

Irish Humanities Alliance Annual Report 2024

January 2025

Irish Humanities Alliance



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About the Irish Humanities Alliance

The Irish Humanities Alliance (IHA) is a joint initiative of humanities researchers within higher education and research institutions across the island of Ireland founded in 2013, and is housed at the Royal Irish Academy, Dublin.

The IHA provides a platform for all-island humanities collaboration and consultation which has enabled the diverse range of humanities disciplines across the island to speak with a single voice. The IHA aims to produce a report over the course of the calendar year, detailing the main activities of the alliance. This report covers 2024, sections include hyperlinks to further documents and resources.

Core Objectives

- Protect, promote and develop humanities scholarship across the island of Ireland.
- Promote humanities collaborations between institutions and disciplines.
- Ensure parity of esteem between humanities disciplines.
- Promote secure and adequate funding of humanities research in Ireland.
- Promote the centrality of the humanities in addressing pressing societal challenges, particularly through the thematic IHA Working Groups.
- Support excellence at all stages of academic career development in the humanities.
- Advocate for research and education strategies attuned to a multicultural & multilingual society.
- Promote European and further international humanities collaboration with humanities organisations and alliances.

Structure

A membership agreement is in place with Member Institutions to contribute to the implementation of the IHA Annual Work Programme in accordance with the aims of the IHA and responsibilities of the Member Institution and Individual Members.

- a) IHA Member Institutions propose four IHA Individual Members as institutional humanities representatives, to sit on the IHA Board.
- b) IHA Individual Members attend board meetings, contribute to the Work Programme, regularly inform their Member Institutions regarding the work of the IHA, and promote the work of the IHA within their institutions with academic staff, students and administration.
- c) The IHA Board nominates a new Vice Chair each year, and the Vice Chair then becomes the IHA Chair the following year. Each IHA Member Institution is entitled to one vote per institution for nominations.

Membership Background

The IHA is an alliance of thirteen higher education and research institutions who have invested significantly in the IHA since its establishment in 2013. Current membership comprises: Dublin City University; Maynooth University; Mary Immaculate College; Queen's University Belfast; Royal Irish Academy; South East Technological University; Technological University Dublin; Trinity College Dublin; Ulster University; University College Cork; University College Dublin; University of Galway; and University of Limerick. The Royal Irish Academy hosts and supports the IHA.



IHA Working Groups

IHA Working Groups are an important aspect of our Work Programme. Through our established network, the IHA establishes WGs in response to current issues and/or trends in the arts and humanities. In this way, position papers, reports and public seminars are employed to inform the arts and humanities community and the wider public in addition to contributing to HEI and the national research policy agenda in Ireland.

The IHA also hosts WGs with an interdisciplinary focus to expand knowledge and further enable cross- and transdisciplinary networking. Membership of IHA WGs is open to researchers from any of our member institutions. WGs are usually led by two Co-Chairs, supported by the IHA Coordinator and report directly to the IHA Board at the four Board Meetings each year. There are currently six active IHA WGs.

Medical and Health Humanities WG

Reconstituted in 2024, the WG organised a [Medical and Health Humanities Research Survey](#) in the past year, to provide insight into the breadth and depth of Irish humanities research related to the areas of health and medicine. The final report is based on responses to a call from WG members and includes details of publications, research grants and work in this area from 138 scholars in this field. The WG is planning to organise a Medical and Health Humanities Doctoral Training Workshop in 2025.

‘Medical and health humanities scholarship is a vibrant and growing area of research across the island of Ireland. Our universities on the island have considerable research activity in this area while this is also a growing field in other institutions. We hope that this overview will be a catalyst for further development of joint working between academics in Ireland, provide an information resource for further development of networks and wider research opportunities, and provide insights into the potency of this approach to health and well-being to those leaders and bodies directing strategies for research and development in Ireland.’

