Social Entrepreneurship Module report
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(Submitted as part of the Graduate Certificate in Innovation and Entrepreneurship, The Innovation Academy, University College Dublin).

Innovation and the Humanities project

Outline: In order to complete the final module of the Graduate Certificate in Innovation and Entrepreneurship, I undertook a self-directed project titled ‘Innovation and the Humanities’. The aim of this project was to explore ways in which the innovation and entrepreneurship skills explored during the programme could be applied specifically to humanities contexts, and to examine the current position of contemporary discourses on innovation and entrepreneurship within the humanities in third level education.
Outline of project strands

This project has three strands. **Strand 1** involved setting up a research project around the key questions outlined above - the interrelationship between contemporary humanities discourses and contemporary innovation and entrepreneurship discourses within higher education. This strand involved running a conference in UCD in 2012, gaining €5000 in funding from UCD Research to carry out a larger funding project, setting up a project website and research project with a colleague in UCD, attending conferences, and reporting back on findings. An ethics application for this project has just been approved by UL and the second phase of this project is currently underway.

**Strand 2** involves the founding of a campus start-up company, and engaging in various programmes of start-up training provided by the university. This company is a private limited company, called Stair: An Irish Public History Company Ltd., and has three directors ([http://stairpublichistory.wix.com/stair](http://stairpublichistory.wix.com/stair)).

**Strand 3** has involved running a project with Stair: An Irish Public History Company Ltd. for the Health Service Executive in Monaghan. This project demonstrates the research and aims of Strands 1 and 2 in action. The project demonstrates the high-quality outputs of a humanities-based start-up, as well as its potential to generate revenue and employment.

In order to demonstrate the research, work and findings of this social entrepreneurship module, each strand is outlined in detail below. Appendices with relevant information for each strand will be attached to the overall project outline.
STRAND 1: Innovation and the Humanities Research Project

1.a. Background
During my initial engagement with the Innovation Academy, I became interested in the fact that the modules and resources available for innovation within third level institutions were aimed at ideas of tech transfer, monetization and patents, and did not necessarily engage with process- or service-related disciplines, and in many cases did not engage with the humanities. This seemed to be a gap in the field, given the high number of humanities students in third level institutions, and the current employment crisis for humanities graduates, particularly those graduating with PhD degrees, and limited career opportunities.

This situation resonated with my own personal experience, as a recent PhD graduate applying for jobs with little success. I was lucky to be employed at UCD as a part-time lecturer in the School of Art History and Cultural Policy, and as a postdoctoral researcher on a digital humanities project within the UCD School of History. This digital humanities project involved a partnership with Fáilte Ireland, and involved creating a digital resource for exploring Ireland’s medieval heritage that would be usable and accessible for tourists and researchers alike. A video on this research project created by UCD research can be viewed here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iy3VUNTYYUA These experiences led me to explore the potential for developing entrepreneurial ventures within the humanities in order to develop the sector, and what I could see was the potential for engagement with the heritage tourism sector by academics in order to improve the tourist offering, and capitalize on this aspect of Ireland’s unique built heritage. The formation of Stair: An Irish Public History Company Ltd. formed one part of this development, but this is explored more fully in the Strand 2 section of this report. In tandem with this, I developed a research project to explore how innovation and entrepreneurship could best be supported within the humanities.

Forming the Innovation and the Humanities research project - step 1

The first stage in forming the Innovation and the Humanities research project was to organize a one-day symposium on the subject at NovaUCD, the Innovation centre at UCD. The aim of this day was to highlight current practices within the humanities that engage with ideas of innovation and entrepreneurship.

A report on the conference can be found here: http://www.ucd.ie/innovation/newsevents/newsarchive/2012/december/innovationandhumanitiesconference/name,157189,en.html

As conference leader, I organized and curated this conference, which was well attended with over 50 delegates registering on the day. Professor Peter Clinch, then UCD Vice-President for Innovation, opened the conference with a keynote address. Professor Clinch stated that “there are significant economic impacts which can be achieved through the creation of cultural capital in areas such as heritage tourism, the value of Ireland’s ‘brand’, the acknowledged contribution of our cultural brand to the value of Irish products and services, the digital
humanities and opportunities in small and large industry. And perhaps the most exciting opportunities from an economic point of view are in the convergence of knowledge from the humanities, the social sciences, engineering and science.” He added, “At University College Dublin, the arts, humanities and social sciences are equally important to the innovation mission of the University alongside science and engineering. We must enable students and staff to participate in innovation activities, help them to create value from their knowledge and to bring ideas to fruition whether commercial or in a more intangible way.” He concluded, “Today’s conference is an important contribution to creating value from Ireland’s expertise in the humanities and I would like to congratulate everyone involved in organising such a productive day.” (Source: http://www.ucd.ie/innovation/newsevents/newsarchive/2012/december/innovationandhumanitiesconference/name,157189,en.html, accessed 21 April 2015).

