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Ollscoil na hÉireann, Corcaigh  
**National University of Ireland, Cork**



**UCC**

Coláiste na hOllscoile Corcaigh, Éire  
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**Exploring ethnography and digital visualisation: a study of musical  
practice through the contextualisation of music related projects  
from the Seán Ó Riada Collection.**

Volume 1 of 1

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for the degree of

**Doctor of Philosophy**

**University College Cork**

**Digital Arts and Humanities**

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## Author Declaration

This is to certify that the work I am submitting is my own and has not been submitted for another degree, either at University College Cork or elsewhere. All external references and sources are clearly acknowledged and identified within the contents. I have read and understood the regulations of University College Cork concerning plagiarism.

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Patrick Egan

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## Referencing

In this thesis I used Zotero for gathering references both in-text and for building a works cited listing. I also used the online resource Citefast to contribute to works cited. The referencing system that I have used is Modern Language Association (MLA), eighth edition.

Online journals sometimes do not have page numbers or sections clearly delineated. As a referencing guide, paragraph numbers are used to indicate the section of the webpage to which I was referring. When referencing online-only articles, I have utilised MLA 8th conventions such as including the first section of the title of the article.

In some cases, footnotes are used. Though footnotes are not generally supported in the eighth edition of MLA, I have included them in areas where it was both inconvenient for the flow of writing to place notes off page, or to include a note within the text.

## Terms and Abbreviations

PDF – A PDF or Portable Document Format is an electronic file format that allows data to be viewed, navigated, printed or searched by end users.

UCC – University College Cork.

SÓRC – The Seán Ó Riada Collection. The SÓRC is the subject of this thesis and comprises the papers of Seán Ó Riada held at the Boole library at UCC. I refer to it as the acronym SÓRC throughout this thesis.

D3 – D3 is a Javascript library for visualising data.

HTML – Hypertext Markup Language.

SQL – Structured Query Language.

API – Application Programming Interface – a set of procedures that allows data from an electronic system to be accessed.

LOD – Linked Open Data – A structure that is used for exposing, sharing and linking digital data.

Western art music – A term used in this thesis interchangeably with the term classical music.

Data Point, Data Interval – A data point is a specific point in data visualisation, as opposed to a data interval which consists of a length between two data points.

Datasets – A collection of data represented in an electronic resource as a set of rows and columns. In this study a number of datasets are utilised.

Data Visualisation Framework – A term used to describe the prototype developed in this study.

## Abstract

This thesis explores how cultural data of musical practice is contextualised during the process of digital visualisation and ethnographic research. The investigation utilises a two-pronged approach to examine music related projects from an archive, the Seán Ó Riada Collection, and focuses on how mid-twentieth century Irish artist Seán Ó Riada rose to prominence.

Humanities scholars and digital humanists are increasingly engaged with digital technology in their work. Although ethnography and digital visualisation have often been used in research, both processes are beginning to be used in tandem. This project makes an original contribution to the scholarly literature through interrogations of how a hybrid of concepts and methodologies drawn from digital humanities and ethnomusicology may work in tandem or may be complementary. Practice theory is advanced as a suitable methodology for historical analysis, facilitating an investigation of musical practice in order to reveal evidence of change or continuity during the development of Seán Ó Riada's career. Analysis of music related documents discovered within the Collection is framed by the circumstances through which projects were rehearsed and presented to audiences in a number of different mediums. I argue that the development of digital datasets and iterations of visualisation enable more informed questions and suitable theories to emerge when engaging with the contents of archival collections. I also argue that as a result of this activity, the selection process for suitable methodology and theory (such as event-based research) are important considerations when attempting to combine the practices of ethnography and digital humanities.

This thesis also examines the complexities that emerge with exploring musical practice with digital cultural data, arguing for deeper engagement with data and digital tools in the structures where they are recombined and represented. Digital practices are perceived as challenging, informative and evolving processes of engagement. The debate concerning the use of more elaborate systems of classification for the representation of cultural data is not solved, instead it is utilised constructively and considered as part of an ongoing, self-reflexive process of research that enables knowledge discovery.

In addition, this study introduces a series of semi-structured interviews that were carried out in order to assess the accounts of performance related activities, related by contemporaries and critics of Seán Ó Riada. The ethnographic section of this thesis demonstrates how ethnomusicology contributes to an improved interpretation and understanding of digital data. This study contributes to the ongoing discussion about digital humanities activities in ethnomusicology and ethnomusicology in digital humanities. It demonstrates the use of novel digital processes alongside long-form ethnographic fieldwork to contextualise historic materials in archive collections.