Medical and Health Humanities:
A Research Snapshot from across the island of
Ireland

Na Daonnachtal Leighis agus Sláinte:
Léargas ar an taighde atá á dhéanamh ar fud
oileán na hÉireann

November 2024
Samhain 2024

Irish Humanities Alliance
Comhionannas Daonnachtal na hÉireann

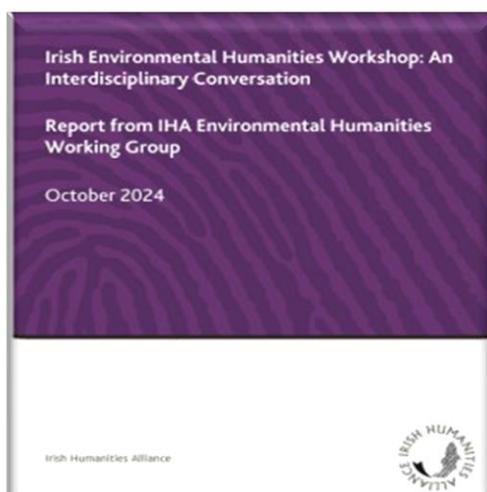


Legal Humanities WG

Established in November 2024, the Legal Humanities Working Group aims to provide a connective forum for encouraging interdisciplinary and inter-institutional scholarly collaboration; gather information on activities in the Legal Humanities conducted in HEIs across the island; gather expertise and resources; and provide a network to be drawn upon in the design and preparation of funding bids. The WG is planning to organise a public event including a range of speakers: creative writers / performers, academic scholars, and legal practitioners in 2025.

Environmental Humanities WG

Reconstituted in 2023 to advocate and mediate for the importance of arts and humanities disciplines in understanding environmental challenges such as climate change. The WG organised a public symposium [Irish Environmental Humanities: An Interdisciplinary Conversation](#) at the Royal Irish Academy on 30 May 2024. The workshop explored the role of the Arts and Humanities in shaping research, teaching and public policy in relation to the climate and environmental emergencies of our times. A report from this workshop is available [here](#).



Key themes and concerns explored on the day focused on:

- Teaching and Pedagogical Practice
- Decolonisation and Sustainability Discourse
- Methods and Disciplines
- Irish Environmental Futures

A report on the workshop findings was published in Oct 2024.

Research Ethics and Integrity WG

Formed in 2024 to address the distinct and rapidly evolving challenges, both national and global, confronting arts and humanities research. Amongst the diverse areas that the WG aims to respond to are the role of AI in humanities research, including copyright and publishing, research ethics review processes within and beyond the university, and ethics and integrity training for graduate students.

The WG responds to challenges by encouraging transdisciplinary humanities engagement and leadership in the development of national policy and guidelines; sharing experience of engagement and leadership in university-led integrity initiatives such as data management, the application of FAIR principles, and ethical review processes.

Research & Innovation WG

Established in June 2023, in response to the announcement that the Government of Ireland would amalgamate the Irish Research Council and Science Foundation Ireland to create a single funding agency for research in Ireland. The WG was to the forefront in organising a workshop in collaboration with the Royal Irish Academy on 15 May 2024. This was the first of two consultation events convened by the RIA to consider the corporate plan and future funding portfolio of the new funding agency, Taighde Éireann – Research Ireland. See [here](#) for a full report on workshop findings.

Acadamh Ríoga na hÉireann
Royal Irish Academy

Report: Workshop on Taighde Éireann-Research Ireland
Arts & Humanities Research Community

Workshop convened and facilitated by the Irish Humanities Alliance in collaboration with the
Royal Irish Academy,
15 May 2024



Horizon Europe WG

The Horizon Europe WG responds to calls for comments/feedback on aspects of draft Horizon Europe work programmes. WG members are tasked with responding to upcoming calls issued by the Irish National Delegate. Calls often have short deadlines for response and this work is efficiently conducted in the interest of the Arts and Humanities community in Ireland.

DOMESTIC AND INTERNATIONAL ACTIVITIES

IHA Arts and Humanities Research & Innovation Event

Following the success of our pilot Arts and Humanities Showcase in 2023, the IHA organised a daylong event to celebrate research achievements among our Arts and Humanities community. This event was held on 27 November 2024 at the Royal Irish Academy.