Topics covered included:
- Sustainable finance for (humanities) start-ups, Stuart McLaughlin, CEO, Business to Arts
- UCD Innovation supports, Dr Ciara Leonard, UCD Innovation
- Humanities and industry: collaboration and transition, Brian Donovan, Director, Eneclann Ltd
- Establishing trust; the road to incorporation and the National Folklore Collection, Dr Kelly Fitzgerald, Sruth/ Irish Folklore Commission
- Monastic Ireland, Dr Niamh NicGhabhann, UCD Micheál Ó Cléirigh Institute for the Study of Irish History and Civilisation
- Digital humanities in action: learning about learning with the Fota and Strokestown learning zones, Dr Danielle O’Donovan and Jennifer McCrea
- Heritage and culture: An engine for tourism growth in Ireland?, Aidan Pender, Director of Strategic Development, Fáilte Ireland
- The challenges of knowledge transfer, Dr Marc Caball, UCD Humanities Institute of Ireland.

Following on from this, I took part in several business and entrepreneurship training events at NovaUCD, including the Commercialization Bootcamp, run by Dr. Ciara Leonard and Caroline Gill. In order to document this process, I wrote a series of blog posts - the post on the Commercialization Bootcamp can be found here: http://niamhnicghabhann.tumblr.com/post/52152809485/thinking-about-innovation-and-the-humanities

Further blog posts on this subject can be found here:
http://niamhnicghabhann.tumblr.com/post/49308432489/thinking-about-innovation-and-the-humanities and

These blog posts were a useful way of immediately documenting the process, and were widely shared on social media. For some reflection on the role of social media and the contemporary ERC experience, please see here: http://niamhnicghabhann.tumblr.com/post/108726262290/academic-life-and-the-internet
1.b. Developing the research project

Following the success of the Innovation and the Humanities conference, Dr. Maeve Houlihan (Quinn School of Business, UCD) and I decided to apply to UCD Research for a grant to carry out further research in the area. The project application was successful and a grant of €5000 was given to the project. This is currently ongoing. The research project is outlined below.

The vigorous engagement with the Innovation and the Humanities conference at UCD NOVA (14 December 2012) resonated with both need and appetite for dialogue around cultural creativity, enterprise and endeavour and how creative careers are nourished within the university. The Humanities, specifically the arts and cultural sector, are creative to their core though rarely associated with the language of innovation or commercialisation. Its practitioners readily make things happen, though seldom describe themselves as entrepreneurs. Yet, this capacity to create is a cornerstone of our social as well as economic wellbeing, and its development requires nurturing, support and infrastructure, as it does in any other sector.

At the conference, humanities researchers, practitioners, students and cultural change-makers came to NOVA to explore their place within the enterprise conversation and share case studies and insights. What are our notions of innovation and enterprise within the university, and within humanities in particular? Cultural endeavour stands on its own merits, building a reflective society. It does not have to be scaled or income-generating to have value. Yet, nor is it the case that it should not be. How can UCD and NOVA support cultural enterprise and facilitate students, graduates, scholars, faculty and other stakeholders who wish to harness their creative work and talent into employment, creative careers or further forms of impact and opportunity? Responding to these questions and the need for deeper engagement between the humanities disciplines and innovation and enterprise initiatives, this project proposes three actions. Our immediate goal is to foster dialogue, and to map a plurality of creative career and innovation pathways for humanities
stakeholders. Our broader goal is to build a platform for constructive collaboration towards a sustained research programme on the humanities and innovation, enabling both publishable and cultural enterprise outcomes.

**Proposed Project Actions**

1. **Building a Resource Hub: To build a digital resource on projects, resources and research, which support innovation within the humanities disciplines.**
   This aspect of the project will involve an audit/scoping exercise by the project proposal authors, to source and assemble research and support materials relating to humanities and innovation. Looking at current research, project and resources which are being developed both in Ireland and internationally, a digital resource hub will be prepared which can be used in the further development of this field, and as a practical tool for researchers, teachers and students. Future, as a capacity building exercise, the authors will participate in workshops, relevant training or seminars, and an international conference connected with the goals of the project, with the goal of identifying promising practices of benefit to the project. This will allow the knowledge gained through this experience to be reinvested in the project and in the university.
   - Potential conferences include the 2013 European Culture Forum (4 – 6 November), Brussels, which has, as one of its pillars, ‘Measuring the true value of culture and the functioning of the cultural eco-system’. For more information on this conference, please visit [http://ec.europa.eu/culture/events/forum2013/index_en.htm](http://ec.europa.eu/culture/events/forum2013/index_en.htm) and Digital Economy 2013 Open Digital (4-6 November, BBC, Media CityUK, Salford) [www.de2013.org](http://www.de2013.org)
   - Engagement (through site visits, dialogue and attending workshops) with organisations championing humanities and innovation including UK’s ‘Create’, the UK’s Arts and Humanities Research Council, Arts-Emergency, and Warwick University’s #culturalvalueinitative, and with Irish organisations such as Business to Arts and Humanities Research.
   - Anticipated costs €3,000

2. **Symposium: Organising a high-profile event to highlight Innovation and the Humanities.**
   We propose to follow the success of the initial Innovation and Humanities event in NovaUCD (14 December 2012) with an expanded, high profile symposium to highlight innovative projects and pathways within the humanities. This will challenge and question the idea of ‘innovation’ and what it means within a humanities context. Speakers will, as before, come from a range of academic and practitioner backgrounds, focused on cultural creativity and highlighting examples of collaboration and the creation of new knowledge or approaches to work and creative careers. This seminar will be aimed at a broad audience of academics, practitioners, student and other stakeholders - simulating dialogue and focusing energy on the creative careers project.
   - Action timeline - December 2015
   - Anticipated costs €2,500

3. **Pathways Initiative: Mapping a cross section of creative careers**
   How do creative careers unfold, and within a university context? What supports and resources have helped or are needed? Using appropriate methodologies, Drs Houlihan and NicGhabhann will survey humanities academics within the university about ideas of innovation within their own research and practice as teachers, and
signposts to creative careers and innovation pathways among students and graduates. We will recruit some research assistance at this stage, to support the project, and to create an early career development opportunity for an emerging researcher. This research will work to generate and distil valuable demographic and attitudinal data around approaches and current practice within the university and among our graduates, perceived challenges, and opinions about building further development in this area.

