

Report on A.C.S. Technology Fellowship
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Dear ACS Technology Fellowship Grant Committee:

I am very pleased to report on the fine progress I have been able to make in the past year on my Irish Web Site project, and to acknowledge once again the substantial assistance provided by the ACS grant I received. The grant gave a significant boost to the project, and has enabled me to carry it further than would otherwise have been possible. In the following pages I report in detail on the multiple aspects of the project and the progress I have made in the past year, as well as the future developments of the project.

Data gathering: I led students to Ireland for the spring semester this past year for the second time, the first time being in 2000. During our six weeks there, I shot 975 new images of various Irish sites. Added to my first collection of roughly 800 images, this more than doubled my collection. In addition, Jeff Overholtzer, information technology specialist at Washington and Lee, also came to Ireland for two of the six weeks I was there. Jeff and I were working together under the auspices of a Class of 1966 grant from Washington and Lee, aimed mainly at facilitating Jeff's gathering of images and other data relevant to my project. Jeff shot an additional 1400 images, as well as gathering a multitude of other resources: audio and video interviews with native Irish speakers; quicktime VR shots of important Irish sites; sound recordings of Irish language and Irish poetry. Jeff's data gathering included the palm-pilot data recording methods we hope to develop further. He also gathered GPS data for his shots, which are now incorporated into the Irish Cartography section of the web site. Furthermore, we added about 100 shots of Dublin from my colleague Suzanne Keen's slide collection. Consequently, the heart of the project, the searchable database of Irish images, now numbers over 3,100 images—a substantial growth.

Data cataloging: Much of the summer was spent by me in cataloging all of this new data. Jeff's images were largely cataloged in the field via the palm pilot method, but still there was substantial review and revision needed. My images all needed to be entered upon my return. So too all my images had to be digitally developed (we used a developing lab in Oregon, which provided excellent service and product). We also had to have Suzanne's images scanned and then entered into the cataloging database. By mid-August, I had all of the new resources fully cataloged, reviewed and checked, and entered into the searchable database. The Searchable Database will soon be a collection-level entry in Washington and Lee's library catalog, as well as in the WorldCat catalog. It is accessible to all users at <http://ireland.wlu.edu/db.htm>.

Teaching and Scholarly Applications: The main thrust of the project is to use the searchable database as a resource for building multiple teaching and research applications within the web site. Thus my work last summer and this fall has consisted mainly in

outlining, developing, and in some cases completing these various applications. I discuss the work and progress on these applications in the following list:

- **Spring Term in Ireland program:** I have completed the detailed narrative and pictorial travel log for the 2000 program, which gives a complete description of that first program to Ireland. This module, which now consists of over 100 web pages, stands as a model of the program to Ireland. The 2002 trip will consist of a detailed “slide gallery,” along with a brief narrative itinerary and an accompanying map section. Future trips will be similarly entered into the web site.
- **Irish Authors and the Irish Landscape:** this key teaching tool is well under way. Here I combine narrative and image to produce pages that offer biographical, historical, and cultural context for the major Irish authors I teach. This is a module that also employs student efforts: group web-readings of several of Yeats’s major poems, and also student essays and images on Joyce’s Dublin. This section will be of great help in introducing these authors as I teach them in my English 352: Modern Irish Literature course.
- **Introducing Irish History: A Web Text:** This is the most ambitious part of the current teaching and scholarly applications. In order to provide a cultural and historical context for students in Irish literature, I am writing a detailed historical overview of Ireland (aiming at approximately 100 web pages, perhaps more including the images), including a time-line that now runs for 7 pages. The web-text will include many images of Ireland to illustrate the historical concepts I am presenting. It will also include sound (folk songs, poetry readings), crucial links to related topics (e.g., “Saint Patrick of Ireland,” “The Irish Monasteries,” etc.), and the Irish High Crosses and Mapping Ireland modules I discuss below. This project, when completed, will allow me to introduce students to Irish history efficiently and effectively, as it will be a self-guided course of study that students will complete during the first week of the semester. Students can also return to this resource throughout the term. It will be invaluable to colleagues in related areas who want to direct students to a sound overview of Irish history.
- **Irish Poetry and Language:** here I offer an audio reading of one of the great 17th-century Irish poems, in its original Irish, read by a native Irish speaker and poet. I also offer the song version of the poem. This will be of great use as I try to give the students a sense of the actual sound and musical quality of Irish poetry.
- **Viewing the Celtic Cross:** a 3-dimensional viewing engine of all aspects of the Irish High Crosses at Monasterboice. This module will be incorporated into the History Web-Text as an interactive component, challenging students to study the Irish High Cross and discuss its place in Irish history.
- **Mapping Ireland:** we have developed two complementary models of a map of Ireland, connected to the database of Images I have produced. In one model, students can click on an Irish county and see all the images associated with that county. In the other, students can zero in on highlighted points on the map that show where images of Ireland are to be found (keyed to the GPS coordinates Jeff gathered). This module has great potential, from the immediate aid of being able

in class to go to the map and show students where a site is located, to many more ambitious and complex applications.

In addition, several other teaching benefits are at work: the ability to create, within minutes, detailed slide-shows of crucial sites, contexts, and literary scenes for use in lectures or presentations; an interactive database that students can access and search with ease; and a format for students to produce and publish their own work on Irish literary studies. I would also add that my own technical training, in web page construction, image manipulation, and data gathering techniques has greatly improved, which will facilitate future development of this web site.

Future developments: All of the elements discussed above are still in progress, though some are closer to completion than others. My immediate aim is to finish the modules that will be of immediate use in my Modern Irish Literature course this coming fall. This will include the History Web-Text and the Irish Authors in the Irish Landscape modules, in particular. I also want to incorporate essays that my students have written while in Dublin about Joyce's uses of Dublin sites in his writings. Students have also gathered images to accompany these essays, and I want to incorporate these into the module. I also want to examine the role of this material for Irish Literary Studies scholarship. I am presenting a paper at this June's American Conference of Irish Studies in Minneapolis, and I hope to present the web site there as well, and to publicize it through the ACIS web site and also their monthly journal.

Evaluation and Assessment: I now wish to have outside scholars and teachers offer evaluations and assessments of this project. Towards that end, I plan to contact several scholars in Irish studies in the coming months, and ask them to review the web site as a whole. I will draft a response module that will ask directed questions of the reviewers, as well as leave space for their own topics and comments. This information will be of great help to me as I work to develop and hone the site further.

Conclusion: Through the generous support of the ACS grant, this project has shifted from an ambitious, but as-yet-unrealized goal, to a project that is finished in its outline and now approaching the stage where it will make a serious impact on my teaching and scholarship. It is quite gratifying to me to see the web site taking shape, and all the different components fitting together at last. The assistance of numerous figures in University Computing, especially Jeff Overholtzer and Jeff Knudson, cannot be overstated. I am quite grateful to the ACS for the generous support. I hope you will visit the site at <http://ireland.wlu.edu>.

Sincerely,

Marc C. Conner
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