



Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh
University College Cork, Ireland

Future Humanities Institute





Welcome to the Future Humanities Institute

The Future Humanities Institute (FHI), a UCC Futures Institute, is an ambitious, interdisciplinary research community dedicated to understanding and shaping the human dimensions of today's most pressing global challenges.

It can be tempting to overlook the role of the arts and humanities in responding to issues such as climate change, social unrest, artificial intelligence, social well-being, innovation and geopolitics. Yet these global grand challenges are fundamentally human ones.

They demand creative responses. They also demand new insight into the values, histories, identities and belief systems that guide collective action. The arts and humanities give our imaginations purpose, helping us think beyond the limits of the present and design alternatives to the status quo.

Mapping Climate Change

Researcher: Professor Jools Gilson,
School of Film, Music and Theatre

Projects: Mapping Climate Change
& The Tempestry Project

Funder: The exhibition was supported
by Research Ireland and UCC and
sponsorship from Bam Ireland and
Clarendon Properties

Image Credit: Marcin Lewandowski,
soundofphotography.com

UCC's Futures Framework recognises the essential work of the arts and humanities in addressing global grand challenges. This is why the Future Humanities Institute strives to unite researchers from across disciplines who are equipped to illuminate complexity, question assumptions and move beyond traditional methodological frameworks.

The study, for example, of the creative arts; the dynamics of languages and culture; the study of histories, pasts, religions and beliefs; philosophy, geography and studies of the environment; the analysis of how power works in politics and in daily life; the telling of our human stories; the purposing of digital tools to understand the world better move us beyond passive observation. Attending to neglected histories helps us understand how to take better action now. Our power lies in combining creativity and analysis to engage deeply with the challenges shaping our world and to propose new ways of thinking that open pathways to real change.

The Future Humanities Institute believes that ideas must lead to action. Across our Radical Humanities Lab and thematic Research Clusters, our researchers are internationally recognised for excellence, global networks and sustained success in attracting competitive funding. Their work informs public policy, shapes cultural debates, enriches community life and brings arts and humanities insight into dialogue with science, engineering, medicine, sustainability research and technological innovation.

From secret police files to living histories: uncovering authoritarian pasts and their legacies today

Researcher: Dr Tatiana Vagramenko,
School of Society, Politics and Ethics

Project: History Declassified

Funder: Research Ireland (Pathway Programme)

Credit: Tatiana Vagramenko



What does the Future Humanities Institute do?

The Future Humanities Institute empowers bold and creative arts and humanities-led research at UCC and brings its full richness into conversation with science, social science, engineering, medicine and sustainability research. In this collaborative space, we rethink inherited frameworks, explore alternative possibilities and build approaches that respond to society's most pressing questions. The Future Humanities Institute is:

- **A development catalyst**, driving innovative research agendas, methodological experimentation and cross-disciplinary exploration
- **An advocacy hub**, championing the social, cultural, environmental and democratic value of humanities expertise in Ireland and internationally

The Future Humanities Institute is rooted in a vibrant and well-established research ecology. With representation from all ten Schools in the College of Arts, Celtic Studies and Social Sciences on its Executive, the FHI benefits from disciplinary breadth and demonstrable strengths, including:

- **Highly ranked subject areas** according to the QS, including English Language and Literature (82), Performing Arts (Top 51–100), Modern Languages (101–150) and Archaeology (151–200)
- A Radical Humanities Laboratory and a range of interdisciplinary Research Clusters experienced in capturing **EU-level and national funding**, including European Research Council grants at starter, consolidator and advanced levels and humanities-science collaborative awards such as COALESCE from Research Ireland, Marie Curie doctoral networks and COST action leadership
- Established **partnerships** with cultural organisations, communities, policymakers and industry
- **Global research networks** spanning Europe, Asia, Africa and the Americas

Taken together, these strengths and clarity of purpose demonstrate the FHI's readiness to take a leading role in advancing Ireland's arts and humanities research and in helping to shape the country's evolving research landscape.

