

# Digital Humanities Observatory

*Ireland's window on humanities e-scholarship*

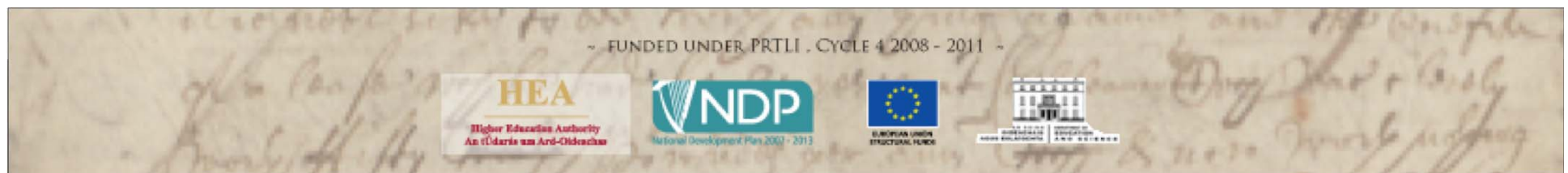
A project of the  ROYAL IRISH ACADEMY  
ACADAMH RÍOGA NA HÉIREANN

## Digital Project Management

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# Our objectives: to learn ...

1. How to decide what kind of digital resource to create
2. How to set goals for the digital project
3. How to plan projects
4. How to communicate within the project team, with users, and with future stewards of the digital resource

# Exercise 1 (15 minutes)

Break into small groups with people you don't already know.

Decide on the top five things that you learned from previous projects—things project participants should never forget. These can be *dos* or *don'ts*.

# Institutions, collections, & projects

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	Has an audience of users	Has defined goals

# Institutions, collections, & projects

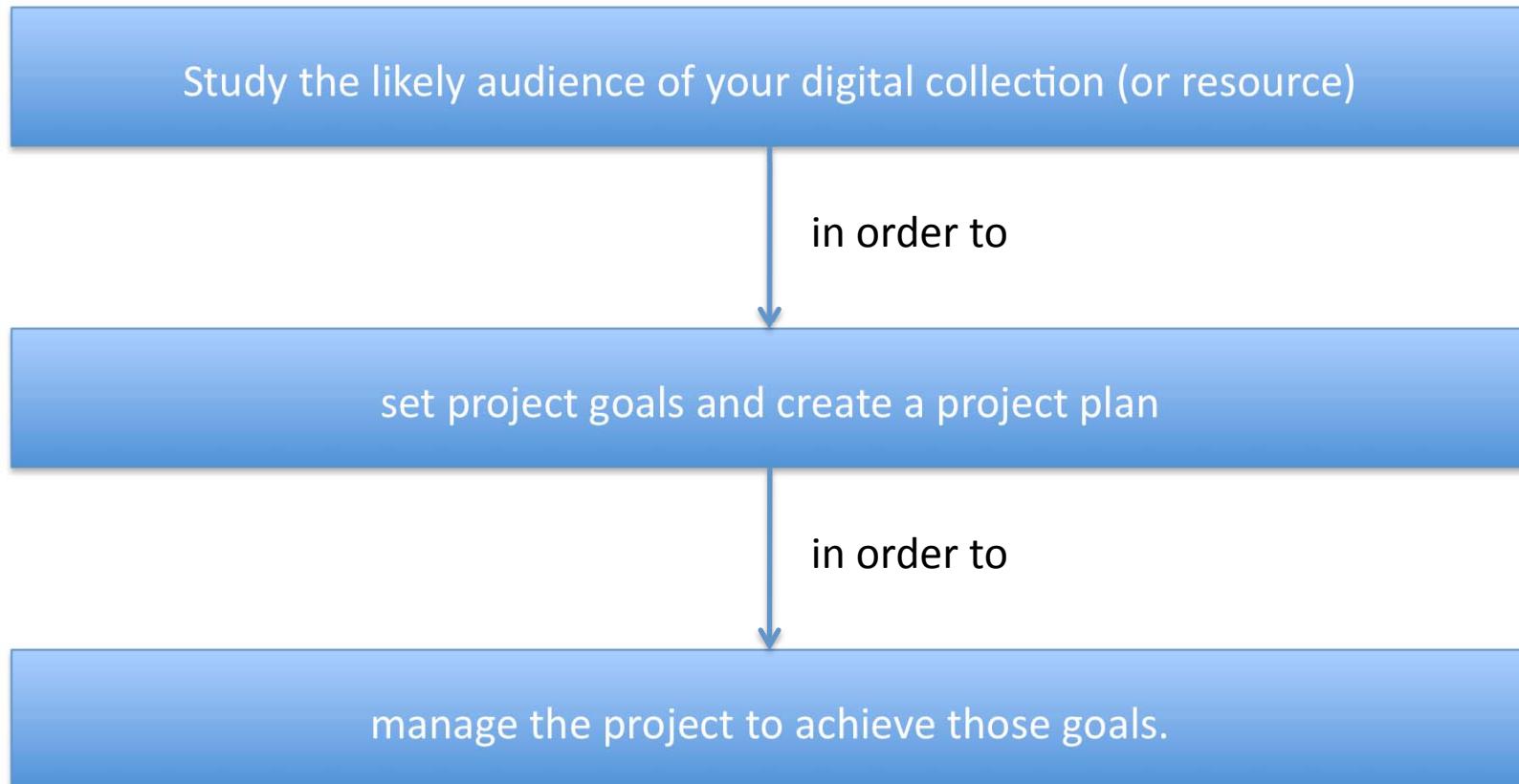
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*A digital project* is a project that aims to fully or partly digitize an existing analogue collection (on paper, film, canvas, etc.) or to create a brand new digital-only collection.

