

# David Stifter

## Nowlan Grant scheme 2021

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Name	David Stifter
Date report was submitted:	Apr 11, 2022
2a. Year awarded:	2021
2b. Title of project:	A Digital Corpus of Medieval Irish Latininate Inscriptions
2c. Please provide a summary of the project (minimum 100 words):	<p>The RIA Nowlan Digitisation Grant has allowed the project researcher Dr Nora White and the project director Prof David Stifter to initiate the Early Medieval Irish Latininate Inscriptions (EMILI) database. This initial phase of EMILI has focused on a selection of important but relatively neglected inscriptions on stones and on other objects from the early medieval Gaelic world. The inscriptions are in the Old Irish language and written in the Latin script (mainly in a style of insular script described as ‘half-uncial’). The majority of Latininate inscriptions are found on stone monuments, often accompanied by carved cross designs, which mostly function as Christian grave-slabs. Texts generally contain a personal name and many take the form of a request for prayer for the individual named. Inscriptions of this type also occur on a small number of non-lapidary, portable objects, such as reliquaries and hand-bells. Digitising the 600+ inscriptions in Ireland and from neighbouring regions (e.g. monastic inscriptions from Iona) is a long-term undertaking that will ultimately make freely available the entire Early Irish Latininate corpus in a digital format. Phase 1 of this project included: developing and setting up the digital infrastructure and starting to fill it with multidisciplinary data and metadata, drawing on original accounts and previous recordings, such as photographs and drawings. Descriptions from early accounts, such as R.A.S. Macalister’s <i>Corpus inscriptionum insularum Celticarum</i>. Vol. 2, Dublin: Stationary Office 1949, have been augmented and enhanced with data from other sources (e.g. Archaeological Survey of Ireland and multidisciplinary information from recent articles on individual inscriptions and regional groups). Although this phase of the project did not include fieldwork, any photographs or 3D models that are already available online (e.g. by Digital Heritage Age and the Discovery Programme) have been embedded into the online corpus. Permission has also been obtained from the National Monuments Service and the National Museum of Ireland to use appropriate photographs in their possession. The EMILI website (<a href="https://emili.celt.dias.ie/en/">https://emili.celt.dias.ie/en/</a>) is hosted and maintained by the School of Celtic Studies at the Dublin Institute for Advanced Studies, the main centre for early Irish research. In future phases, we will build on this by (re-)inspecting and recording the inscriptions in context using non-contact 3D recording techniques (digital photography, 3D photogrammetry). In this first</p>

phase the focus has been on a subgroup of inscriptions that has not seen a comprehensive study so far: the approximately one hundred inscriptions (on stone and on portable objects) from the provinces of Leinster (excluding Clonmacnoise), Connacht and Ulster. As the emphasis was very much on building the framework website and utilising the latest tools and techniques in digital epigraphy (e.g. EpiDoc XML encoding and the publishing platform EFES – <https://github.com/EpiDoc/EFES>), it was only possible to encode ca. 30 inscriptions so far. However, now that a template has been developed, it will be much easier to add more inscriptions in later phases. We endeavoured to include inscriptions where 3D models or digital images were already available.

2d. Please outline the objectives of the project:

The main objective of the project was to bring together information from various sources and disciplines (including epigraphy, linguistics, onomastics, archaeology and history) in a single searchable, digital resource. The digital corpus is open, interoperable and sustainable and will form the basis for future expansion and research into the many aspects of early Irish epigraphy. We tried to apply the principles and recommendations for digital humanities projects set out in the report of the joint IRC-AHRC Digital Humanities Networking Grant (2020–2021) ‘Developing a Digital Framework for the Medieval Gaelic World’ (available online at: <https://www.qub.ac.uk/schools/ael/Research/ResearchinLanguage/Fileupload/Fileupload,1334209,en.pdf>).

Another main objective was to bring Irish epigraphy into the largely classics-dominated digital epigraphy field. To this end, Dr Nora White has collaborated broadly in the field of digital epigraphy as a member of the international EpiDoc (<https://sourceforge.net/p/epidoc/wiki/Home/>) and Epigraphy.info (<https://epigraphy.info/>) communities. Particularly since the start of the EMILI project, Dr White has initiated and organised international virtual meetings and workshops sharing techniques, tools and best practise in digital encoding and digital imaging.