- Action timeline - January 2013 – December 2015
- Anticipated costs €3,000

Proposed outcomes, outputs and dissemination of project findings.

Overall Outcome:
The three project actions outlined above will significantly add to the body of knowledge and activity within the university around innovation and the humanities and contribute to discussions underway around innovation and cultural and creative enterprise among the Office of the Vice-President for Innovation and researchers, students and teachers within the humanities disciplines. Beyond this our goal is to lay the ground work for a substantial and sustainable research initiative of equal academic and practical relevance.

Output 1: Creation of a digital hub and resource using a wordpress or tumblr platform to record and archive all project findings, and to inform audiences about project activities. This website will ensure that project findings are retained for use into the future.

Output 2: Research audit on projects and resources in Ireland and internationally which are aimed at supporting innovation and the humanities.

Output 3: High-profile symposium around innovation and the humanities, bringing together influential speakers and promising practice case-studies

Output 4: Survey data from humanities academics working within UCD around practices of innovation and creative career pathways

Output 5: A publication, bringing together the findings of the survey, the case studies from the seminar and material and findings from the audit.

Further research outputs include the preparation and submission for peer-review of a co-authored paper by the project proposal authors, and potentially the basis of a competitive proposal to Horizon 2020 in the transmission of culture sphere.

Potential future development
This project is based on collaborative, interdisciplinary work. It aims to create dialogue across various departments within the university context, and to create links with universities and other institutions both nationally and internationally. These practical and achievable aims, and the timely nature of the project will further contribute to building a research culture which is in line with the objectives of Horizon 2020. Therefore, the three strands proposed are approached as foundational seed research, aspiring towards an expanded future body of research and potential catalyst for a Horizon 2020 funding bid.
**Project leaders:** Dr. Maeve Houlihan is senior lecturer in organisational behaviour and work at the School of Business, UCD, with responsibilities at graduate and undergraduate level, including a longstanding teaching relationship with the MA in Cultural Policy and Arts Management.

**Dr. Niamh NicGhabhann** is a lecturer at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick, and is a student enrolled in the Graduate Certificate in Innovation at the Innovation Academy at UCD. The research for this project will form part of the research schedule of both project leaders. We anticipate seeking research assistance from MA students exploring their potential interest in undertaking PhD studies in this area, creating a realistic preview experience as well as financial assistance for the right student.

Dr. Maeve Houlihan: [maeve.a.houlihan@ucd.ie](mailto:maeve.a.houlihan@ucd.ie)
Or
Dr. Niamh NicGhabhann: [niamhroisin@gmail.com](mailto:niamhroisin@gmail.com)
1.c. Current research project outputs

Dr. Houlihan and I attended and presented at the 'Beyond the Creative Campus' conference at King's College London in June 2014. A video reflecting our participation can be found here: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UdAydARmbi8

A conference report on the conference content and its relationship to the Innovation and the Humanities project can be found here (and is also included below): https://innovationandthehumanities.wordpress.com/research-into-innovation-and-the-humanities/

A research project website can be found here: https://innovationandthehumanities.wordpress.com/

A list of resources and related projects, which is continually updated, can be found here: https://innovationandthehumanities.wordpress.com/resources-and-related-projects/

The primary research phase is about to begin, comprising surveys and semi-structured interviews with current students, recent graduates and staff and faculty members within humanities departments.

Ethics approval has recently been granted by the UL AHSS ethics board, and this research will commence shortly.

Following the primary research phase, Dr. Houlihan and I will write a co-authored paper for submission in an ISI-ranked journal on the subject of this research project.

The ethics application for this project, including sample survey and interview questions, has been included as Appendix 1 to this report.

A second conference will also be held in Dublin in December 2015, capturing and sharing this research and the perspectives of invited speakers.

10 project research meetings have already taken place in Dublin and Limerick, discussing and planning the primary research stage and the conference development.
King’s College London: Higher Education and the Creative Economy, 23-24 June 2014

This conference, based at King’s College London, was the final output of the successful AHRC-funded project ‘Beyond the Creative Campus’. This project was organised by Dr. Roberta Comunian (Lecturer in Cultural and Creative Industries at the Department for Culture, Media and Creative Industries at King’s College London), and Dr. Abigail Gilmore (Director of the Centre for Arts Management and Cultural Policy at the University of Manchester). The conference was organised along a number of interconnected themes.