Launch of Medical and Health Humanities: A research snapshot from across the island of Ireland

The IHA Arts and Humanities Research & Innovation event opened with the formal launch of our Medical and Health Humanities Working Group Report (2024). Des O'Neill, Professor in Medical Gerontology, School of Medicine, TCD, chaired an insightful discussion on the importance of medical and health humanities with panellists: Amanda Clifford, Professor in Physiotherapy, Faculty of Education and Health Sciences, UL and Des Fitzgerald, Professor of Medical Humanities and Social Sciences, the Radical Humanities Laboratory, UCC.

Exciting News! Event, Narration and Impact from Past to Present

Stemming from the IHA annual conference held at University College Cork in March 2021 we were delighted to officially launch an impressive volume *Exciting News! Event, Narration and Impact from Past to Present*, edited by Prof. Brendan Dooley and Dr Alexander (Sandy) Wilkinson (Leiden: Brill, 2024). The volume brings together a broad range of current research in Europe and beyond concerning media impact in the period from the seventeenth through the twentieth century. The volume was launched by Dr Jason McElligott, Director Marsh's Library. Editors, Prof. Dooley and Dr Wilkinson chaired a vibrant panel of contributors: Dr Joel Herman; Dr Bláithín Hurley; Prof. Liam Mac Mathúna; and Dr Máire Nic An Bhaird. Further details on this volume linked below.



Prof. Brendan Dooley presents a copy of the volume to Ms Emma Rothwell for the Royal Irish Academy Library

IHA Research & Innovation Showcase

The IHA Arts and Humanities **Research & Innovation Showcase** included presentations of three projects which received funding that led to demonstrable public impact. The showcase was chaired by Dr Nessa Cronin, IHA Chair.

- **Presenter:** Dr Caitríona Ó Dochartaigh, UCC
Project: [Ultonia - Cultural Dynamics in Medieval Ulster and Beyond: A Shared Inheritance.](#)
Funding: North–South Research Programme (Shared Island Fund)

This project led by Dr Caitríona Ó Dochartaigh, UCC and Dr Nioclás Mac Cathmhaoil, UU Magee, was inspired by the Educational Dialogue strand of the Shared Island Initiative which calls on educators North and South to learn from each other and jointly reflect on the future of education on the island. The genesis of the project grew out of the evident need to exploit synergies between existent research centres on a cross-border basis, to generate high-quality research outputs and at the same time foster greater co-operation in educational initiatives North and South.

- **Presenters:** Prof. Elaine Farrell, QUB and Prof. Leanne McCormick, UU
Project: [The Bad Bridget project - Criminal and deviant Irish women in North America, 1838-1918](#)
Funding: Arts and Humanities Research Council (AHRC)

This project focuses on criminal and deviant Irish girls and women in Boston, New York and Toronto from 1838 to 1918. The project has several aims. It seeks to explore how and in what ways Irish women were sexually deviant in North America and how they were treated. The project also seeks to uncover the types of criminal activity in which Irish women were involved, from public drunkenness to murder. The project considers if Irish women deviated from societal norms to a greater extent than other ethnic groups and if the reactions of the authorities were guided by ethnic prejudices.

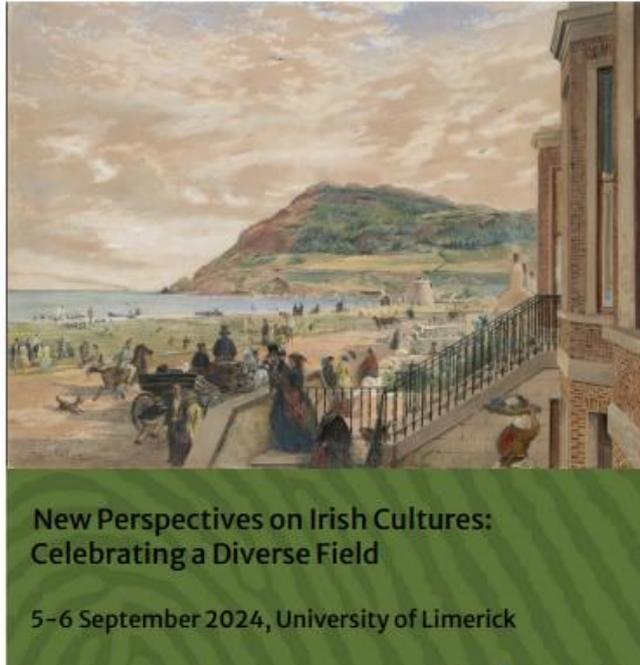
- **Presenter:** Ms. Joy Rooney, SETU
Project: [Portallis - The transdisciplinary pilot project explored the earliest connections between Ireland and Wales.](#)
Funding: European Regional Development Fund

