

## Forum Insights

### IRISH HISTORIC TOWNS ATLAS USERS' GROUP PROJECT

#### Overview of the project:

The Irish Historic Towns Atlas (IHTA) Users' Group project aims to promote the creative use of the Irish Historic Towns Atlas in teaching, research and fieldwork at third level. Users of this atlas know it to be a rich resource across a number of overlapping fields with enormous potential for the further enhancement of teaching. While the atlas is already used across different disciplines (history, geography, local studies, heritage studies, archaeology, architecture, town planning) and it is greatly respected as a scholarly resource, the mission of the IHTA Users' Group is to bring to the notice of each member of the network and to the wider circle of users and potential users, ways in which it might be utilised in the transformation of existing teaching and the planning of new modules. This will be done by (a) a series of Users' Group meetings at various locations and (b) an open teaching and learning workshop.

#### Partners:

Project convenor: Jacinta Prunty (Maynooth University, IHTA)

Project coordinator: Anne Rosenbusch (IHTA)

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#### Key outcomes of the project:

- determine how the IHTA is already being used as a resource in third level teaching
- facilitate wider dissemination of information and expertise from current IHTA users
- provide online learning resources to users of the IHTA
- organise a workshop that will showcase the use of the IHTA in innovative class and field teaching

#### What has been done already:

Three IHTA Users' Group meetings were held between February and April 2015 at Mary Immaculate College Limerick, Dundalk Institute of Technology and Maynooth University. Colleagues from the disciplines of history, geography and digital humanities introduced their current use of the atlas in existing modules. The information gathered in the three meetings allowed to identify what teaching resources could be provided to online users in order to facilitate greater use of the atlas. Online teaching resources, available on the IHTA website, will include high quality images of maps from the atlas, a general bibliography and powerpoint lecture slides, adaptable for various modules on urban history and geography.

In addition, the meetings with current atlas users were used to organise a teaching and learning workshop held in September 2015. Suitable topics for the workshop were identified and speakers were chosen. It was decided to divide the workshop into two thematic sections. The first section to focus on the use of the IHTA in skill-based learning across the disciplines of digital humanities, geography, history and architecture. The second section to look at different ways of teaching a deeper understanding of historical processes and changes in urban morphology over time.

#### Workshop:

Teaching and learning: using the Irish Historic Towns Atlas at third level

10 September 2015, Royal Irish Academy, 19 Dawson Street, Dublin 2

The aim of this one-day workshop was to promote the creative use of the IHTA in teaching, research and fieldwork at third level across the disciplines of geography, history, digital humanities, local studies, archaeology, architecture and town planning.

It was open to lecturers, postgraduate tutors, demonstrators, heritage people and others who would like to obtain new tools, methods and ideas for teaching. A workshop not a conference; colleagues shared their experience of using the IHTA in existing and planned modules in ways that enable participants to implement new ideas themselves and so make fuller use of this acknowledged valuable resource. The day also fed into the IHTA project as members of the editorial board and staff learned from users 'on the ground'. For the full programme see [www.ihta.ie](http://www.ihta.ie).

### How can you get involved:

For further information on the project please contact the project coordinator, Anne Rosenbusch, at [arosenbusch@ria.ie](mailto:arosenbusch@ria.ie).

### Background to the Irish Historic Towns Atlas project:

The IHTA project was established in 1981. The aim is to record the topographical development of a selection of Irish towns both large and small. The IHTA is part of a wider European scheme, with towns atlases containing broadly similar information available for a number of countries. Thus Irish towns can be studied in their European context. The IHTA is a compilation of topographical information (or a gazetteer), reconstruction and facsimile maps, and an essay exploring the topographical development of each town or city within the series. Each fascicle also includes townscape views, photos of streetscapes, and aerial photos along with a town-specific and general bibliography. With the recent launch of the twenty-seventh fascicle, *Youghal* (authors: David Kelly and Tadhg O'Keeffe), the series has reached a critical mass, allowing for research across twenty-four towns and cities (in parts) in Ireland on a comparative basis. A guidebook to using the atlas *Reading the maps: a guide to the Irish Historic Towns Atlas*, was published in 2012 (authors: Jacinta Prunty and Howard Clarke). There is an annual public seminar in May of each year. As a project, the IHTA has always aimed to be inclusive and collaborative, serving school teachers, students and ordinary members of the public as well as those with more specialist academic interests. The IHTA Users' Group and the resulting workshop are part of this ongoing endeavour. For more information on the project please see [www.ihta.ie](http://www.ihta.ie).