My PhD thesis explored the textual transmission and manuscript tradition of an Early Modern Irish death tale, Oidheadh Con Culainn (‘The Death of Cú Chulainn’). Focussing on the extant manuscripts dating to the pre-19th centuries, I utilised the tale’s prosimetric structure to classify the manuscripts into distinct groups. Corroborating evidence for the existence of these groups was gained by carrying out extensive textual comparisons on both intra- and inter-group levels, exploring possible links (e.g. geographic) and collaborations between the scribes, assessing linguistic and metrical variations, analysing the ‘rhetorics’, and comparing different versions of the tale written by the same scribe.

Special consideration was also given to the tale’s most famous poem, Laoidh na gCeann (‘The Lay of the Heads’), which appears in manuscripts in the context of the tale but also has an independent life, thus attesting to the popularity of the tale.

The methodology developed in this thesis could be applied to other texts of similar length and complexity and therefore contributes to the wider debates about the transmission of tales.

How I Publish and Promote my Research

- Deposited thesis in institutional repository (http://theses.gla.ac.uk/1236/)
- Set up ORCID and Google Scholar profiles
- Published in subject-relevant journal (Australasian Journal of Irish Studies)
- Attended conferences
- Using a twitter account to keep up-to-date with scholarly activities in the field (Celtic Studies and Information Management/ Librarianship)

My Library Services and Spaces

- Research consultations
- Library classes, especially software training
- Webinars
- Drop-in sessions
- Computing/printing facilities
- Interlibrary loans
- Assistance from Archives/ Cultural Collections staff at a number of institutions

My Digital Toolbox

- Library tools
  - Discovery
  - Library Catalogue
  - Digital Repository
  - Online databases, e.g. JSTOR
  - Search alerts, Table of Contents (TOC) alerts, RSS feeds
- Reference management software
  - Zotero
  - Collaborative tools
    - Dropbox
    - Google Drive
  - Digital Profiles
    - ORCID
  - Google Scholar
- Networking
  - Twitter

What I Would Really Like

My thesis included a significant number of colour-coded spreadsheets and maps. I am keen to explore alternative ways of representing these, for example using (interactive) data visualisations. I am also interested in finding out more about text mining and the way in which research projects such as mine can benefit from Digital Humanities initiatives.

Image Acknowledgements

- Stephen Reid, ‘Cuchulain comes at last to his death, 1904. Image from Wikimedia Commons, accessed on 09/10/15.
- ‘Cuchulain’s death, illustration by Stephen Reid, 1904’, CC BY.
- ‘Stephen_Reid_1904.jpg’, GNU Free Documentation License.
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- ‘Co-authorship network map of physicians publishing on hepatitis C (detail), taken on December 16, 2012, by Andy Lamb’, CC BY.
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My Information Management Tips

I’m embarrassed to say but… all the referencing for my thesis was done manually. How much time I could have saved myself! So, thinking about reference management before embarking on a major research project is something I’d highly recommend.

I have recently started using Zotero, an open source reference management software. I’ve been finding Zotero extremely user friendly and so far haven’t run into any problems that couldn’t be solved easily.

zotero