With regard to the landscapes of inscribed stones in Ireland, the project aims to contribute to bringing the research in line with what has been achieved in Wales by documenting and encoding geographical and archaeological information for the Irish material.

2e. Please outline the findings of your research and/or milestones achieved. (Please refer to the intended outcomes stated in your application form)

Milestones achieved:

1. Adoption of the latest EpiDoc XML schema to encode the inscriptions and the EFES platform for publishing digital epigraphy.
2. Creation of a digital corpus of previously understudied early Irish ‘Latinated’ inscriptions from Leinster (excluding Clonmacnoise), Connacht and Ulster.
3. Development of a dedicated, multidisciplinary, searchable website for the digital corpus, linked with other relevant online resources that will form the basis for future expansion and research, and that will ultimately contain the entirety of Latinated inscriptions from the medieval Gaelic world.
4. A dataset is currently being deposited with the Digital Repository of Ireland to ensure long-term preservation and access.
5. Two peer-reviewed articles relating to the project have been submitted for publication.
6. Several presentations and conference papers have been given or will be given in the near future (see below).

2f. Please describe the methodology used in conducting the research:

The methodological approach for this project has been to apply digital methods of documenting (XML encoding) and visualising

(high resolution photographs, 3D models, interactive maps) to the data collection. Following the methods employed by the Ogham in 3D project (<https://ogham.celt.dias.ie/>), up-to-date EpiDoc XML guidelines (based on TEI – Text Encoding Initiative) have been applied to the data as these guidelines are considered the de facto standard in digital epigraphy. Utilising the EFES publishing platform, the information added to the database includes encoded editions and descriptions of the inscriptions (covering epigraphy, palaeography, linguistics), as well as their material context and object type, along with the broader archaeological and historical context. Geographical data is also included, facilitating visualisation on an interactive map. Links are also made with other related digital projects and resources, primarily eDIL (electronic Dictionary of the Irish Language; <http://www.dil.ie/>), NMS Historic Environment Viewer (<https://maps.archaeology.ie/HistoricEnvironment/>), Logainm: Irish place-names database (<https://www.logainm.ie/>) and Monasticon Hibernicum (database of early Irish ecclesiastical settlement; <https://monasticon.celt.dias.ie/>). The data is indexed according to place of origin (by townland name), object type and personal names. Further indices include words, lemmata, symbols, abbreviations and numerals. Search functions can also easily be programmed in EFES from the marked up data and this is planned for future phases of the project when the corpus will be larger. In a next step, the linguistic epigraphic data will be integrated into CorPH (Corpus PalaeoHibernicum), a lexicographic and linguistic database developed in the ERC-funded Chronicon Hibernicum project at Maynooth University (URL: <https://chronhib.maynoothuniversity.ie/chronhibWebsite/tables?page=0&limit=0&fprop=&fval=&dttable=text&ctable=text&search=false>), where it will be subjected to linguistic annotation, variational tagging and historical-linguistic analysis. It is hoped that the analysis will reveal patterns of language usage that are relevant for the geographic distribution of linguistic variation.

2e. Please provide at least one appropriate image which can include photographs which can be used by the RIA in grant publications, website etc.



Early Medieval Irish Latinized Inscriptions

About Inscriptions Indices Bibliography

A digital collection of inscriptions, primarily in Old and Middle Irish and in the Latin script, from the early medieval period (6th - 12th cent. AD)

DIAS  
Institiúil Ard-Léinn | Dublin Institute for  
Bhailé Aithne Clártha | Advanced Studies

Maynooth University  
National University  
of Ireland Maynooth

RIA  
Acadamh Ríoga na hÉireann  
Royal Irish Academy

3a. Please provide details of the dissemination of the outcomes from this project (Publications, presentations, outreach, media etc) including details of any social media/web platforms used to publicise this project:

Two articles about the project and about findings of the project have been submitted and are forthcoming soon:  
2023 (forthcoming): David Stifter and Nora White, 'Early Literacy and Multilingualism in Ireland and Britain', in A. Mullen and G. Woudhuysen (eds.), Languages and communities in the late and post-Roman western provinces, Oxford University Press (a collective volume published as part of the ERC-funded LatinNow project, University of Nottingham).  
2022 (forthcoming): Nora White, 'Report on a new Digital Epigraphy project: EMILI', in: L. Kopar, K. Kazzazi, and G. Waxenberger (eds.), runes:et:al (inaugural issue of a new journal).