## Keywords

DIGITAL HUMANITIES, ETHNOMUSICOLOGY, DIGITAL VISUALISATION, DIGITAL VISUALISATION FRAMEWORK, ITERATIVE DESIGN, DATA DRIVEN DESIGN, ETHNOGRAPHY, DIGITAL CULTURAL DATA, QUALITATIVE, QUANTITATIVE, REFLEXIVE RESEARCH

# **Chapter 1**

## **Introduction**

This thesis explores how cultural data of musical practice is contextualised with the process of digital visualisation and ethnographic research. The research is conducted using a special collection based at University College Cork, Ireland. By employing concepts and methodologies from ethnomusicology and digital humanities, special collection materials are contextualised in traditional and novel ways. As a result of this approach, cultural data is used as a means to guide theory and practice during phases in the exploration of evidence.

### **1.1 Collections**

In this thesis, a collection is defined as being a specific set of physical cultural heritage items which have been catalogued, housed and listed at an archive or special collection in a library. When a collection is archived within a library, the generation of metadata (data describing these items) is considered as best practice by an archivist during this process. The metadata that is generated by archiving is usually published in a document called a finding aid or descriptive list. This document then becomes known as a digital collection.<sup>1</sup> A digital collection in its most basic form in this thesis refers to a descriptive list containing metadata.

#### **1.1.1 Special Collections**

Rare book, manuscript and special collection libraries are important resources for scholarly research. They are helpful in identifying information about an exclusive set of

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<sup>1</sup> See for example "Sean Ó Riada Collection / Bailiúchán Sheáin Uí Riada - UCC Library." Seán Ó Riada Collection / Bailiúchán Sheáin Uí Riada – UCC Library, 19 Aug. 2014, <http://booleweb.ucc.ie/index.php?pageID=289>.



documents and about the materiality behind their text, and their provenance as a primary source. They provide a window into the past, acting as clues about how a book or document might have been used, or interpreted. Their use can provide crucial information that could influence research in a variety of ways (Jones 2001; Dalbello 2004; Mitchell, Seiden, & Taraba 2012). As a result of the need for a high level of preservation, special collections materials are usually accessed through a gatekeeper, potentially making the ease of their retrieval more complicated than other library materials.

The *modus operandi* in many of these archival repositories has been to require scholars of research to physically visit an archive in order to view these available materials. The process of booking an on-site appointment for access is sometimes aided by the availability (either in physical form or online) of a finding aid, a document typically typed using software such as Microsoft Word and then saved in Portable Document Format (PDF) for reading and search. Often, when using this aid, the discovery of archival items is limited only to manual reading and / or keyword search.

The use of metadata is now changing such that scholars and data developers are using it for research in new, alternative ways (Michalko 2015, Kräutli 2016). For example, archival institutions such as the Tate Gallery in London have released the metadata of their collections on the World Wide Web, specifically aiming to encourage researchers to use their data in novel ways (Archives and Access Project). Other collections, such as those at the Library of Congress in the United States have actively promoted the visualisation of the contents of their archives (Visualizations and Digital Collections). As a result, new, novel and alternative ways of utilising metadata are being promoted as highly effective means for understanding the contents of collections as access to data becomes democratised.

## 1.2 Motivations for this study

Research in the digital humanities has fostered new potential for engaging with digital tools and technologies. It is generally accepted within the digital humanities community that digital practices have the potential to transform how we think about research. However, the way in which this can be fruitful for ethnomusicology on a more engaged level has yet to be fully explored.

This study uses novel methods for researching with archival metadata in order to explore if research in ethnomusicology and digital humanities can intersect in fruitful, compelling ways. I engage with material from the Seán Ó Riada Collection (SÓRC) at University College Cork (UCC) in Ireland and its accompanying digital collection. In a data visualisation framework, I then recombine this data with data gathered from other archival collections throughout Ireland. This process demonstrates new research in digital humanities and ethnomusicology that generates mutually enriching concepts and approaches in both fields.

Addressing the history of archival practices with finding aids and metadata is beyond the scope of this thesis. However, a number of points will be made concerning the researcher's motivation for engaging with metadata during this project. In particular, I focus on important developments that have occurred in archival science with regard to metadata description and finding aids.

It has long been recognised by scholars that approaches to archive appraisal and description are not neutral activities. The very act of appraisal and archiving has been determined by the relationship between the archivist and the document at one particular

period in time, one which Duff and Harris describe as where archivists, “tell stories about stories ... in the realm of narrativity” (Duff and Harris 276). Deodato suggests the way that influence is shaped throughout the process,

In deciding what about a complex body of records accounts for meaningful order, determining its provenance, highlighting what is believed to be significant about its contents, and assigning names and access points, archivists shape the way those records will be understood and used by researchers. (Deodato 56)

The use of archival standards and practices, whilst improving the ways in which archives can be structured and accessed, can therefore be limited as a result of the construction of finding aids. Archivists have debated this point more readily in recent decades as post-modern approaches become more commonplace, as stated by Pitti,