# Before you jump in ...





# 1. Study the likely audience of your digital collection (or resource)

Think like a book editor, indexer or cataloguer:

- Who will use the resource?
- What will they do with it?

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Conduct focus groups and/or surveys.

Perhaps even form an advisory board.

# Not just at the beginning ...

Study users not only at the beginning but at all stages of the project. User testing is an ongoing, iterative process.

In addition to focus groups at the beginning, have these or other potential users look at mock-ups and test out site prototypes.

## 2. Set project goals and create a project plan

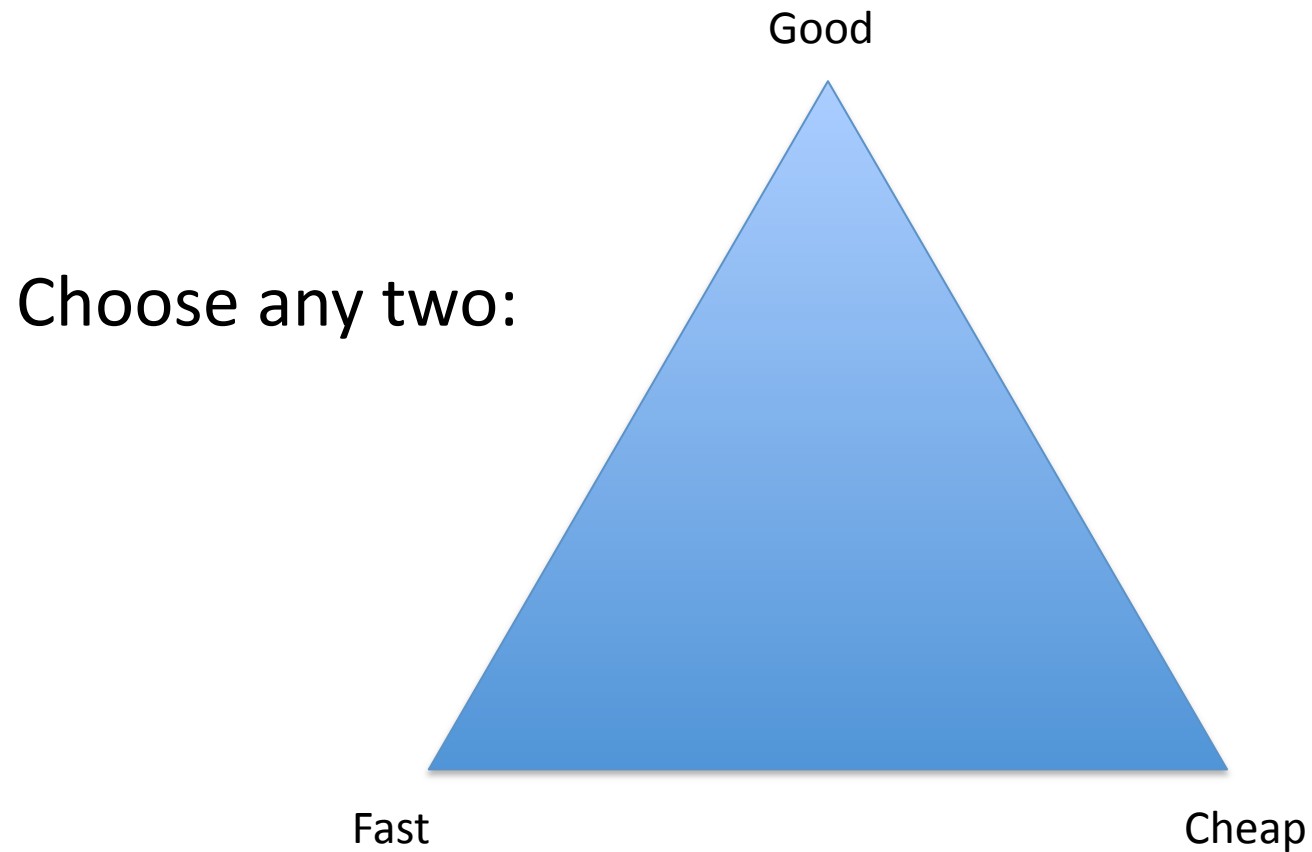
It's important to define exactly what the project aims to achieve.