The first explored the importance of the creative disciplines within university campuses, with strong presentations by figures such as Jenny Bilfield, President of the Washington Performing Arts Society, USA and by Christine Khor, Director, NUS Centre for Arts, National University of Singapore. These presentations focused on interconnections within the university, and the role of the arts and creative disciplines as a central factor in a broad, connected and pioneering university education. This theme of the arts disciplines collaborating with other disciplines featured prominently throughout the conference, with panels and keynotes exploring the processes and methods behind successful collaborations. The word ‘hyphen-disciplinarity’ featured throughout the weekend as a way of thinking across disciplines in a collaborative and engaged way, rather than focusing on the needs or potentials of disciplines in isolation. Jenny Bilfield’s presentation focused mainly on her time at Stanford University, and the impact of commissioning art work and creating opportunities for students and staff to engage in creative endeavours (especially when they were from disciplines traditionally considered as being outside of or different to ‘the arts’), such as a collaboratively-produced vertical dance performance with artist Elizabeth Streb. Christine Khor outlined and discussed the vibrant arts environment created at the National University of Singapore, and the impact it has had on students and their personal and professional development.

These ideas of collaboration were further explored in a series of panels (parallel panels means that I can only report on half the conference, unfortunately!) focusing on the concept of moving beyond knowledge transfer to knowledge engagement and co-creation. Speakers included Fiona Kearney from the Glucksman Gallery in University College Cork, who has developed an innovative curatorial collaboration with academic departments from across the university. Academics work with gallery curators to create exhibitions which explore and reflect a chosen subject, engaging with ways of knowing and representing from different, but collaborating perspectives. Martin Andrews, from the University of Portsmouth, spoke about Real Live Architectural Projects, which essentially involves architectural students working on projects with clients and gaining valuable experience as part of their training, while clients get access to imaginative, exciting ideas. Robin MacPherson, the last speaker on the panel, spoke about the Institute for Creative Industries, of which he is Director in Edinburgh Napier University. He discussed several projects, focusing particularly on film, where artists identify and work with groups and clients to create high-quality outputs, products and services. The idea of the ideas broker or projects curator was discussed during several panels – a figure who can understand the needs of the client
and the potential offered by the creative practitioner, and who can essentially ‘match-make’ in a way that will allow the benefits of the collaboration be apparent to both parties.

These models of collaboration and engagement were further discussed in a panel discussion later in the conference, featuring Leon Cruickshank, Reader in Design from the University of Lancaster, Jon Dovey, Professor of Screen Media, University of West England, Georgina Follett, Deputy Principal for Knowledge Exchange, University of Dundee and Morag Shiach, Vice-Principal and Executive Dean, Humanities and Social Sciences at Queen Mary, London. This discussion was centred on the experiences of running collaborative projects, such as Creative Works London and Innovation Voucher Projects. Key issues such as appropriate levels of mentoring, managing client expectations, ensuring that projects are delivered in a sustainable way, and the role of the broker were explored by the speakers and the audience. A later session featured Tarek Virani, from Queen Mary, University of London, who explored collaborations between creative small, medium and micro-sized enterprises and higher education institutions, focusing particularly on the experience of the Creativeworks London Creative Voucher Scheme, and conference co-convenors Roberta Comunian and Abigail Gimore, who explored the paths and spaces between higher education and the creative and cultural industries – succinctly and engagingly illustrated by a short film created by Alys Scott Hawkins in collaboration with Dr Abigail Gilmore and Dr Roberta Comunian as part of the research network ‘Beyond the Campus: Higher Education and the Creative Economy’: http://www.creative-campus.org.uk/love-story-project

The second key topic discussed centred on supporting and developing creative industries, creative entrepreneurship and creative careers. The opening plenary panel featured Bruce M. Mackh of the Alliance for the Arts in Research Universities, and Venka Purushothaman, Vice-President (Academic) and Provost, LASALLE College of the Arts in Singapore. These sessions focused on ideas of interdisciplinarity and creative education, on exploring the foundations of creative education in different cultural contexts and contemporary challenges and opportunities for creative education. This theme was also explored in a panel on ‘the creative academic: exploring work and engagement dynamics of art and humanities academics’, which featured Jane Hodson and Amy Ryall from the University of Sheffield Arts Enterprise project, Richard Bromiley of the Creative Exchange Wales Network: the Creative Canvas in Wales, and Kate Pahl (University of Sheffield), Helen Graham (University of Leeds) and Steve Pool (artist poly-technic) who explored communication and language between arts practitioners and academics. The themes explored at these panels and sessions were also examined in the parallel panels during these sessions, with sessions on preparing students for work in the arts and creative industries and similar themes – full information on the programme can be found here: http://www.creative-campus.org.uk/conference-programme.html

The role of the arts and humanities within social entrepreneurship projects and university outreach projects, or projects which utilise the arts within socially-engaged contexts were also explored by Laura Lannin, of the UCL Share Academy
and by Michael Bowdidge of the Transart Institute. Lannin’s project presentation included examples of the Share Academy working with museums and other cultural institutions to help them to realise their potential and goals through the delivery of high-quality projects, including publications or re-imagining visitor experiences. Bowdidge’s presentation explored the use of arts projects in educational contexts. These perspectives ensured that a rounded view of the arts in collaborative contexts was represented by the conference – these contexts include the work of artists in its own right as an important and culturally valuable activity, the role of the arts and humanities in education, the development of arts, humanities and creative educational practices and policies, the ways in which arts and humanities practitioners can collaborate with others for social or economic gains, among others. This rounded perspective was a particular strength of the conference, and ensured that it did not fall into the trap of defending one position or another, but rather viewing them all as part of a connected and sustainable economy and ecology for practitioners, educators, audiences, innovators, communities, audiences and individuals.