Creative Agency and Religious Minorities: 'Hidden Galleries' in the Secret Police Archives in Central and Eastern Europe

Researcher: Professor James A. Kapaló, School of Society, Politics and Ethics

Project: Hidden Galleries

Funder: European Research Council (ERC)

Image credit: James A. Kapaló





Mountain ascetics (yamabushi) play horagai conch shells on the Katsuragi mountains, Japan

Researcher: Dr Tatsuma Padoan, School of Society, Politics and Ethics

Project: Aesthetic Communication: The Role of Senses in Social Interaction, Across and Beyond the Human

Funder: Wenner-Gren Foundation for Anthropological Research, 2024, Gr. CONF-938

Image credit: Tatsuma Padoan

How We Work

The Radical Humanities Laboratory

At the heart of the Future Humanities Institute is our pioneering Radical Humanities Laboratory, which nurtures experimental, embodied, creative and cross-sectoral research.

The Lab supports:

- innovative, practice-based and research-creation methodologies
- collaborations that bridge arts, culture, social sciences, environmental sciences and technology
- projects that challenge inherited frameworks and open new imaginative pathways

The Lab exemplifies our belief that transformative thinking requires radical methods, and that the humanities have an essential role in shaping Ireland's social, cultural and technological future.

Our Research Clusters

The Future Humanities Institute supports existing and emerging interdisciplinary research clusters, each addressing an area of critical contemporary importance:

Centre for Arts Research and Practice (CARPE)

A hub for artistic research, cultural production and creative methodologies. Projects span film, performance, visual art, sound, media and collaborative arts processes that blend creativity with societal engagement.

Centre for Advanced Studies in Languages and Cultures (CASiLaC)

Supporting cutting-edge research in languages, translation, world literatures, multilingualism, cultural memory and global intercultural understanding, with strong international partnerships and major funded networks.

Digital Cultures, New Media & Cultural Analytics

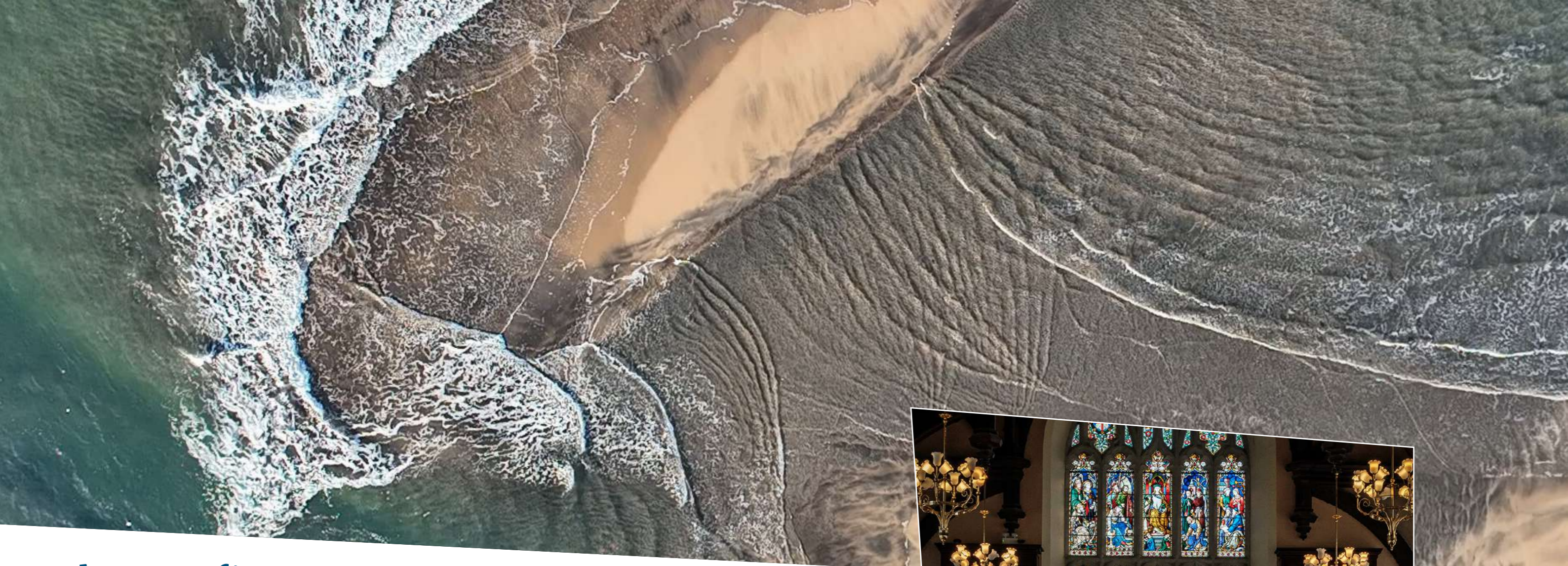
Investigating how digital systems shape cultural life, identity, knowledge and power. This cluster embraces computational methods, data analysis, immersive media, creative technology and the ethical questions emerging from AI.