*What will be achieved, and under what conditions will the various parties (institutions) participate?*

Rank your goals in terms of importance.

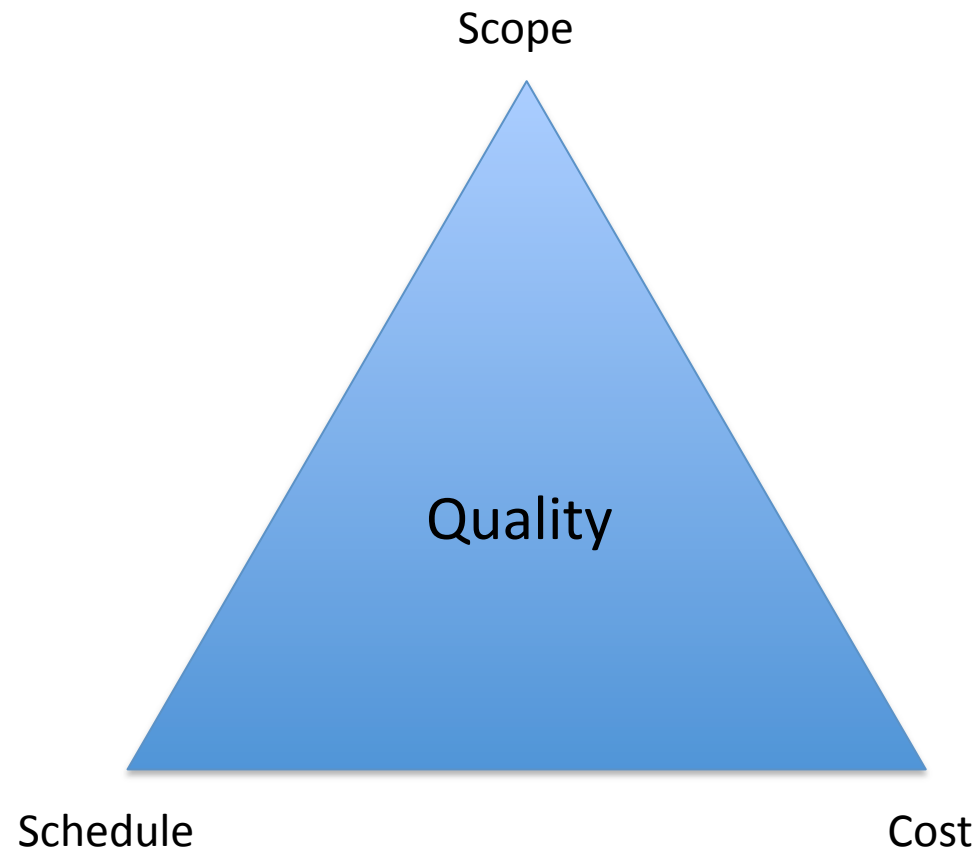
*In case time, money, or both run out, what is most important?*

# The cynical view



# Project Management Triangle

*The triple constraints*



See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project\\_Management\\_Triangle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Project_Management_Triangle)

# Write it down

- Not everyone interprets or recalls the same initial project discussion the same way!
- When the stakeholders are not required to participate (not all working for the same supervisor), it's good to have a memo of understanding regarding each party's responsibilities.

