

Digital Humanities Observatory

Ireland's window on humanities e-scholarship

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ACADAMH RÍOGA NA HÉIREANN

Tools to Manage Digital Humanities Projects

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Our objectives: to learn about ...

1. Tools for communication within a project team
2. Content management systems
3. Tools for project management

Some communication tools

Asynchronous (delayed)	Some of both	Synchronous (instantaneous)
<ul style="list-style-type: none">• email• online forums• word processor documents• wikis	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Google Docs• Google Wave	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• instant messaging• VoIP (like Skype)• meetings• chatting at someone's desk or over the phone

Email

If your group is larger than a handful of people, using “reply to all” can be problematic because of the difficulty of copying and pasting to new messages.

While you can set up a group of recipients in your email client or interface, you can't share this list with others.

The [Electronic Publishing Unit \(EPU\)](#) at UCC can set up an email list for you. There are also [free mailing list software options or services](#). Usually you also get online list archives, sometimes even with a view of messages threads!

People usually have trouble following rapid or sporadic conversations.

Discussion forums

A discussion forum is like an email discussion except that it all happens on a website. The discussion can be open or closed to the public. Users can choose to be notified by email or web ('RSS') feed if a post is made, but messages are not automatically 'pushed' to them as by email.

Many [free software options and services](#).

Word processor documents

If you collaboratively author, you can send documents as email attachments, and you can use 'track changes' for collaboration, clearly seeing who introduced which change. But if too many people edit:

- You'll have trouble seeing through the revisions.
- You risk confusing people with many versions of the document in circulation.

Word is designed for single documents, not websites, so it's awkward to create documentation meant for a website using a word processor. Instead, use a wiki or CMS.

Wikis

Allow for collaborative authoring and instant publishing at friendly URLs.

They need not be open to editing by anyone!

The [Electronic Publishing Unit \(EPU\)](#) at UCC can set up a wiki for you. Many [free software options and services](#), but none are good at handling simultaneous editing by different users.

Google Docs

A word processor document (or spreadsheet, presentation, or online form) that is not stored on someone's hard drive but rather on Google's servers.

Various options:

- Select group can read and edit
- Select group can edit, others can only read
- Select group can edit, all can read

Edits are reflected instantly!

Like a word processor, doesn't work well for creating websites.

Google Wave

Google Wave is like Google Docs combined with instant messaging and a discussion forum.

This service was just recently released, so it has a number of bugs, most notably not being able to remove a participant in a 'wave'.

You can add extensions ('gadgets') to waves.

See [How to Manage a Project in Google Wave](#) and [Frequently Asked Questions about Google Wave](#).

Instant messaging

Instant messaging software is often used for quick questions that are not urgent enough to warrant interrupting someone.

As with in-person conversations, it's also suited for cases where you have trouble formulating the whole question in advance.

Many [free options](#).

VoIP (like Skype)

VoIP software isn't simply a cheap way to make phone calls; some services allow conference calling, instant messaging, file transfer, and screen sharing as well.

Many [free options](#).

Web content management systems (CMS)

A web CMS is designed to make websites easier to construct and maintain. It provides a web interface to editing the content of the site.

A web CMS is much like a wiki, but it's oriented toward top-down development rather than a wiki's bottom-up development. A CMS is also much better at imposing structural constraints.

Using a CMS for team communication

You can use a CMS to maintain an intranet (a website not accessible to the public).

You can collaboratively write documentation, host email list archives and discussion forums, and manage to-do lists.

Many free software options to install on a server and some hosting services, though you usually have to pay for a hosted site.

Project management software

Better yet, you can use software specifically designed for managing projects.


Many [free software options](#) to install on a server and some hosting services, though you usually have to pay for a hosted site. In particular, note these two, which are free to download and install and have all the inventoried features:

- Project.net
- Redmine

You don't have to do it

If you find that the approach of project management software doesn't fit your way of thinking, don't use it! You don't want to spend time duplicating information in the software and in the tools you use on a regular basis.

How to find tools (using project management tools as an example)

1. Look up a [topic](#) or [known software](#) in Wikipedia.
2. Look in the article a link whose title begins '[List of](#)' or 'Comparison of'. If there is none, look for a [category](#) (at the bottom of the article).
3. If you find a 'list of' or 'comparison of' that includes a table, note that you can sort the data by any column by clicking the  icon.

Exercise (work in groups of 2–3)

1. Choose a category of tool or a known tool that you'd like to find more about.
2. What criteria would be important to you in selecting a tool?
3. Use Wikipedia to investigate software options. Choose three that you would investigate more.

Questions?



Slides from this two-day workshop are available at
<http://dho.ie/node/667>

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