# THE PAST AND PRESENT STATE OF DIGITAL HISTORY

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# FINDING NEW WAYS TO ANALYZE THE PAST

# ADDING LAYERS OF UNDERSTANDING
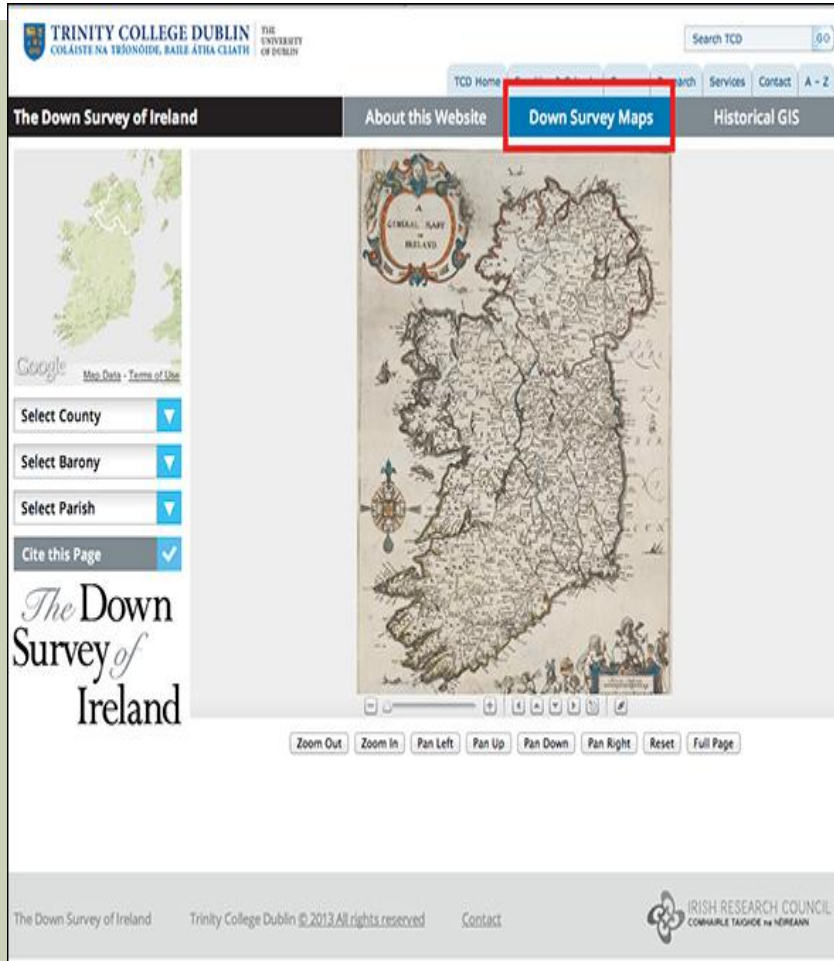
# DEFINING DIGITAL HUMANITIES

- Lou Burnard when asked how to define DH answered:

  'with extreme reluctance!'

- Daniel Cohen defines DH as

'Digital Humanities is the use of digital media and technology to advance the full range of thought and practice in the humanities, from the creation of scholarly resources, to research on those resources, to the communication of results to colleagues and students.'

(**Source: *Defining the Digital Humanities Conference* at Columba University 2011, proceedings available online**: http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xu6Z1SoEZcc)

# WIKIPEDIA DEFINITION

- The Digital Humanities are an area of research, teaching, and creation concerned with the intersection of computing and the disciplines of the humanities. Developing from the field of humanities computing, digital humanities embrace a variety of topics, from curating online collections to data mining large cultural data sets. Digital humanities (often abbreviated DH) currently incorporate both digitized and born-digital materials and combine the methodologies from traditional humanities disciplines (such as history, philosophy, linguistics, literature, art, archaeology, music, and cultural studies and social sciences) with tools provided by computing (such as data, visualization, information retrieval, data mining, statistics, text mining)and digital publishing.

# DH (DIGITAL HUMANITIES) VS DH (DIGITAL HISTORY)

- 'Digital history might be understood as an approach to examining ad representing the past that works with the new communications technologies of the computer, the internet network, and software systems. On one level digital history is an open arena of scholarly production and communication, encompassing the development of new course materials and scholarly data collection efforts. On another level, digital history is a methodological approach framed by the hypertextual power of these technologies to make, define, query and annotate associations in the human record of past. To do digital history, then, is to digitize the past certainly, but it is much more than that. It is to create a framework through the technology for people to experience, read, and follow an argument about a major historical problem.'

