

## NeMO - NeDiMAH Methods Ontology

Use Case Buck:

Project: 'The Letters of 1916'

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Aiming to imprint the research process on the NeDiMAH Methods Ontology, this document presents the scope and description of a case study of humanities research. This use case was provided by William Buck in the context of his participation at the NeDiMAH Methods Ontology Workshop held in the Hague in December 2014.

### **Use Case Buck: Project ‘The Letters of 1916’**

William Buck is a historian and post-doctoral researcher for the Letters of 1916 digital humanities project, based at NUI Maynooth. He has specialized in the subject of Ireland and the First World War for his PhD and he also has experience in the customer service and recruitment field.

The Letters of 1916 project is the first public humanities project in Ireland. Its goal is to create a crowd-sourced digital collection of letters written around the time of the Easter Rising (1 November 1915 – 31 October 1916). The project includes letters held at institutions (in Ireland and abroad), alongside those in private collections. To date, the project has collected over 1600 letters that comment on the Easter Rising, literature and art, the Great War, politics, business and ordinary life. The project is well on its way to creating an online collection for the public, created by the public, which will add a new perspective to the events of the period, a confidential and intimate glimpse into early 20th Century life in Ireland, as well as how Irish politics was received and viewed internationally.

Contributors to the Letters of 1916 project include, NAI, NLI, the Military Archives of Ireland, the National Museum of Ireland, TCD’s Manuscripts & Archives Research Library, UCD Archives, Medical Missionaries of Mary, the Irish Capuchin Provincial Archives, Cork City and County Archives and more recently PRONI and The New York Public Library.

Methods used within the project include crowdsourcing, photographing and cropping the images of the letters, text description (meta-data) and text encoding of letters uploaded, creating structured data, and proofing the work that other contributors and transcribers on the project have done.

William Buck has also been participating in the University’s modules on Digital Humanities: Theory & Practice, as well as the Digital Scholarly Editing module to give him an insight into the development of the field of Digital Humanities. Both modules were about the advantages and risks associated with subject – from the creation of mass data and open access for educational purposes to new audiences outside of the academic sphere, crowdsourcing, best data practice, the issues surrounding copyright and disclosure risks when dealing with sensitive data and data protection laws.

Participation in the project allows him to incorporate his specialist historical knowledge of Ireland and the First World War period, whilst also developing new skill sets in digital humanities, crowdsourcing techniques, sourcing materials, text encoding using TEI and proofing of texts.

The Letters of 1916 project is aiming to change the discourse of the subject of history to get the public involved and connected more closely with the source materials, the archives and transcribing the content of historical letters for their own educational benefits. The project promotes collaboration

between institutions (universities, archives and libraries) and the general public, while making previously undiscovered historical materials more accessible in the public domain.

To change the discourse of the subject area of History and develop Digital Humanities, the encouragement and education of the general public in the use of these web tools is necessary for the promotion of the subject. This is aided by the project's PR and outreach events, such as the Letters 1916 Workshop for Teachers 2014, which was held at NUI Maynooth in August 2014 for secondary school teachers and others involved in the education sector. Further Outreach events are in progress for 2015, in Cork (UCC), Galway (NUIG), Belfast (PRONI) and Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford. Attendees are given the opportunity to learn about and get involved in the project, from the technologies used to transform paper-based archives to searchable digital databases, to getting hands-on experience transcribing letters, to learning how the letters provide a unique window onto this tumultuous time in Ireland's history. Families with letters are invited to join the growing number of contributors who have deposited digital copies of their letters in the collection. The Letters of 1916 project team are also on hand to digitise letters as well as to provide advice on how to help preserve the original letters.

The project is also promoted through Twitter chats, Facebook entries, blog posts on its website, and the more traditional press releases in the local and national media.

Along with the continued collaboration with local, national and international institutions and private collections, the Letters of 1916 project will contribute to the growth and publicity of the subject of Digital Humanities.

**List of questions:**

1. Are there any other crowdsourcing projects that our project can learn from or be compared to?
2. Can our methods of research and collection of materials be expanded upon to include other elements to help enhance the project further?
3. Are there any sources/materials that will help with standardization of our metadata through Dublin Core and TEI?

4. What are the most highly recommended tools and methods to evaluate the success of a crowdsourcing project?

5. Can the Ontology Spreadsheet be used as a project management tool to complement other PM tools such as GANNT charts?