The Innovation and the Humanities project team also presented the initial project ideas at the conference, and received valuable feedback, making important connections with those currently carrying out research in the field and learning from the processes which had already been carried out. The ‘Beyond the Creative Campus’ website has a range of valuable resources and a useful bibliography, together with some content from previous workshops and sessions carried out as part of this project. It was interesting to see the funding commitment from the AHRC to the development of this and similar projects – many as part of the AHRC Connected Communities funding stream, and some significant projects under the ‘Arts and Humanities in the Creative Economy’ strand (a short video about funded research projects is available here: http://www.ahrc.ac.uk/News-and-Events/Watch-and-Listen/Pages/Arts-and-Humanities-in-the-Creative-Economy.aspx). Increasingly connected policies and practices in education, business and social entrepreneurship will undoubtedly be supported through the development of these research and collaboration networks and platforms, and provide useful models of practice and funding for universities and funding bodies in an Irish context.
2.a. Background to forming the company

Stair: An Irish Public History Company Ltd. was founded by three members of staff at the UCD School of History and Archives. The company was founded as a NovaUCD campus start-up, and was supported by the School of History and Archives at UCD.

Stair: An Irish Public History Company Ltd. provides finished content, tailored to each client’s needs. Our research is of the highest academic standards, and reflects the most exciting, innovative developments in contemporary history.

The company was formed as a B2B and B2C company - with potential clients including media companies and public and private groups and organisations, among others. The company aimed to provide research services and to provide finished historical content, as well as historical and heritage training modules when required.

Our website is available here: [http://stairpublichistory.wix.com/stair](http://stairpublichistory.wix.com/stair) Our company logo was designed by Fiona Byrne, who works with Stair on a contract basis as a project manager.

The aim of this section of the Innovation and the Humanities social entrepreneurship project was to develop a sustainable enterprise that would put some of the research ideas outlined in Strand 1 into practice.

Founding directors of Stair: An Irish Public History Company Ltd.:

**Dr. Anne Mac Lellan:**
Anne has a strong interest in the social and cultural history of Ireland in the twentieth century with a particular enthusiasm for the history of medicine, health and science. She is the winner of the Royal College of Physicians 2012 History of Medicine Research Award and the joint winner of the Ulster University/Centre for the History of Medicine’s History of Medicine in Ireland
essay prize, 2011. Anne’s PhD, from the UCD School of History and Archives, was funded by Wellcome Trust. She enjoys making history accessible to audiences beyond the academic and is currently writing a biography of Dr Dorothy Stopford Price, a medical doctor who was pivotal in the battle against tuberculosis in the mid-twentieth century. In addition to her historical skills portfolio, Anne brings a wide experience of working in Irish print and broadcast media to this co-operative. Previously, she was an Irish Times staff journalist specialising in education. She has also worked as a freelance researcher for RTE Radio One and her work has been published in a range of Irish newspapers, journals and magazines. In another life, she was a biomedical scientist working in microbiology laboratories in a number of Irish hospitals. She is currently Director of Research and Academic Affairs at the Rotunda Hospital (the world’s oldest working maternity hospital), Dublin and lectures part-time on the history of medicine and medical devices in the National College of Art and Design.

**Dr. Edel Bhreathnach:**

Edel is a passionate and informed historian with extensive publications, project management experience and a professional grounding in diplomacy. She has worked on many topics in early and late medieval Irish history including Tara, Co Meath (Ireland’s premier royal complex and landscape), the intellectual history of medieval Ireland, landscape surveys and the friars in the vernacular tradition. Following her engagement with the exciting Government-funded historical and archaeological collaboration, Discovery Ireland (1992-2000), Edel wrote Tara: a select bibliography and edited The kingship and landscape of Tara (Dublin, 2005). The Discovery project has become a model for many other interdisciplinary projects in Ireland and Britain and the original team continues to work on Tara in collaboration experts in a range of different disciplines. Edel is co-editor of The Irish Franciscans 1534-1990 (Dublin, 2009), and of The landscape of kingship and cult: text and archaeology (Four Courts Press, Dublin, 2011). A large part of Edel’s mission as a historian is to reach out to fellow academics and to the public, creating academic networks that span the globe. Formerly a career diplomat, Edel lectures in UCD and was appointed Acting Internal Examiner for DPhil by History Faculty, University of Oxford in 2011. Her interests extend to the communication of history and landscape through modern media, the development of a dynamic policy for the humanities in Ireland, the creation of an effective bridge between the humanities and sciences in Ireland and extending philanthropy to the arts and culture in Ireland.

**Dr. Niamh NicGhabhann**

Niamh brings historical art and architecture expertise and flair to Stair. She holds a Ph.D from the Trinity College Dublin (Department of History of Art and Architecture), where she was an Irish Research Council for the Humanities and Social Sciences (IRCHSS) Doctoral Fellow. She has lectured and written on various aspects of Irish art and architecture, in particular on the post-medieval life and uses of Irish Gothic buildings, and on modern and contemporary visual art and architecture. She is a researcher on the Monastic Ireland project, based at the Micheál Ó Cléirigh Institute for the Study of Irish History and Civilisation,
UCD, which is constructing a database of images and information on Ireland’s late medieval heritage. This project will be accessibly for tourists, and will also have a research portal for scholars. Monastic Ireland is supported by the Department of Arts, Heritage and the Gaeltacht, Fáilte Ireland, The South-Western Regional Authority and Heritage Island. Niamh has a diversity of talents and recently curated a retrospective exhibition on the work of Mayo-born artist, Owen Walsh (1933 - 2002). She has curated Shaping Identities Together, an exhibition which will form a part of the cultural calendar during Ireland’s 2013 EU presidency, and WATERMARK, an exhibition celebrating 20 years of the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at UL. She is currently the course director of the MA Festive Arts programme at the Irish World Academy at UL. Niamh has a talent for communication, both written and spoken, and welcomes opportunities to take part in teaching and outreach projects in both school and community settings.