Archivists increasingly recognize that the single apparatus represented in the traditional printed finding aid is inflexible and inefficient when dealing with complex, interrelated records. (Pitti 4)

In this sense, even though finding aids are well represented by archivists, the way that they are created limits the ability to provide additional perspectives and context. The finding aid then becomes a one-time document that reflects the worldview, biases and context of their creation. Deodato suggests that,

Finding aids only reflect the first reading of the records, freezing their meaning in time and foreclosing the possibility of alternative interpretations. (Deodato 60)

A number of calls have been made for archival appraisal and description to be more open in its representation. This sentiment is echoed by others who recognise that the communities themselves have a role to play in archival description (Loewenthal, Toner)

Emerging frameworks for digital practices afford researchers and archivists the ability to address some of the issues mentioned above, to promote descriptive inclusivity and the improvement of metadata, wherein hidden voices can emerge from the process of archival description, and for wider perspectives to be included with archival documents. Digital visualisations of finding aids are emerging as ways to neutralise bias in digital collections and finding aids. The ArchivesZ project is one such example. Kramer-Smith et al. explain that

Nothing will replace the need to eventually read the finding aid of a collection of interest - but putting visualization tools in the hands of archives users will facilitate the understanding of the big picture of the materials available at a specific archive.  
(Kramer-Smith et al.)

A number of scholars have championed the benefit of engaging with digital tools and practices. Archivists have also begun to explore ways in which to experiment with approaches to archival description and the structures of finding aid documents. Tools, such as The Polar Bear Expedition Digital Collection developed by Krause and Yakel, demonstrate their awareness of the inherent bias within archival description(s) and the need for novel ways with which to engage with digital collections (Krause et al. 282).

In the digital humanities, scholars such as Lorna Hughes encapsulate the significance of developing visualisation of cultural heritage in the digital age by offering new critical

approaches using digital tools and practices. In 2006 she laid out an emerging critical framework for digital cultural heritage that introduces significant opportunities for exploration of the “intellectual, cultural, technical, social and political meaning of the digital” (Hughes). Hughes calls on humanists to use analysis that was used in print culture to “interrogate the state of knowledge, the concept of culture and the redefinition of social in the information age” and sees building or making as key opportunities for critical or self-reflexive engagement with the creation of digital content.

Scholars in the field of the Digital Humanities have also voiced concerns about bias in the description process, emphasising that it not only captures descriptions about the content of an archive, but also leaves inherent traces of subjectivities and embedded bias (Kräutli 243). This thesis builds upon these developments within archival science and digital humanities, by suggesting deeper engagement with finding aids, by problematizing narratives and structure within the finding aid, and by highlighting and interrogating bias that is represented within a digital visualisation.

Digital practices allow researchers to change how collections are understood. By recombining descriptions of a collection’s material in a digital manner, a greater awareness of the Collection as a whole may be articulated. In this research I demonstrate that by creating a digital visualisation framework for the representation of archival data, biases are revealed, and more mature questions are posited about the significance of digital and also physical collections. I suggest that in order to expand what we know about both types of collections, it is necessary to use new digital structures to complement and challenge existing standards.

### 1.3 Research Questions

This study began with a review of narratives concerning the career of Seán Ó Riada, an artist who rose to prominence in a number of mediums and genres of music in Ireland during the mid-twentieth century. The research procured, engaged with and analysed a wide selection of historical evidence that has been used to critique Seán Ó Riada's life and works, in particular evidence of his career trajectory, so as to determine whether or not number of projects involving Seán Ó Riada extant within the SÓRC which might not have been available or included within previous biographies and analyses of his career.

With a significant body of texts and media currently being available in the public domain, preliminary inquiry focused on selecting music-related materials encountered through searches of the SÓRC's digital collection and subsequent viewings of the corresponding material. These explorations led to the formation of a research question for enquiry into his musical activity: *How did Seán Ó Riada rise to prominence during his career?*

Following this core research question, wider considerations of Seán Ó Riada's interactions within Irish society were considered. Research questions arose such as: *How might his musical related activity aided his rise to prominence? How was this reputation sustained? What was unique about his status as an individual within Irish society? What were the socio-economic circumstances of his life and how did this influence his career trajectory? How did institutional agendas influence materials in the SÓRC, particularly Radio Éireann and Radio Teilifís Éireann? Can recombining data from the digital collection contents contribute new understanding about the nature of materials within the Seán Ó Riada Collection? If so, how?*

In recent years, several scholarly narratives have documented aspects of Seán Ó Riada's career. The chief emphases of these narratives focus on his artistic development during this era as a cultural icon, composer, performer, raconteur and, in some cases, as an academic during the mid-twentieth century.<sup>2</sup> He is often portrayed as an important cultural figure from this period in Irish history. In other accounts the narrative backdrop to Seán Ó Riada's career is highlighted through the poor quality of infrastructure for musical practice and a "corrosive want of general (music) education", which are perceived to have influenced the development of various music communities in Ireland into the 1950s (White 134-135).