Dr Nora White has given six talks and presentations about the project:

June 2021: Invited panel discussion on 'The Digital Middle Ages in Ireland and Beyond', International Congress of Medieval Studies (Kalamazoo, USA); short presentation on the EMILI project.  
Oct 2021: Meeting with colleagues in UCC and NUI Galway on the archaeological aspects of EMILI and planned collaboration in a proposed 'Framework for Recording Carved Stones in Ireland'.  
Oct 2021: Presentation during Maynooth University Research Week on 'Digital Humanities and Ogham and Latin inscriptions from Early Medieval times to the present'.  
Jan 2022: Presentation at Epigraphy.info digital epigraphy working group meeting on 'EMILI and the use of EpiDoc encoding for digital editions of Irish inscriptions'.  
April 2022: Visit to the UCD Centre for Experimental Archaeology and Material Culture (CEAMC) to discuss potential collaboration with Dr Ryan Lash who is undertaking research on the early medieval carved stones of Inishark and Inishbofin.  
June 2022: An abstract has been submitted for a conference paper about the project at the Irish Conference of Medievalists at Queen's University Belfast.

Prof David Stifter will give a talk in the near future:

16 May 2022: Invited talk at University of Erlangen-Nürnberg (Germany) on recent research on Celtic onomastics, includes a presentation of EMILI.

3b. Number of academic papers/articles published:

2

3c. Number of lectures given/outreach events involved in:

5 + 2 in the near future

3d. Media coverage (articles in newspapers/ University websites etc.):

<https://www.maynoothuniversity.ie/news-events/digital-humanities-and-ogham-and-latin-inscriptions-early-medieval-times-present> Social media coverage:  
<https://mobile.twitter.com/earlyirishmu/status/1450321593729753088> <https://www.facebook.com/moybologue/posts/delighted-to-see-the-emili-early-medieval-irish-latin-inscription-project-is-4586457908051955/>  
<https://twitter.com/ChronHib/status/1435256301009920007?s=09&fbclid=IwAR0kumQVHDI944bhX5Rah9tm6kuqReSk11ffTJGQjO5i0vor9keatxVZIZs>  
<https://twitter.com/ndefaoite/status/1440332617446879243>  
<https://mobile.twitter.com/ChronHib/status/1474262036204904448>

3f. How will you continue to communicate the results of your project?

When the project website goes officially live at the end of April 2022, we will use social media and the Maynooth University website to promote its launch. As this is just the first phase of the project, we plan to continue to promote the results achieved so far and to secure further funding for follow-up phases to extend the scope of the corpus and to undertake fieldwork, including 3D imaging of the inscribed monuments and artefacts. Communicating the results of the project will also be achieved by planned collaborations with researchers at UCD, UCC and NUI Galway, as outlined in 3a.

3g. What are your publication plans?

In addition to the online publication of the digital corpus itself and the forthcoming publications noted in 3a., we also plan to publish journal articles (like Callaghan and Stifter 2020: <https://www.brepolonline.net/doi/10.1484/J.PERIT.5.124478>) on aspects of specific inscriptions, groups of monuments/artefacts and methods used to digitise/digitally document the inscriptions.

5d. What plans (if any) do you have to further your proposal/project?

The Digital Corpus will be expanded in future phases of the EMILI (provided funding can be obtained) to include inscriptions from the remaining geographical areas (Munster, Clonmacnoise, Iona) to ultimately arrive at a complete digital corpus of early Irish inscriptions. With the appropriate funding, we will also carry out fieldwork, prioritising inscribed stones/objects that have not been recently visited or recorded using digital imaging.