EAGNA

Taighde ar an nGaeilge, taighde trí mheán na Gaeilge. Research on the Irish language, research in the Irish language. This cluster is a dynamising force for the transformative potential of the linguistic and cultural thought-ways embodied and embedded in the Irish language and culture.

Eco-Humanities

Exploring environmental futures, climate justice, multispecies relations and the cultural dimensions of sustainability. This cluster brings humanities scholarship into urgent dialogue with environmental science, ecology, community groups and policymakers.



What Defines Us:

The Future Humanities Institute draws together innovative thinkers and practitioners from across the arts and humanities. We are:

Visionary. We imagine new possibilities and articulate bold ambitions for society.

Creative. We apply imagination to generate fresh perspectives and drive constructive action.

Rooted. We ground our work in place, culture and relationships, drawing on the depth and diversity of lived experience.

International. Our global networks allow us to collaborate across borders and disciplines.

Transdisciplinary. We reach outward to science, ecology, technology, medicine and the social sciences, building shared approaches to complex challenges.

Exemplary. Our research sets new standards of excellence and offers original contributions that shape emerging fields.

Top: Wave diffraction and interference over a sand bar at Fanore Beach, Co. Clare, captured 3 January 2026

Researcher: Dr Aaron Lim, School of the Human Environment

Project: DETECT – Earth and Ocean Lab

Funder: Environmental Protection Agency (EPA)

Image credit: Kevin Walsh (Earth and Ocean Lab, Geography, UCC)

Right: Climate storytelling workshop: creative approaches to climate communication and action

Researcher: Dr Rosa Rogers, School of English and Digital Humanities

Project: Climate Services for Multi-sector Benefits (CLIMB)

Funder: Met Éireann and FHI Seed Funding

Image credit: Marcin Lewandowski, soundofphotography.com





Assessing the Contemporary Art Novel in Spanish and Portuguese

Research Team: Carlos Garrido Castellano, Flavia Pontes Espindola, Beatriz Dantas Vieira, Carla Almanza-Gálvez, Fernanda Barini Camargo

Project: Assessing the Contemporary Art Novel in Spanish and Portuguese: Cultural Labour, Personal Identification and the Materialisation of Alternative Art Worlds (ARTFICTIONS)

Funder: Irish Research Council (Laureate Consolidator)

Image credit: Shinji Nagabe is the author of the image through a collaboration with Projeto Certeza from Itabaianinha-Sergipe, Brazil.

We create impact by being

Action-oriented:

We turn ideas into impact by advising government, industry and communities, and by generating thought-leadership that influences national and international debates.

Engaged:

We build relationships that matter. From co-researching with individuals, communities and cultural partners to working with policymakers, influencers and industry, our work is grounded in collaboration. We listen, co-create and connect to ensure that arts and humanities insight is shaped with and for the people it serves.

Enterprising:

We train the next generation of researchers, practitioners and leaders, building the interpretive, creative and analytical skills needed to navigate a rapidly changing world.

Strategic:

We actively pursue excellence. Our achievements, including world-ranked subjects, contributions to UN SDG targets and competitive research income, demonstrate the quality and influence of our work. These strengths position us to shape agendas, attract partnerships and deliver research that makes a difference.

An interior view of the Treasury Office, Four Courts, 1922

Researcher: Prof. Ciara Breathnach, School of History

Project: Absence in the Archives (forthcoming book with Cambridge University Press)

Image credit: NLI/INDH19a. Image Courtesy of the National Library of Ireland.



