deaf:hearing ratio of full-time academic staff 3:1
- Many graduates are now lecturers, having completed postgraduate training in cognate fields.
Interpreting in Practice

- Professional registration is problematic: no statutory basis at present.
- Training needs to be rolled out nationally - SIF II - & made accessible to Deaf students too.
- Currently looking at accreditation of TCD degree by the UK’s CACDP.
  - This links to statutory registration and accreditation in UK and to formal recognition of BSL and ISL in Northern Ireland: As BSL/English public service interpreters in NI are registered, so too should ISL/English interpreters.
- Deaf interpreters - a new development.
SIF II

- Strategic Innovation Funds (Cycle II)
- Project worth €2.4 Million (approx. $3m)
- Working with Blanchardstown Institute of Technology to roll out 4 year honours blended learning degree (BA in Deaf Studies)
- Collaborating with NUI Cork, Limerick Institute of Technology & Tipperary Institute
- Innovative use of new technologies to bridge barriers to access.
Training: Footprints in the Sand...

- Since 1964 in the USA & since the early 1970s across Europe, with Sweden beginning in the late 1960s
- Since 1992 in Ireland - sporadic until 2001
- No harmonization of SLI training across the EU
- Some mapping of language learning to CEFRL
- Need for European Framework of Core Competencies for Interpreters?
‘A lot done, more to do...’

- For ISL users: lack of formal recognitions and/ or protections afforded to them as SL users in Ireland;
  - Even where there are legal provisions, practice does not always follow as we’d like it to;
  - Provisions are generally ad-hoc in nature. Funding streams are provided on a good will basis;
  - Interpreting provision seen as “the solution”: in reality, it is part of the solution, but not the complete answer.