Although these accounts address many aspects of Seán Ó Riada's career and life in Ireland, a number of other important changes occurred during this period in history, in particular for the Arts. The Arts Act was passed in 1951, at a time when Seán Ó Riada was a student at UCC. The years following this period involved some major shifts in cultural policy and cultural expression. In particular, the mid-1950s marked a time of revival "in which ideas began to be welcome" (Pine 424). There are also political considerations of change continued to occur into the 1960s such as the civil rights movement and the roles played by high and low cultural forms during this period in performing Irish identity.

Issues surrounding gender are also absent in many accounts of how Seán Ó Riada's career progressed. Many of Seán Ó Riada's co-performers and work colleagues were men. This period in Irish history embodied great imbalances concerning the rights of women within the workplace and this difference became highlighted with the passing of legislature

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<sup>2</sup> See: Ó, Canainn T, and An B. G. Mac. *Seán Ó Riada: A Shaol Agus a Shaothar*. Garton, 1993.

concerning the Employment of Married Women Act in 1973.<sup>3</sup> The way in which artists operated and how events occurred under these conditions has hitherto been neglected.

In short, Seán Ó Riada's working career interfaced with highly dynamic, shifting organisations and institutions that served to restrict or support certain modes of cultural creativity and identity making in Ireland. Given the aforementioned context, rather than focusing on theory surrounding the reasons why change happened under mentalist viewpoints, the central research question chosen for this study was revised to consider practical processes of *how* processes of change materialised.

#### **1.4 Design and scope of the thesis**

Using a two-pronged approach, this research integrates digital humanities tools and techniques along with ethnography in balanced measure. Both strands of inquiry explore the same fundamental question, "how did Seán Ó Riada rise to prominence", but both strands explore the investigation from two distinctly different approaches. Firstly, I explored the topic from the perspective of a digital humanist by engaging with an archive collection using research by design and data development. I focused on the creation of a digital visualisation framework over a four-year period (between 2014 and 2018). I gathered, structured and analysed metadata from the finding aid of the SÓRC, from the SÓRC itself and a wide range of data from other archives in Ireland (as outlined in Chapter 3). Secondly, I approached the same topic using principles from ethnomusicology and practice theory. This interdisciplinary position allowed me to sustain a complementary research agenda. I

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<sup>3</sup> Book (eISB), electronic Irish Statute. *Electronic Irish Statute Book (EISB)*. <http://www.irishstatutebook.ie/eli/1973/act/17/enacted/en/html>. Accessed 6 May 2018.



focused on the contributions of a number of interviewees with the purpose of uncovering key indicators relating to the process of change or continuity in mid-twentieth-century Ireland. The artist and society engaging in performance at specific moments became the primary focus of the interview process.

By understanding the varied types of music-related projects performed by Seán Ó Riada through these approaches, I began to gain a greater understanding of the contents of the SÓRC and subsequently Ó Riada's role as an artist in twentieth-century Ireland.

#### **1.4.1 Purpose of this thesis**

The purpose of this thesis is twofold: 1) to explore music related projects of the SÓRC through the design, creation, and development of data and a digital visualisation framework and 2) to describe key developments in Seán Ó Riada's career through the contextualisation of the same music-related documents.

The research began with a search for a range of manuscript music scores from within the Seán Ó Riada Collection, focusing on compositional practice within these scores as a concept to guide enquiry. Due to the discovery of a large number of non-notational music-related materials, the research agenda was adjusted to appraise and account for all potential music related projects within the Collection. Re-considering the scope of research - moving beyond non-notational documents - caused me to reconsider the entire methodological approach. As a result, all music *related* material that was found was deemed to be a music project. Reconsidering the parameters of projects that would be included in this study prompted a change in objectives and, subsequently, in methodological perspective. In order to understand the full range of material selected from within the

SÓRC, the approach to this evidence changed from an intersubjective comparison of music notation towards analysing aspects of how material evidence from the Collection was performed in a broad sense (for example in terms of rehearsals, public concerts and recitals, broadcasts) .

At the heart of this study is an exploration about how a range of music-related projects from Seán Ó Riada's career were performed. It proposes to map these projects through a combination of ethnographic narratives and digital visualisation.

### **1.4.2 Theoretical Framework**

As previously outlined, the process of change and continuity during the development of the career of Seán Ó Riada is explored through two separate but complementary research models. The first model provides a qualitative assessment of the performance of music-related projects through fieldwork interviews. The second explores a quantitative approach, involving digitally generated and structured data from a number of archival sources. The findings from both areas of research are presented together in Chapter 6. The following outlines how each qualitative and quantitative approaches are employed during the research process.