Portallis maps the story of the first human journey between Ireland and Wales dating back to the Mesolithic period, in the context of contemporary resilience and climate adaption for both local coastal communities and their visitors. Achieved by consolidating existing evidence with new data to develop a powerful new cross-border narrative, a new visitor experience is accessible at Waterford Museum of Treasures, Ireland, and Ceredigion Museum, Wales.

IHA Annual Conference 2024

New Perspectives on Irish Cultures: Celebrating a Diverse Field

The annual IHA conference was held on 5-6 September 2024, at the University of Limerick



Supported by the Irish Humanities Alliance; the Faculty of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences staff research support funding scheme University of Limerick; and the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance.

This hybrid conference brought together scholars working across a wide range of disciplines to generate new perspectives on how Irish cultures are being studied, how Irish cultures are being framed and deployed, and on the multiplicity and diversity of Irish cultures.

Keynote Speakers:

Mr Oein DeBhairduin, Traveller Culture collector and Curator, National Museum of Ireland. 'Minceiri and the Museum: Connection, Challenge and Change'

Dr Aileen Dillane, Irish World Academy of Music and Dance, University of Limerick. 'Always Coming Home': Speculative Ethnographies, Deep Ecologies, and Musical Affordances'

Steering committee:

Dr Niamh NicGhabhann (UL); Dr Karol Mullaney-Dignam (UL); Dr Sophie Cooper (QUB) & Prof Sonja Tiernan (IHA).

STATEMENTS & PUBLICATIONS

The Irish Humanities Alliance regularly release public statements and responses to national and international events affirming our values. Our Working Groups organise workshops and conduct research to inform the wider arts and humanities community and engage with stakeholders. Statements, workshop reports, and publications published in 2024 can be directly accessed through links on images below or through the IHA policy page on our [website](#) and linked below.

[IHA Statement, 10 December 2024](#)

On 4 December 2024, the New Zealand Minister for Science, Innovation and Technology, Judith Collins, announced that the Marsden Fund would focus on core scientific research ignoring the humanities and social sciences. The Irish Humanities Alliance, standing in solidarity with our colleagues working in the humanities and social sciences across New Zealand, called for this decision to be withdrawn and published this statement.



[IHA Position Paper, 21 February 2024](#)

Drawing on our strategic objectives, the IHA published a position paper responding to the then recently published 'Research and Innovation Bill 2024' to provide for the establishment and functions of a new funding body to be known as Taighde Éireann / Research Ireland.



WEBSITE & SOCIAL MEDIA PUBLICATIONS

Blog Posts: The Alliance's blog series is a collection of Humanities perspectives and comment pieces on news, current affairs, and publications. The blog covers a wide range of Humanities subject areas, and we encourage contributions from Arts and Humanities researchers and those interested in the Humanities.

During 2024, five blogs were published on the IHA website, shared on social media and can be read through the links below:



Wicked in nature. Image courtesy Detta Cahill

'The Green Credentials of the Wicked Witch of the West: An Ecocritical Perspective on Wicked (2024),' by Dr Ellen Howley, DCU

'Exhibiting Bad Bridget', by Prof. Elaine Farrell, QUB and Prof. Leanne McCormick, UU



The Bad Bridget Exhibition. Courtesy of Ulster American Folk Park



Sleeping woman by Abbie Bernet. Reproduced under Unsplash License

'Theorising Research Ecologies? An Environmental Humanities (Meta) Symposium', by Dr Ashley Cahillane, UCD

'New funding agency represents a major step in Irish higher education', by Prof. Daniel Carey, MRIA



Flooded rain tree in the Mekong. Photographer Basile Morin, Wikimedia Commons Licence



AI generated image utilised by far-right figures in wake of Dublin riots

“Ireland, We are at War”: Conor McGregor, Crisis Populism, & Transnational Flows of Digital Discontent’ by Dr Anthony P. McIntyre, UCD

The Humanities and Me is a series of short reflective pieces by invited artists, writers, curators, academics, journalists, politicians, and well-known personalities about what the Humanities means to each of them personally. Subjects range from their daily lived experience of the Humanities, to what it means to them intellectually.