Mapping the reception and evolving legacy of the Vikings across Europe over the past 200 years

Researcher: Professor Tom Birkett, School of English and Digital Humanities

Project: NorseMap

Funder: European Research Council (ERC)

Image credit: Library of Congress

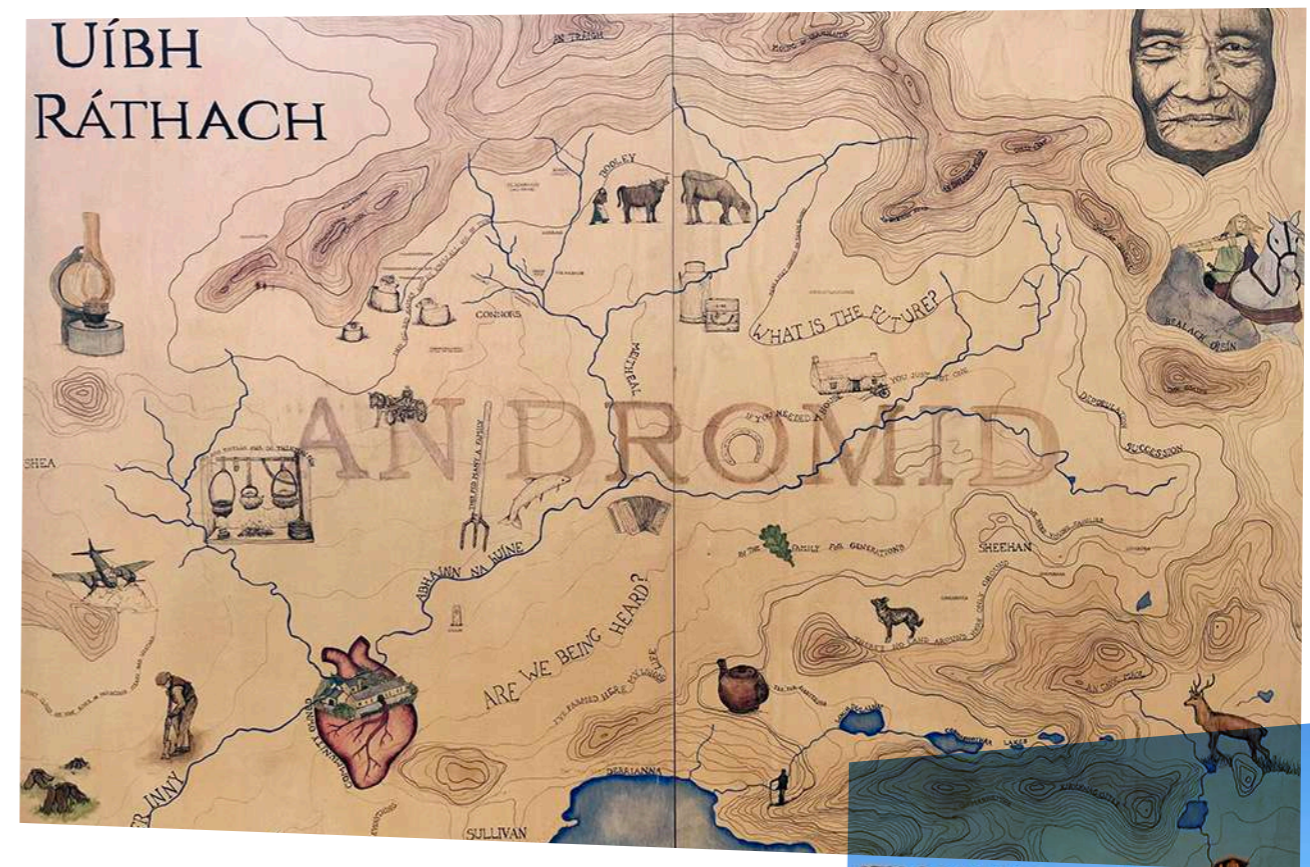
What comes next

The Future Humanities Institute is ready to take the next step in developing its nationally and internationally leading role. With strong research capacity, global networks, emerging infrastructure and a clear strategic mission, FHI aims to:

- spearhead major interdisciplinary collaborations
- Secure a wider net of large-scale national and international research funding
- lead consortia that influence policy, culture, technology and society
- serve as the foundation for a future national research centre for the humanities in Ireland

FHI is a home for ambitious thinking, impactful scholarship, transformative partnerships and the next generation of humanities leadership.

Find out more www.ucc.ie/en/future-humanities



Above left: Wisdom sits in Places

Researcher: Jennifer Ahern PhD researcher – SPE and ERI; Dr. James Cuffe, School of Society, Politics and Ethics

Project: This visual story map emerged from an arts-based participatory action research project in Uíbh Ráthach, a Gaeltacht region in southwest Ireland.