**(Seefeldt & Thomas, 'What is Digital History? A Look at some exemplar projects,' in *Perspectives on History* (May, 2009).)**

# DIGITAL REVOLUTION IN SCHOLARSHIP?
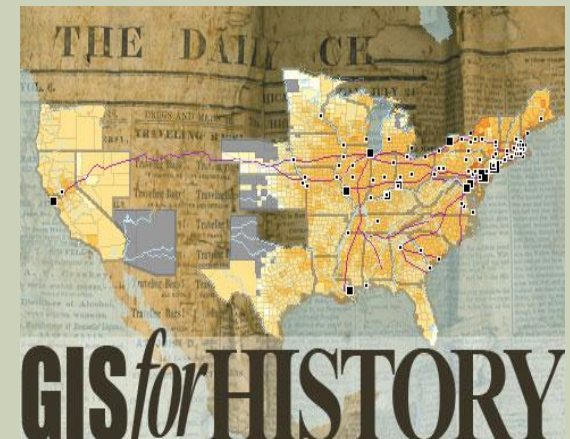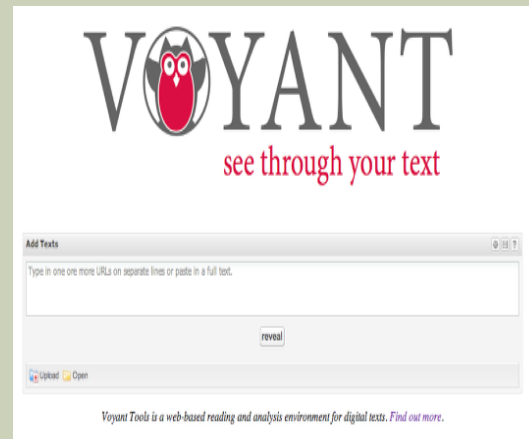
# IT AND HUMANITIES-UNLIKELY BEDFELLOWS?

- " … by its very nature, humanities computing has had to embrace "the two cultures," to bring the rigor and systematic unambiguous procedural methodologies characteristic of the sciences to address problems within the humanities that had hitherto been most often treated in a serendipitous fashion." [Hockey 2004]

# DIGITAL ZEITGEIST AND SCHOLARSHIP

- Research methodologies and approaches:
- Relational Databases-e.g. KCL's Counting the Clergy of the Church of England (CCE) –(150-200,000 clergyman).
- Textual Analysis-e.g. Voyant and Taporware
- Digital Publishing(e-journals, blogs, issue of quality control and pier review)
- Digital Curation and Archiving.
- Increasing scholarly collaboration and democratisation of access to Knowledge, open source tools etc.

# AUGMENTATION OR PARADIGM SHIFT?

- **Some key point to consider in our readings today**:
- Does DH constitute an intrinsic paradigm shift in how we conduct humanities research or does it merely extrinsically enhance and augment traditional methods?
- Is the reticence of some scholars to engage with DH justified, and if so how might such differences be reconciled/assuaged?
- How can we best promote and develop DH among scholars?
- As historians, how should we respond to Rosenzweig's challenge re the putative crisis over 'the scarcity or abundance' of digital sources in our own time.?

# RISE OF DIGITAL HUMANITIES :
# NOT EVERYBODY'S CUP OF TEA?

- http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=VREJV--VHSw

- http://www.criticalcommons.org/Members/ccManager/clips/5-ccdownfall.mov/view

# SUGGESTED FURTHER READING

- Matthew K. Gold (ed.), *Debates in the Digital Humanities* (Minnesota, 2012)-Open source edition available online at http://dhdebates.gc.cuny.edu/book

- Willard McCarty, Humanities Computing (London and NY: Palgrave, 2005) http://llc.oxfordjournals.org/content/22/2/244.full

- Susan Schreibman et al. (ed.), *A Companion to Digital Humanities*, ed. (Oxford: Blackwell, 2004)
- *Digital Humanities Quarterly* online: http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/

- Daniel J. Cohen & Roy Rosenzweig. *Digital History: A Guide to Gathering, Preserving, and Presenting the Past on the Web*. (Pennsylvania, 2006)-Online edition available at:

  http://chnm.gmu.edu/digitalhistory/

- Toni Weller, *History in the Digital* Age (Routledge, 2012)

- Roy Rosenzweig & Anthony Grafton (eds*.) Clio Wired: The Future of the Past in the Digital Age (Columbia University Press, 2011)*

- Bodenhamer, David J. 'The Potential of Spatial Humanities', in Bodenhamer, Corrigan & Harris (eds.), *The Spatial Humanities: GIS and the Future of Humanities Scholarship* (Bloomington, 2010), p.14-30.