#### **1.4.2.1 Qualitative Approach**

The qualitative approach to this project is conceptualised through a set of research practices from ethnomusicology, fieldwork being a central tenet. This activity has been described as one that almost defines the discipline of ethnomusicology (Cawley 39). O'Flynn also suggests that fieldwork is significant because it causes academic discussions to become "grounded in everyday musical practices and beliefs" (19). When adopting a qualitative

orientation, however, the credibility of this method hinges ‘on the skill, competence and rigor of the person doing fieldwork’ (Patton 14). As an insider in Irish traditional music, I held a strong position to understand the cultural data efficiently. Despite being an insider, however, constant evaluation was maintained during interview analysis and the coding of narrative themes in the interests of intersubjectivity and research quality control.

Seán Ó Riada was an important figure who was highly influential in Irish-language arts and Gaeltacht culture during this era. The extent of primary-source engagement with Irish-language material in the early stages of the research was somewhat limited due to the researcher’s developing proficiency in the Irish language. However, during literature review reading, a number of educational activities aided the researcher’s skills and competency in the Irish language. Support was sought in the form of evening courses at University College Cork between 2015 and 2018. These activities improved reading in the Irish language as immersion in this material intensified. The scope of the thesis precluded an extensive engagement with Irish-language sources, although it is hoped that the visualisation of the data will aid future scholarship on Seán Ó Riada’s importance within Irish-language arts and Gaeltacht culture in particular. Support was sought from a copyeditor in order to provide professional transcription of interview material voiced in the Munster dialect of the Irish language. This material arises in Chapter 5.

Thematic codes were generated through engagement with a number of interviewees. Individuals selected for each interview were primarily chosen for their connection to the rehearsal or performance of projects involving Seán Ó Riada in different ways. Fieldwork was designed as a series of semi-structured personal interviews, ongoing throughout the process of data gathering and visualisation. Digitally recorded interviews

whose durations vary between one and six hours were conducted with ten individuals, ranging in ages between forty to eighty-four years, during the period between November 2015 and January 2018. Permission was sought from and granted by the Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC) to conduct interviews, with coding and transcription occurring immediately after each event. Themes relating to the performance of music-related projects were allowed to emerge from interview data using a grounded-theory technique, as advocated by Glaser and Strauss.<sup>4</sup> This approach complements O'Flynn's description, previously mentioned, where fieldwork constitutes theory in everyday musical beliefs and practices. Grounded theory emerged in an inductive manner during content analysis. Each interview was transcribed and read line by line, with thematic codes applied beside the relevant answers using a computer. These documents were then printed, physically cut into pieces (Fig. 1.1) and re-arranged in order to engage closely with the data discovered.

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<sup>4</sup> See: Glaser, Barney G, and Anselm L. Strauss. *The Discovery of Grounded Theory: Strategies for Qualitative Research*. 1967.