Humanities and Me articles published by the IHA in 2024:



Marc Ó Cathasaigh



Philip Nolan

ENGAGEMENT WITH STAKEHOLDERS & POLICYMAKERS



The IHA is a founding and committed [member](#) of the [European Alliance for Social Sciences & Humanities \(EASSH\)](#). The EASSH General Assembly 2024 took place on 5 – 6 December 2024 in Brussels.

IHA Coordinator, Prof. Sonja Tiernan, attended the meeting in person to represent the interests of the IHA. There were presentations from senior representatives of the EASSH Governing Board and other members of the Alliance. The event was coordinated and led by Dr Gabi Lombardo (Director EASSH) and Prof. Silvana Colella (President EASSH.)



[The Wales Arts and Humanities Alliance \(WAHA\)](#) was formerly launched on 11 October 2024 at Aberystwyth University and the Centre for Advanced Welsh and Celtic Studies (CAWCS), facilitated by the Wales Innovation Network and encompassing all nine universities in Wales. WAHA provides a pan-Wales opportunity to build deeper and stronger partnerships and knowledge exchange through the research and innovation excellence of higher education arts and humanities.

Dr Nessa Cronin (IHA Chair) and Prof. Sonja Tiernan (IHA Coordinator), participated in a hybrid roundtable discussion with colleagues from our sister organisations, the Scottish Arts and Humanities Alliance, and the British Academy. There were rich discussions of how we can 'make the case' for Arts and Humanities more effectively and how we can advocate with impact.

Led by Mary-Ann Constantine, Professor/Project Leader at CAWCS, and Dr Patrick Finney, Pro Vice-Chancellor for the Faculty of Arts and Social Sciences at Aberystwyth University. A recording of the roundtable session may be viewed [here](#).

System-level Incentivisation of Open Research Practices

Find out more about this NORF project! 

ABOARD
Roadmap to
Embedding Open
Research Practices
in Ireland

The IHA is a [project partner](#) of [ABOARD](#) which is a [NORF](#) funded project co-led by University College Cork and Trinity College Dublin.

The ABOARD project will develop a roadmap for system-level incentivisation of [Open Research](#) practices; this will mean that the incentives that researchers encounter in all their major fields of activity (including recruitment, promotion, institutional research initiatives and engagement with external funders) will be aligned effectively.

Dr Nessa Cronin and Prof. Sonja Tiernan attend ABOARD meetings and share information with IHA members. Most recently, the ABOARD [Self Assessment Survey](#) was shared with IHA members. The aim of this survey is to assess the state of play in the Irish research culture and the openness to change in relation to Open Research practices, the Responsible Use of Research Metrics and Responsible Research Assessment.

NEW MEMBERSHIP

The IHA were delighted to announce that South East Technological University and Mary Immaculate College, Limerick joined our alliance in 2024. We welcome our SETU and MIC colleagues and look forward to working with them over the coming years as we champion humanities research and scholarship in Ireland and Northern Ireland.



KEY PRIORITIES for 2025

Membership Expansion

In the last decade there has been a progressive change in the landscape of universities in Ireland as well as the development of humanities subjects in Higher and Further Education Institutions. To further strengthen our alliance and to ensure full representation of the humanities across our island, we aim to continue broadening our membership base as we progress.

New Research Funding Agency

A priority for 2025-26 is a continued focus on ensuring that the new funding agency, Taighde Éireann - Research Ireland, will recognise parity of esteem between disciplines; provide support for research excellence at all stages of academic career development in the humanities; and secure adequate funding of humanities research.