# Your project plan should contain

- Project phases

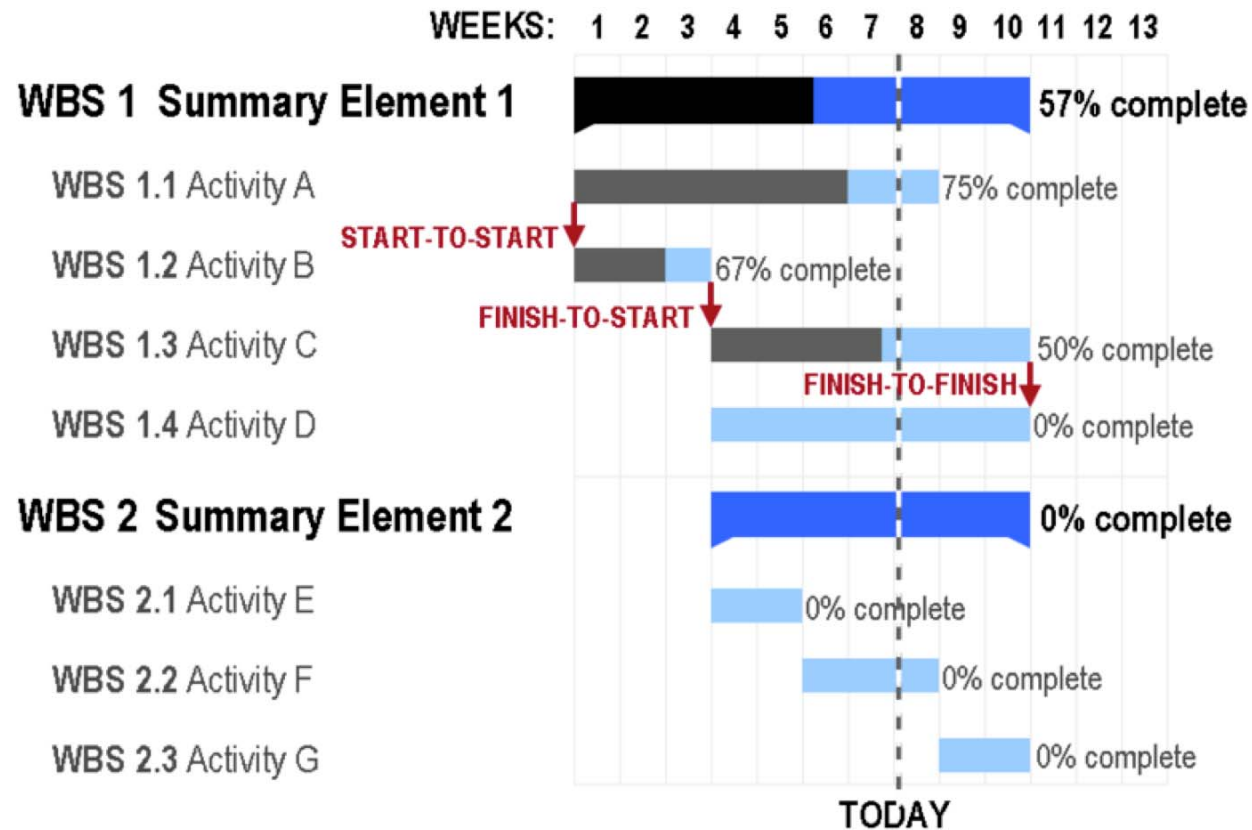
*In case limited resources prevent you from accomplishing all that you plan to, the most important and/or easiest work (in the earliest stages) will still get accomplished.*

- A timeline showing who does what when, including dependencies

*Consider creating a Gantt chart.*



# A Gantt chart



Source: <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:GanttChartAnatomy.png>

# The project manager

The PM is responsible for implementing the project plan (and perhaps formulating it in detail).

The PM is proactive:

- Seeking out information
- Involving people who are critical to the project
- Sharing information with those who need it
- Putting information in writing

The PM must be committed to the project's success and must encourage others to also be committed.

# Things go wrong

Delays often arise because time estimates are too short. That's why you plan for project phases.

On the other hand, internal deadlines are useful for keeping forward momentum, especially on any long-term project.