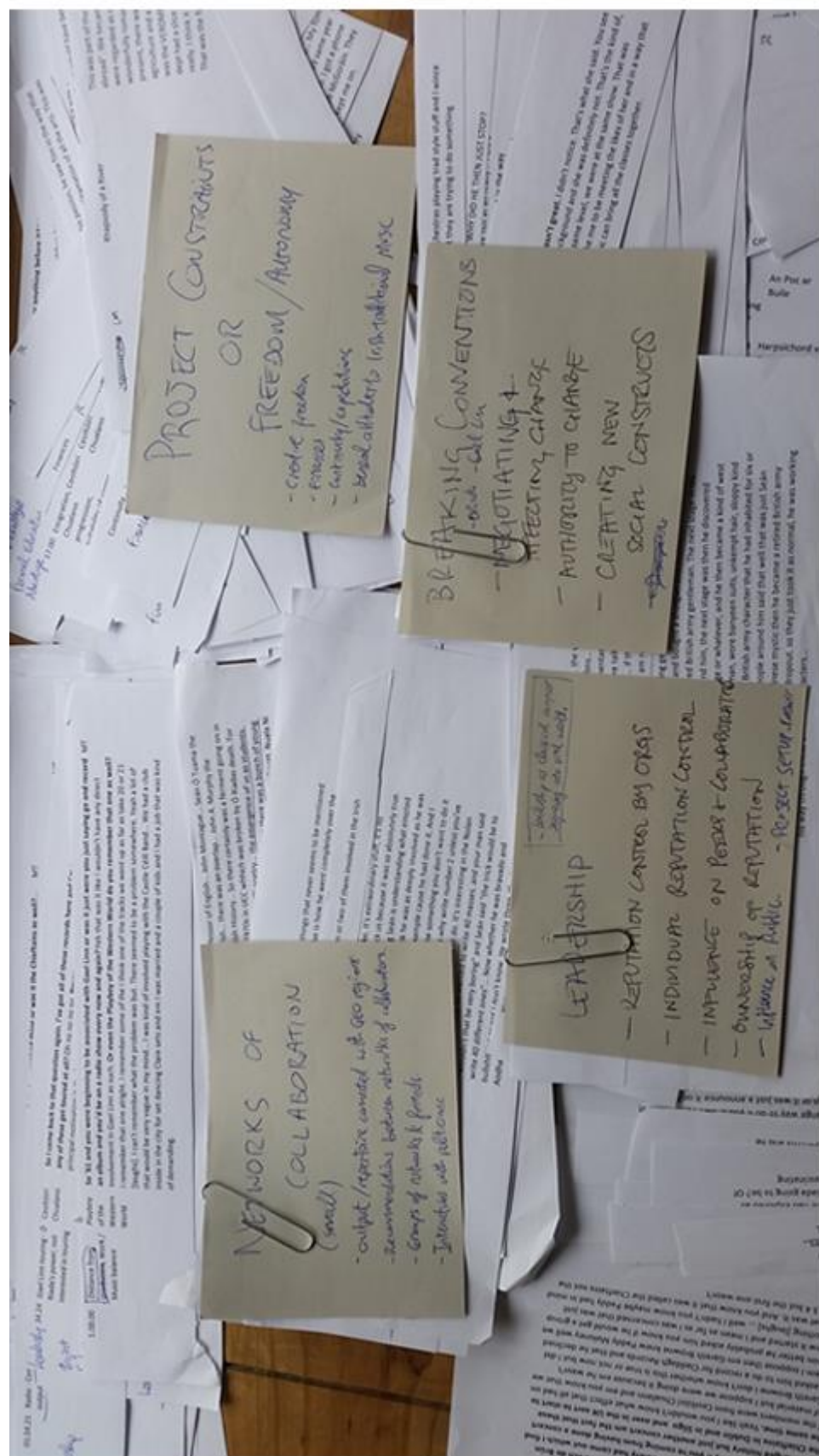


Fig. 1.1.1. Interview excerpt cut-outs used to generate thematic codes

Using these thematic codes, I produced a set of findings which served to provide insight into interviewee experiences with Seán Ó Riada and his legacy. As thematic coding of interview data was crucial to this project, the research emphasis required a solid theoretical foundation to be in place before analysing qualitative data. Coding of interviews began in September 2017. This process continued until February 2018. Following this, the analysis of claims and findings was conducted in March 2018 and completed in May 2018.

#### **1.4.2.2 Quantitative approach**

Alongside a qualitative approach to the understanding of collection materials from a theoretical frame in ethnomusicology, a set of digital research methods were employed and a data visualisation framework created in order to model Seán Ó Riada's experiences from a quantitative perspective.

A number of patterns emerged in the digital visualisation framework that indicated some clues to missing projects that had not been found within the SÓRC. To provide a more complete picture of Seán Ó Riada's activities, a search for projects missing from the SÓRC was conducted at external archives. These archives included; the National Folklore Collection at University College Dublin (UCD), the Radio Éireann archives, and the Irish Film Institute. Digitised newspapers available in the *Irish Times and Weekly Irish Times* archive and the Irish Newspaper Archive were searched in order to provide a more complete account of Seán Ó Riada's career in music.

During this study, both qualitative and quantitative models are approached in an independent capacity, but in some cases the results of visualisation influenced questions for interviewees, or where interview knowledge was imparted about archive data that was

worthy of exploration. The strongest influence between both avenues of research was in the process of visualising music related projects from the Collection. This process provided some important indications about the scope of material found within the SÓRC, therefore influencing the change in objectives.

## **1.5 Aims and Objectives**

As a central focus of this project, materials from the SÓRC are primarily used to address how Seán Ó Riada rose to prominence during his career. The principal aims of this research then are:

- 1) To investigate the nature of a range of materials held in the Seán Ó Riada Collection.

One particular objective of this research approach is to gather contextual information relating to the Collection material in order to understand how change or continuity occurred within Seán Ó Riada's career.

- 2) To contextualise collection documents by relating them in terms of their performance both individually and, where appropriate, as collectives. The objective here is to combine and connect each project with related information from datasets that were organised in order to facilitate a layered understanding of how their performance emerged and progressed.

- 3) To visualise and alternatively perceive both the digital and physical versions of the SÓRC using digital representations and visualisations. One objective here is to create a digital model for representing and recombining collection data in order to understand the ways in by which digital humanities practices inform research in ethnomusicology.

## 1.6 Project Timeline Summary

In the following section, I present a brief outline of the project timeline to address changes that occurred in the research orientation during the course of this project. The changes in orientation were the result of immersion with documents from the SÓRC, data from other archives and the visualisation of this data. This process facilitated self-reflection and conscious observation, which prompted the selection of a suitable methodology for this project. The coming passages briefly outline the manner in which shifts occurred in the research journey. These shifts were informed by interaction with digital practices, which in turn enabled a deeper understanding of the subject matter. The initial research ideas are described, before discussing the reframing of my approach to methodology.