**Company formation processes included:**

- Legal formation of the company
- Shareholding agreement with
- Establishment of appropriate financial structures
- Setting up a bank account and internet banking for the company
- Application for tax clearance
- Filing all relevant returns
- Registering for Company Tax and VAT

These were all undertaken by the company directors rather than via an accountancy firm (with some help from Arthur Cox via NovaUCD). An account of these processes can be found on my personal blog here: [http://niamhnicghabhann.tumblr.com/post/77003178827/starting-up-getting-a-public-history-company-up](http://niamhnicghabhann.tumblr.com/post/77003178827/starting-up-getting-a-public-history-company-up)

This is also quoted below to give an insight into the company formation and running process.

I attended a series of workshops during the company formation process. These were held at NovaUCD, Dun Laoghaire Rathdown Local Enterprise Board and the Wicklow County Enterprise Board.

I also gave a presentation on the process of forming this start-up at the Creative Entrepreneurialism and the Humanities event, held as part of Innovation Dublin 2012 at Wood Quay. [http://www.innovationdublin.ie/festival/2012/archived_event_2012/ID1650/](http://www.innovationdublin.ie/festival/2012/archived_event_2012/ID1650/)

My blogs on the subject were also featured on the Cultur Lab website, run by Dr. Marisa Ronan (UCD).
Text of blog post on forming a humanities start-up:

Since working with the Monastic Ireland project at UCD History and Archives and the Discovery Programme, I have been interested in developing partnerships between academic research and other sectors in the private sector, and in looking at innovative ways of funding research and bringing it to new and different audiences. There are, it must be admitted, some reservations in different quarters about these kinds of partnerships and collaborations, due to fears of an over-emphasis on discourses of impact, and of the application of market logic to higher education and to research (read the first chapter of this very interesting book for an overview of the development of this discourse in the UK and USA.) I’ve written about these reservations elsewhere, and do feel that there is a place for this kind of collaboration as one of many futures for humanities research, and as part of an increasingly diversified funding landscape. Like many academics and researchers, I have often found myself being asked to supply or proofread content for historical projects by different companies or individuals. I usually willingly provide whatever has been requested, because I’m interested in the subjects that I research, and because I’m happy that other people are interested too. However, given the scarcity of jobs for early career researchers in the humanities at the moment, a group of colleagues and I stopped to wonder – could we be doing more to support the creation of jobs and opportunities for new PhD graduates when postdoc opportunities are few and far between? A search on www.etenders.gov.ie confirmed that there are a wealth of history and heritage-related projects tendered for every month – projects that PhD graduates would be extremely well placed to deliver, earning a living while building their research portfolios.

Together with a group of colleagues from the UCD School of History and Archives, I founded Stair: An Irish Public History Company Ltd, which is a NovaUCD campus company. Stair is a private limited company, which aims to provide project management and content research and delivery for a range of history and heritage projects. The logo above was designed by the very talented Fiona Byrne, and is based on the beautiful curving shape of Gallarus Oratory! While the founding directors have core areas of expertise, one of the founding aims of Stair is to be able to subcontract work to graduate researchers who we know would be best placed to work on particular projects. We act as a kind of matchmaking service, connecting the right researcher with the right project, and providing the limited company structure for contracts, tax and limited liability.

Setting up the company has been a slow process, even with the valuable supports provided by NovaUCD, which included sessions with advisers and the legal advice around the set-up from Nova partners, Arthur Cox. No company set-up is the same, but I thought it might be useful to share some aspects of our experience of the process…

It is relatively easy to set up a company, but this does not mean that maintaining it will be easy. You will need to file regular reports with the CRO, and failure to do so will result in fines. You will also need to register for corporation tax and VAT if it is necessary for your company. We leaned in to the Wicklow Revenue Office, who have been very helpful and willing to pick up the phone and talk us through various forms
as we went through the process. You will also need to set up your bank account in order to be able to pay your VAT returns. Again, failure to do so promptly will result in trouble with the Revenue – not what any new company needs to deal with! These might seem like fairly trivial and obvious things to someone with some business experience, but in my experience, these are the kinds of issues that may scupper a project from the outset. The complexity is compounded by the fact that they are all dealt with by different agencies. I haven’t been able to find a centralized guide which covers all of the key legal requirements for a new company (all suggestions welcome - maybe I am just looking in the wrong place!) An easy-to-follow guide to legal and tax compliance issues which combines all of these key return dates would be a great help for start-ups coming from non-traditional areas such as humanities research. At many of the university commercialization events that I have been at, there has been an assumption that enough venture capital will initially be raised to be able to hire an accountant to work on such filing and returns. While this might be the case for tech companies, it’s not so for humanities start-up that are literally operating on good will and entrepreneurial spirit until some shekels roll into the bank. Some work WILL need to be done by a registered accountant, but not everything, and they are very expensive. This is shoestring stuff, and a practical calendar of key dates and filing requirements and would be very welcome.