Image credit: Jennifer Ahern

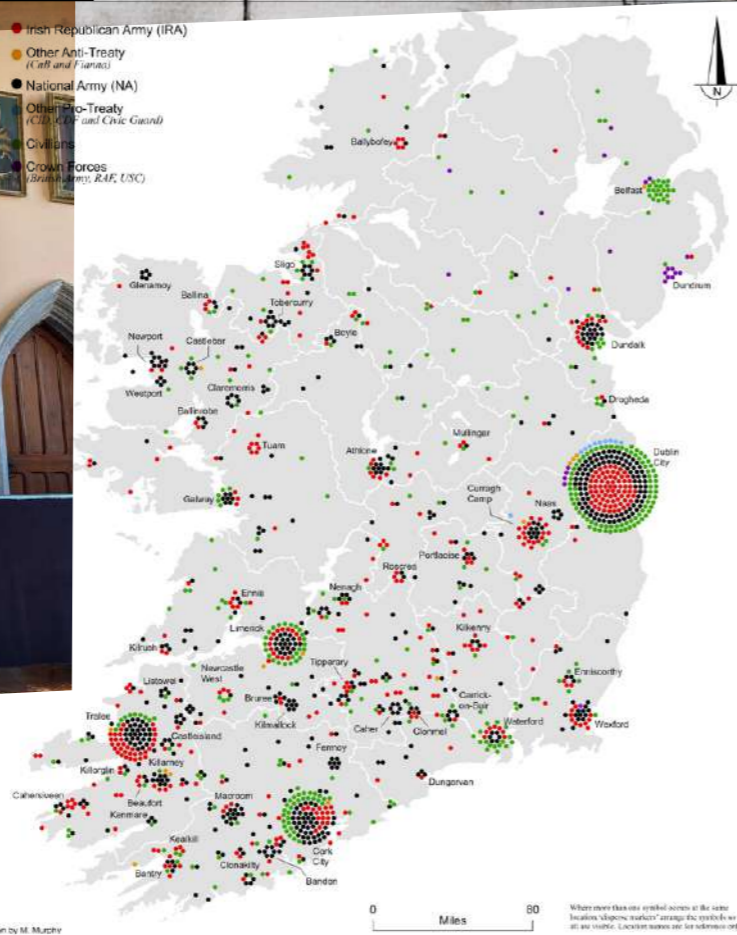
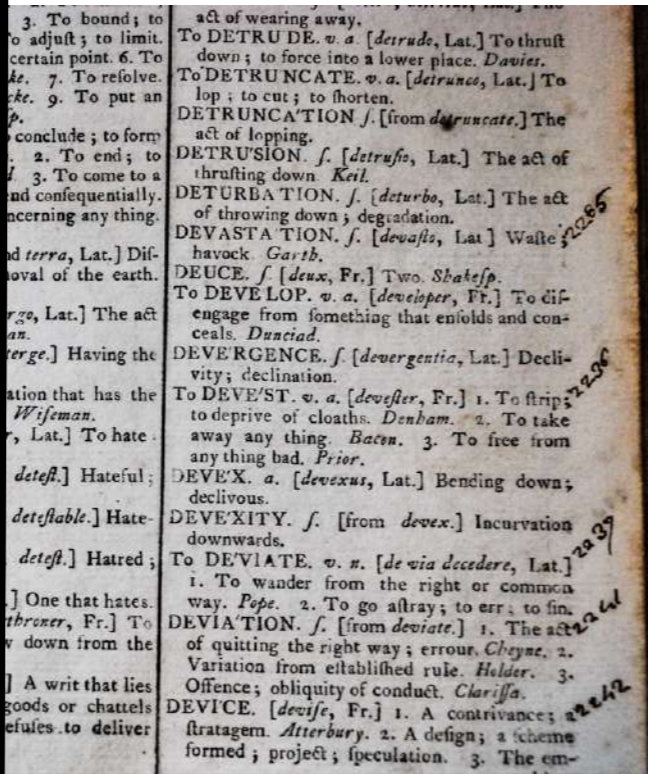
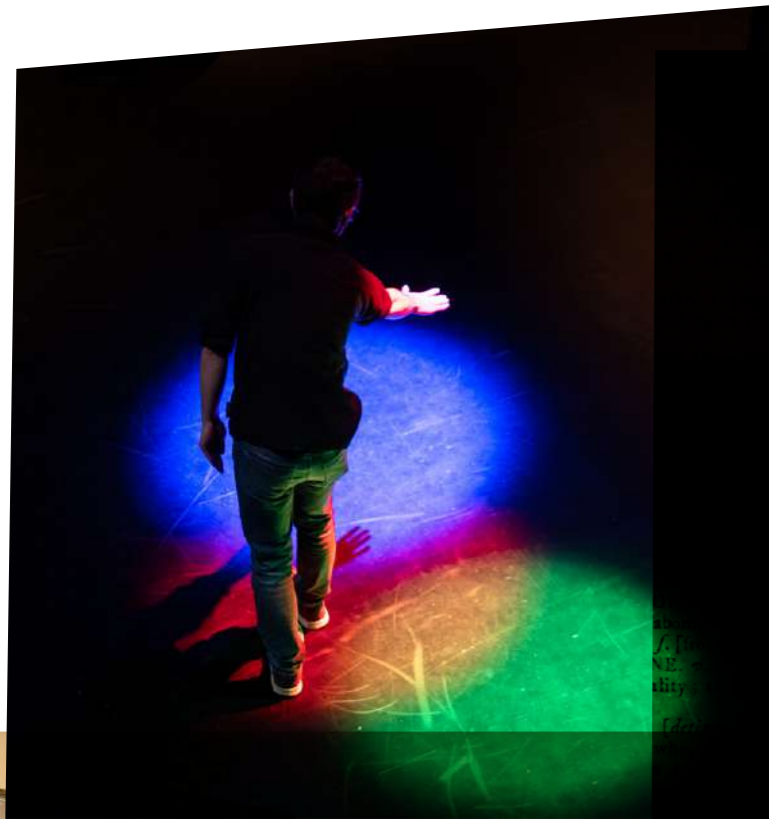
Above right: Abandoned farmhouse in rural Tuscany