Revisit the project plan often and decide when to revise the plan and when to stick to it.

*Project planning is iterative ... like user testing!*

# People have different communication styles and preferences

Asynchronous (delayed)	Synchronous (instantaneous)
in writing	'live'
does not necessarily break concentration	requires interruption from work
allows time for reflection	easier to keep track of discussions

Find an appropriate mix of the two and appropriate tools for each.

# Some communication tools

Asynchronous (delayed)	Some of both	Synchronous (instantaneous)
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• email</li><li>• online forums</li><li>• word processor documents</li><li>• wikis</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Google Docs</li><li>• Google Wave</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• instant messaging</li><li>• VoIP (like Skype)</li><li>• meetings</li><li>• chatting at someone's desk or over the phone</li></ul>

This afternoon we'll talk a bit more about each of these, plus look at software designed specifically for project management.

# Our favourite synchronous communication method



Source: Online everywhere

# How to have productive meetings

- Craft an agenda, preferably with input from the group.
- Set a planned time limit on discussion of each agenda item.

*If you have trouble keeping meetings short, have everyone stand the whole time!*

- Have a timekeeper and/or facilitator who is not the same person as the meeting chair.
- Take minutes, or at least record decisions reached and any tasks assigned.

*Not everyone interprets or recalls the same meeting the same way!*

But even when you agree how to communicate ...

It's quite a challenge to bridge the gap in vocabulary and different frames of reference between subject specialists, project managers, and programmers.

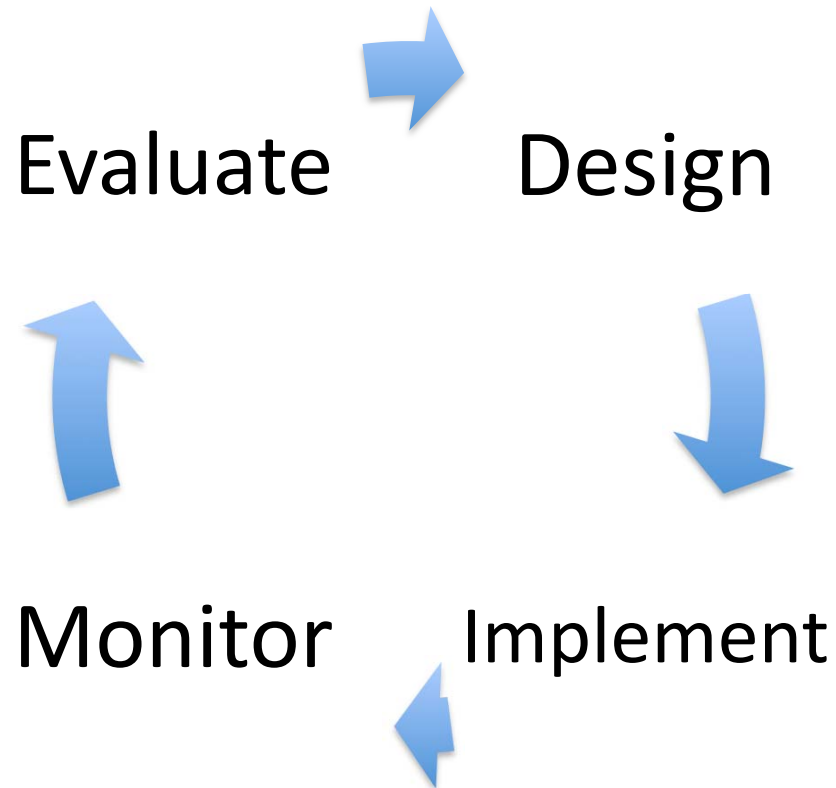
The only advice here is to seek out and hold onto team members who can act as interpreters.



# Types of documentation

- For the project team and future stewards of the digital resource:
  - Internal documentation on decisions reached and how to carry the work forward (in case of staff turnover or in case the project is revived in the future)
  - Commented computer code
- For stakeholders (institutional funders, grant agencies) and the PR division:
  - Promotional material (online and/or in print)
- For users:
  - Documentation (if necessary)

Like user testing and project planning,  
project management as a whole is iterative



## Exercise 2 (in groups again)

Would you change your answers to  
Exercise 1?

If so, how and why?

Slides from this two-day workshop are available at  
<http://dho.ie/node/667>

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