A comprehensive list of what must legally be done by an accountant and when would also be very useful. Following on from this, it would be great to have a clear set of guidelines about an exit strategy for one or all of the directors – what happens when you want to wind up the company, or when someone wants to leave, and how to manage this to avoid mess down the line.

Things that will really help – talk to your revenue office. They are really helpful and will give you a lot of one-to-one help when filling out forms etc. I’d also really recommend getting in touch with your local authority enterprise board. They run talks, courses which are very affordable, and will also arrange mentoring services which are extremely useful. They also run networking events – we have had experience with both the Wicklow County Enterprise Board and the equivalent in Dun Laoghaire, and have found them both very proactive and helpful, regardless of the business type.

Tip - pay attention to your company governance structures. One downside of setting up with a big agency was being given a standard memorandum and articles of association without working on them among ourselves. While this seemed time-saving and prudent at first, we now need to go back and address them to make sure that they fit out particular needs and fit our company structure. Also, take minutes from all meetings, print them and sign them, and then put them in a file with any other company documents, such as your certificate of incorporation, tax clearance certificate, any shareholding agreements (as we had from Nova UCD), copies of the Memorandum and Articles of Association, PPS and addresses of all company directors, bank details, a calendar of key dates for filing returns and the due date of your accounts. This will be your company ‘home’ when it actually lives out of a bag, a train table or a desk somewhere, and will help you to avoid time-consuming searching for essential documents.
We have just started work on our first successful e-tender bid, which I will blog about in more detail at a later stage. Overall, I feel that there is real potential for start-ups and companies in this area, but that there does need to be some investment in supporting their own particular needs – they are not the same as IT, engineering or medical start-ups, and require some different supports. In some cases, humanities start-up people might need less help in writing pitches, but more help in sorting out accounting procedures and tax returns (this is a huge generalization based on a sample group of one – me!) The potential is there, and it would be fantastic to see some practical supports being developed specifically to support this sector.

2.b. Generating and carry out business for the start-up

As with any start-up, the key tasks involved finding initial business, investment where possible (in-kind or direct), working on our pitch and presence within the market, connecting with our potential customers, and making ourselves known.

While we feel that there is a strong viable business model in place, the fact that each director has a full-time job has meant that the company has not been able to grow as initially envisaged. However, at the beginning of the start-up process, all directors were involved in searching for e-tenders, creating pitches and applications, going to interviews for these e-tenders and generating a network for the company. This work was shared among the founding directors. Five e-tender bids were submitted between 2012 and 2014. Two got to the final interview stage, and one was successful. It is worth noting that many more relevant bids were available, but the company did not have the capacity to apply in terms of staffing and time.

Given the time constraints on the full-time directors, the growth of the company is unclear at present. Growth requires a level of investment in time and expertise that the founding directors cannot provide at present. It is possible that they will stay on as an advisory board if a new executive staff comes on board. However, this is currently to be decided.

The first successful e-tender acquired by Stair: An Irish Public History Company Ltd. was for the delivery of a large-scale history and archives project for the Health Service Executive in Monaghan. The details of this project are outlined in Strand 3 of this report.

Ongoing work on the Stair: An Irish Public History Company Ltd. includes filing tax returns and other mandatory company returns, ensuring that, financial reporting and filing of accounts, engaging an accountant and managing the company finances. Given the current status of the company, no new tender bids are currently in process.
STRAND 3: World Within Walls

3.a. World Within Walls project outline

Since February 2014, Stair: An Irish Public History Company Ltd. has been working on a project around the history, memories and archives of St. Davnet’s Hospital, situated on the outskirts of Monaghan town. This is the first successful e-tender bid acquired by the company.

The limited company structure allowed Stair to bid for the project, and to run the project, providing a reliable and expert service to this public body and create employment for history and heritage graduates. The success of this project provides a valuable reflection of the research goals outlined in Strand 1 of this research project and the company aims outlined in Strand 2.

Work on this project has involved liaising with the Steering Committee put in place to monitor the project, a long series of site visits to carry out research and other project outputs at Monaghan, the provision of an outreach programme within primary schools in the Cavan and Monaghan district, the development of a
website and learning resource for second level. Arts Council funding was also applied for in order to develop the second level resource but this was unsuccessful - the funding application materials can be used as the basis of a further funding application for this. An outline of the different project strands is given below. The main project outputs include an archives scoping and management plan, an exhibition, catalogue and website at Monaghan County Museum, a book on the history of the site, an outreach and education programme and an oral history project and archive.

Project introduction

Built as the Cavan and Monaghan District Lunatic asylum, and officially opened in 1869, this institution has had a powerful presence in the area. This project, titled 'World within Walls', is funded by the HSE, and is being carried out by Stair: An Irish Public History Company Ltd. The members of Stair working on this project are Anne Mac Lellan, Niamh NicGhabhann, Edel Bhreathnach and Fiona Byrne, who is project manager. As is becoming increasingly evident, sites such as St. Davnet’s very often contain valuable archives and historical evidence about the lives of those who lived and worked in such institutions – one of the key aims of the year-long ‘World within Walls’ project has been to put a sustainable archives management plan together, as well as capturing and preserving some of the memories of those associated with the hospital. This is being done in collaboration with the National Archives of Ireland, with the guidance of senior archivists and specialists on medical history records.

