

Bridging Worlds: The Launch of the ReCLAIM TRAIN Project at UCD

On 25 April 2025, the UCD Humanities Institute welcomed the launch of the *TRAIN Project — Transnational Research and Interdisciplinary Networks* — an ambitious new initiative aimed at strengthening the ties between the Humanities and STEM disciplines across (and beyond) the University College Dublin community. Funded through the **ReCLAIM initiative** by **UCD Research Culture** and the **Wellcome Trust**, TRAIN aspires to challenge disciplinary silos and encourage collaborative knowledge production through innovative networking models. The launch event was an energising and hopeful beginning, setting the tone for what promises to be a transformative journey. Scholars from a rich array of disciplines – literary studies, modern languages, digital humanities, mathematics, medicine, chemistry, political science, and more – gathered to listen, share, and connect. At the heart of the event were three invited speakers, each of whom embodies the ethos of interdisciplinary engagement.

Dr. Katie Mishler, a scholar in literary studies and digital humanities, opened the event with reflections on how literary narrative and cultural analysis have much to offer scientific disciplines, particularly in the ways we understand human experience. Her work on public storytelling, digital archives, and collaborative platforms provides models for how humanistic inquiry can be reimaged in the digital age, and how it can productively inform data-driven research. **Dr. Ruth Leeney** brought a vital ecological perspective. With a background in marine conservation science and a strong commitment to working with coastal communities, she spoke about how ethnographic methods and local knowledge can be integrated into scientific practice. Her interdisciplinary projects have not only contributed to conservation outcomes but have also foregrounded the ethics of research partnerships, a theme that resonates deeply with the Humanities Institute's and the Earth Institute's values here at UCD. **Dr. Mark Coughlan**, whose research lies at the intersection of marine-based science and environmental humanities, offered a powerful account of how the sharing of cross-disciplinary knowledge can deepen and diversify policy research. He stressed the importance of narrative, context, and historical insight when strengthening the scientific message, insights that resonate with the interpretive methodologies of the humanities. His work exemplifies the benefits of cross-disciplinary training and the creative potential of methodological hybridity.

One of the highlights of the day was the “speed dating” networking session, a fast-paced and energising format that allowed scholars to engage in short, structured conversations with colleagues from outside their fields. The session served as a microcosm of the TRAIN project: curiosity, openness, and a willingness to think beyond disciplinary boundaries. Feedback was enthusiastic, with participants praising the unexpected synergies that emerged during the event.

Behind the scenes, the event was made possible by the steering committee: Dr. Bianca Rita Cataldi (University of Galway), Professor Anne Fuchs (UCD Humanities Institute), Caitriona Devery and William Fitzmaurice (UCD Earth Institute), who co-developed the TRAIN project as a response to the pressing need for greater interdisciplinary and transnational collaboration in research culture. As it emerged from the event, the

humanities are not an island, but a source of intellectual innovation. When paired with STEM, they can offer innovative insights and explore new directions. The TRAIN initiative is also deeply aligned with the goals of the ReCLAIM initiative, which seeks to strengthen research culture through equity, inclusivity, and innovation. In this respect, TRAIN is not just about research outcomes, but it is about relationships, processes, and the structures that sustain creative collaboration.

In the coming months, TRAIN will offer further opportunities for interdisciplinary and transnational engagement: roundtables for early career researchers and thematic workshops on topics such as AI ethics and cultural responses to scientific innovation. At its core, TRAIN is about building an academic community that is intellectually generous, methodologically diverse, and structurally inclusive. The UCD Humanities Institute and the UCD Earth Institute proudly host this initiative, which affirms our belief in the transformative power of research when it reaches across boundaries.

We are grateful to UCD Research Culture and the Wellcome Trust for their support, and we look forward to sharing more stories of interdisciplinary and transnational innovation in the months to come.