The IHA has taken part in the initial consultation on the purpose, vision, and priorities which will inform the establishment of the new agency. Throughout 2024, the IHA engaged in a more comprehensive consultation process to develop a strategy and corporate plan for the agency. The IHA will remain a central voice throughout the consultation process; in early 2025 the Chair and Coordinator of the IHA will meet with Interim CEO of Research Ireland, Celine Fitzgerald.

All-island collaboration

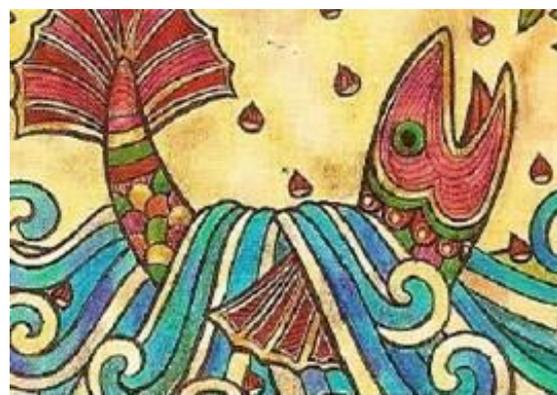
The IHA submitted an Expression of Interest to the HEA funding Call 2, North South Research Programme 2024 in December 2024. Our proposal - Future Humanities, Future Connections: Humanities All-Island Research Network – has successfully passed the first stage of assessment. We are currently working on a full application for submission in late February 2025, the outcome of which will be announced in June 2025.

The IHA remains committed to the concept of an all-island research centre underpinned by the principles of cross-border research dialogue, mutual understanding and cultural diversity.

PLANNED EVENTS & ACTIVITIES 2025-26

IHA Annual Conference 2025

An annual call to member institutions is made to run a conference, under the auspices and with the financial support of the IHA. Successful applicants nominate individuals to join an IHA Steering Committee to take responsibility for organising the conference.



IHA Annual Conference 2025

Call for proposals to host

The IHA annual conference will be hosted at University College Dublin on 4-5th September 2025, led by Dr Bianca Cataldi (UCD) in collaboration with the steering committee: Prof. Anne Fuchs, Professor of German and director of UCD Humanities Institute; Dr Sarah Comyn, Assistant Professor and Ad Astra Fellow, UCD School of English, Drama and Film; Dr Megan Kuster, Postdoctoral Researcher, University of Manchester and Prof. Sonja Tiernan, IHA Coordinator.

The conference *Feeding the Soul: Transnational Narratives of Food and Belonging*, seeks to engage with how food serves as a vehicle towards a layered and complex understanding of belonging, exile, nostalgia and estrangement, but also cross-cultural exchanges, cultural enrichment and nourishment, preservation of heritage and identity. Further details and the call for papers to follow in Spring 2025.

Training and Development



In line with our commitment in the [IHA strategy document](#) to support 'excellence at all stages of academic career development in the humanities' we will look to host further training and information sessions, led by our Working Groups.

Scottish-Irish cultural diplomacy and relations



Scottish-Irish Cultural Diplomacy and Relations event to be held on 26 September 2025. This half-day event, co-organised by the Scottish Arts and Humanities Alliance (SAHA), the Irish Humanities Alliance, and the Royal Irish Academy, will explore the progress achieved in implementing the recommendations of the Joint Bilateral Review of the Irish and Scottish Governments.

INTERNAL GOVERNANCE

IHA Board Meetings:

The IHA Board has four meetings every academic year. The board aims to meet in person at least twice per year. In-person meetings are hosted by a member institution, which may showcase its research facilities to board members on meeting day. There are, on occasion, extraordinary meetings outside the four annual meeting dates.

Board Meetings held in 2024:

19 January 2024 – Trinity Long Room Hub, Trinity College Dublin

12 April 2024 – Online

21 June 2024 – University of Galway

18 October 2024 – Online

IHA Executive Members, December 2024:

Dr Nessa Cronin (UG, Chair)

Prof. Brendan Dooley (UCC, Vice-Chair)

Prof. Sonja Tiernan (IHA, Coordinator)



Further information

Irish Humanities Alliance – Promoting the Value of the Humanities

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