Researcher: Professor Silvia Ross, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures

Project: Ruins and Rubble in Postwar Italy. A collaborative project with colleagues from University of Notre Dame and the College of William and Mary

Image credit: Silvia Ross





Images, from top left, clockwise:

Light Laboratory: Optical Science, Past, Present, Future: Science Week 2025

Project Team: Siobhán Vaughan O'Brien (lead), James O' Callaghan, Caitriona Tyndall, Yvon Bonenfant, Helene O'Keeffe, Matthew Hall, Ann King

Project: Light Laboratory

Funder: Research Ireland (Discover Science Week)

Image credit: Marcin Lewandowski, soundofphotography.com

Richard Lovell Edgeworth's annotated dictionary used in the development of the code for his optical telegraph.

Researcher: Dr Joanna Wharton, School of English and Digital Humanities

Project: Lines of Communication: Telegraphy, Literature, and Security in Ireland and the British Empire, 1794–1850 (LINC)

Funder: Research Ireland (Pathway Programme)

Image credit: Jessica Mary White; Dictionary – Maria Edgeworth Centre

Map of total fatalities across Ireland's 32 counties, 28 June 1922 - 24 May 1923

Research Team: Dr Andy Bielenberg, John Dorney, Dr Helene O'Keeffe, Dr John Crowley, Mike Murphy, Dr Donal Ó Drisceoil, Dr John Borgonovo

Project: Irish Civil War Fatalities Project

Funder: Department of Tourism, Culture, Arts, Gaeltacht, Sport and Media, Decade of Centenaries Programme, 2023–24

Image credit: Mike Murphy, Department of Geography, UCC

Traditions of psychedelic use and cultural revival in Canada and Ireland

Researcher: Professor Oliver Davis, School of Languages, Literatures and Cultures

Project: Psychedelic Humanities

Funder: CASiLaC, UCC Futures – Collective Social Futures

Image credit: Oliver Davis



Loop Love, an inclusive, interactive voice installation at Cork Opera House

Researcher: Professor Yvon Bonenfant, School of Film, Music and Theatre (PI), collaborators Dr Jeff Weeter and Alex Pentek

Project: Voice-Art-Able (Loop Love)

Funder: Research Ireland and the Arts Council

Image credit: Marcin Lewandowski, soundofphotography.com



Futures Humanities Institute

A UCC Futures Institute

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