### 1.6.1 Modifying the Methodology

This PhD project began with a focus on manuscript score material from the SÓRC. It was envisaged that engaging with a set of methods for analysing scores would address the aim of contextualising music that was discovered within the SÓRC. For example, Music Encoding Initiative (MEI) is an emerging method by which musical content from scores is encoded into the digital medium and analysed.<sup>5</sup> By utilising comparative musicological analysis, an intersubjective approach to the SÓRC material was planned to be taken. This approach could have been a worthwhile endeavour, especially as an investigation into

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<sup>5</sup>The Music Encoding Initiative is an open-source framework to define a system for encoding documents in a machine-readable structure. It allows researchers to create representations of musical passages through computer code, which would facilitate analysis of snippets from manuscript scores across a range of musical works. Some projects have used this digital framework to analyse classical music notation. See for instance Beethoven's Werkstatt project ([//beethovens-werkstatt.de](http://beethovens-werkstatt.de)) or the *Catalogue of Carl Neilson's Works* ([//www.kb.dk/dcm/cnw/navigation.xq](http://www.kb.dk/dcm/cnw/navigation.xq)) project.



understanding the range of Seán Ó Riada's creative output in classical music.<sup>6</sup> So far, no study has approached the SÓRC from this perspective. Yet, after an appraisal of the Collection contents, this particular type of focus which proved problematic.

A number of previous studies illustrate the limitations that are inherent when inter-subjective approaches are utilised. Scholarly research in musicology has illustrated how music notation is contextualised using a number of comparative methods.<sup>7</sup> The goal at the early stage of this project was to draw upon these studies by focusing on the nature of Seán Ó Riada's compositional styles. The primary objective of this approach would have been to investigate music passages across manuscript score evidence found within the SÓRC. To illustrate this, theory and methods such as those utilised in Schenkerian analysis, could have enabled patterns to be analysed between passages of music within the scores.<sup>8</sup> Ultimately, it was intended that this method of analysis would be complemented with digital representations by using a software framework developed by the MEI, involving MEI editing tools and the display of score material, such as exemplified in the Beethoven's Werkstatt project.<sup>9</sup> Despite the advantages that have been demonstrated by such approaches to the works of composers, MEI is fundamentally a standard or markup language most often used by researchers to reveal important aspects pertaining primarily to musical notation. Overall,

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<sup>6</sup> I refer to Western Art music as "classical music" throughout this thesis.

<sup>7</sup> See for example Keiler, Allan R., and David Beach. *Aspects of Schenkerian Theory. Music Analysis*, vol. 3, no. 3, 1984, p. 277.

<sup>8</sup> See for example Jonathan Stock, *The Application of Schenkerian Analysis to Ethnomusicology: Problems and Possibilities, Music Analysis* vol. 12, no. 2 (1993), p. 215; Tom Pankhurst, *Schenker Guide: A Brief Handbook and Web Site for Schenkerian Analysis* (Routledge, 2008); Allen Forte and Steven E. Gilbert, *Introduction to Schenkerian Analysis* (W. W. Norton and Company, 1982); Allen C Cadwallader and David Gagné, *Analysis of Tonal Music: A Schenkerian Approach* (Oxford University Press, 2012).

<sup>9</sup> *Beethoven's Werkstatt* is a sixteen-year project involving a number of scholars at the University of Mainz, Germany. It proceeded on the hypothesis that Beethoven's original handwritten scores might have differed from copyist productions and used digital tools in order to compare manuscript scores. MEI became a major part of this project.

this method essentially excludes non-classical music documents such as theatre play scripts, the material broadcast on radio programmes and importantly for this collection, Seán Ó Riada's cue cards that were used for performances with his group, Ceoltóirí Chualann.

In order to address the ways in which this inter-subjective approach was rejected, a number of indications occurred during the process of visualisation which I will present in the following section.

### 1.6.1.1 Data Collection

Beginning in late 2014, data from the SÓRC was collated in order to list all music that existed in the Collection using keyword searches in its finding aid. Apart from manuscript scores, a large number of music-related materials were subsequently discovered, such as play scripts, musical cues in the form of 'score cards', film material, radio broadcasts, writing about music and poetry.<sup>10</sup> All data from this list was compiled with other manuscript scores information to create what became known as the Projects Dataset.<sup>11</sup> This dataset became the primary subject of investigation, as it began to reveal new insights into the Collection that were previously unexplored.

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<sup>10</sup> Score cards was a term used to describe A5-sized sheets of paper containing musical cue directions (primarily for the band Ceoltóirí Chualann as described by Ó Súilleabháin in Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin, *Ceol na nUasal: Sean Ó Riada and the Search for a Native Irish Art Music*, Ó Riada Memorial Lecture (Cork: Irish Traditional Music Archive, Music Department, University College Cork, 2004a).