Writing the history of St. Davnet’s

Led by medical historian Anne Mac Lellan, a book on the history of St. Davnet’s is currently underway. Using the rich archival sources on the site, the story of the hospital from its inauguration to the move towards care in the community from the 1970s to the present day is charted. Weaving together evidence on patient and staff experiences of the hospital with the broader contexts of mental health care, institutional living and social and medical attitudes towards mental health and illness, this book will contribute to the growing awareness and exploration of psychiatric history in Ireland. Beginning with an introduction by Professor Brendan Kelly, and an overview of the historical figure of St. Davnet by Edel Bhreathnach, the book includes four chapters by Anne Mac Lellan, which explore issues of diagnosis, treatment, care, and life in the hospital. The ways in which life ‘outside the walls’ impacted on life within is also examined by Mac Lellan, particularly in with regard to the Soviet declared within the walls of the hospital in 1919, the outbreak of Spanish Flu during the years of the first World War, and the use of parts of the hospital complex for TB care during the 1930s and 1940s. A chapter by Niamh NicGhabhann outlines the architectural history of the site, looking at St. Davnet’s both in terms of Irish institutional building in the latter half of the nineteenth century, and in the context of broader, international ideas of building for health and recovery. Finally, a chapter by Fiona Byrne explores the oral history gathering project which has been at the heart of the ‘World within Walls’ project, including the voices and memories of those who worked and lived in and around the hospital as patients, staff and members of the local community. The book, which will be fully illustrated, is due to be launched in late
2014. Full consideration has been given throughout the project to the protection of individual identities through appropriate anonymization, while allowing the experiences recorded in the archives to be represented.

**St. Davnet’s – memory and testimony**
The gathering of the oral histories of St. Davnet’s is an important part of the ‘World within Walls’ project. While archives, newspaper records and other sources are extremely valuable in understanding the life of the institution, the testimony of those with lived experience of the place is an essential part of their historiography. In order to let the local community know about the project, and about opportunities to contribute, two community days have been held. The first took place in May 2014, with the kind support of Monaghan County Museum, which saw staff, current service users and members of the community with links to, memories about or interest in the history of the site come together. Short presentations were made on the project aims, followed by rich discussion over tea and coffee, and a craft session where all had the opportunity to paint glass tiles which have been fired, and which will become part of the project exhibition in 2015, and to craft paper flowers in memory of the first patients who entered the asylum in 1869, from Armagh District Lunatic Asylum, and from surrounding institutions and from the region. The second community event was held as part of the National Heritage Week in August 2014. With the help of the canteen staff at St. Davnet’s, a patient meal from 1927 was served to visitors, who were given an individual case history, and segregated according to gender as would have been the case in the hospital during that period. Following this, over 200 people took part in a guided tour of the buildings, accessing several wards and the Roman Catholic hospital chapel, which included contributions from former staff on this history of the hospital and its grounds. These community events created awareness of the project, which in turn fed into the oral history project – this is something that will grow in years to come, but has already resulted in a rich archive of stories and memories about life within St. Davnet’s. This archive will be held by the HSE, and will hopefully become part of the resources available to historians of similar institutions. Many contributors have generously allowed their stories to be used as part of the exhibition and education resources.

**World within Wall: exhibition at Monaghan County Museum**
As part of the desire to bring the research carried out on the ‘World within Walls’ project, the project team are currently planning an exhibition with Monaghan County Museum for 2015. This exhibition will include objects, documents, maps and plans from the site, and aims to facilitate an engaging and multi-sensory exploration of the history of the hospital for visitors. The exhibition will feature objects from the hospital, exploring the building of the asylum in the 1860s and the broader historical context for such institutions, as well as the world of work in the asylum, ideas around diagnosis, health and illness, treatment and recovery, and daily life for those living in the hospital. These themes reflect the shared lives of patients and staff – whether working at the hospital farm, in the laundry buildings, as gatekeeper, nurses or resident medical superintendent. The exhibition will also be accompanied by an education project for primary schools, which will engage with ideas of mental health, wellbeing and expression, and a resource for second level students, particularly aimed at those in Transition
Year. This will include an online resource, using the free open-source software provided by Omeka, and will allow students to carry out research on the history of the site, and on designing spaces and environment for mental health and wellbeing. The exhibition and educational resources, which are currently being designed, will be launched in Spring 2015.

Exhibition materials and project images are included as Appendix 2 of this report.
Conclusion

In conclusion, the three strands involved in the 'Innovation and the Humanities' project undertaken to fulfill the social entrepreneurship module of the Graduate Certificate in Innovation and Entrepreneurship have provided me with a multi-faceted insight into processes of company start-up and management.

The research strand continues to develop important insights into the nature of the supports provided within third level education for innovation and enterprise.

The company formation strand provided me with invaluable personal experience of the start-up process, as well as key skills in pitching, generating business, fulfilling the legal requirements of a business, and project management. I found that blogging about the processes involved and sharing these experiences on social media was useful in terms of generating a network and getting useful feedback.

The World Within Walls project allowed me to test the company within the field, and to provide a multi-strand public history company. My experience of this project has led me to conclude that specific supports do need to be developed in order to develop the field of humanities-based entrepreneurship, but that the field is rich and that there is ample opportunity for growth, for the development of the sector, and the creation of employment in this field.