<sup>11</sup> A dataset is defined as a collection of related sets of information, composed of separate elements, which can be manipulated by a computer. However, as noted by Renear, Sacchi and Wickett, there is "no single well-defined concept of dataset." They instead refer to four common traits of that concept, including relatedness, grouping, content and purpose. The descriptions of a dataset used here correspond to the type of structure and data used in this project. For example, relatedness and grouping are achieved primarily due to time of project and its genre. Grouping is achieved through the fact that addition or deletion does not change the identity of the dataset, or that relations are not setup within the dataset between items. The actual content of datasets is based on cited facts from various sources in the literature. The purpose of the dataset is based on new phenomena to be explained.

As a result of creating the Projects Dataset, a number of findings were made. Firstly, a large amount of information was captured as dates and signatures were present on a range of material that was written in Seán Ó Riada's hand. Secondly, during the process of listing these projects chronologically, a large number of arrangements dated in Ó Riada's hand appeared to have been produced over the course of some weeks in 1955. This discovery prompted a need to digitally visualise overlaps in these projects in order to understand the complex timeframes within which Seán Ó Riada's works were created.

#### **1.6.1.2 Visualising Data**

After these discoveries had been made, work began on developing a data visualisation framework. During this process, models were explored to represent the Projects Dataset. Representational models of the Collection were then coded, combining metadata descriptions from the Collection finding aid with data concerning Ó Riada's projects gathered at other archives.<sup>12</sup>

This process of experimentation generated information which began to inform theoretical enquiry.<sup>13</sup> During each iterative step of building the datasets and digital visualisation framework a number of underlying hypotheses were either confirmed or rejected regarding the material within the Collection. In the resulting visualisations, it became evident that a number of time periods were noticeably lacking in project material

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<sup>12</sup> A full description of this building process is outlined in Chapter 5 and references to these prototypes may be found in the appendix accompanying this thesis.

<sup>13</sup> Research through design is a type of practice or design-based research which involves the creation of practically based prototypes which both inform and are informed by theoretical enquiry. As noted by Kräutli, during the research, making cannot be separated from the other methods of a practice based project as "it necessarily causes one to reconsider and reformulate issues, questions and problems, which may only have been revealed by the design process itself." See: Kräutli, Florian. *Visualising Cultural Data: Exploring Digital Collections Through Timeline Visualisations*. 2016. Royal College of Art, PhD Dissertation.

by comparison with the overall visualisation. Furthermore, in some cases, it was clear that some projects were only partially represented where they formed a larger body of work.

Over the course of this research, further data was added to the Projects Dataset in order to investigate Seán Ó Riada's career activities more fully. As each prototype model of the Collection and data from other archives was recombined, new patterns began to surface in the visualisation. A more nuanced picture of the material within the SÓRC emerged, such as periods of intense work but also in some distinct gaps between activities. The visualisation also complicated my understanding of what could be classified as a music related project. When thinking of music in a broader sense, the number of documents relating to Seán Ó Riada's career could grow immensely. As the research progressed, it became clear that Seán Ó Riada's involvement with classical music composition constituted a small part of a wide range of material which was available in the Collection relating to the many other experiences in his musical life.<sup>14</sup>

After the discovery of a vast number of previously undocumented projects from Seán Ó Riada's career, it became evident that they were directly connected to important media organisations. This data exposed a number of indications that Seán Ó Riada had a deeper connection with these organisations than previously anticipated. For example, radio scripts enabled a deeper insight into his musical practices with Radio Éireann. The process of building the digital visualisation framework began to indicate that projects such as radio broadcasts were dominant within Seán Ó Riada's life; they occurred at regular intervals,

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<sup>14</sup>Of the 392 projects I identified in the SÓRC and elsewhere, I calculated that less than 50% of these have been examined (see Ó Canainn agus Mac an Bhua 1993, Ó Canainn 2004). Of this total, I located 267 projects within the Collection. These documents were not catalogued and only recently listed. Few researchers of Seán Ó Riada's career have been in a position to analyse them.

indicating that these activities were consistent contributors to Seán Ó Riada's presence on national radio during his lifetime. The research re-considered if these activities indicated that other forms of musical practice were equally, if not more important aspects of his career.

### **1.6.1.3 Reframing Research**

In order to conceptualise the wide variety of Seán Ó Riada's involvement in music related projects, I returned to my initial research ideas about the material evidence in the Collection. By re-imagining each project as a "creative output", I proposed that by including evidence of creativity in general, I could then widen the scope of materials. It became clear that to contextualise Seán Ó Riada's experiences in a wider sense, I needed to find ways of understanding these creative ideas. As a result of revising my initial ideas and widening of scope of the project, reframing my approach became crucial for understanding projects from the Collection.

In an attempt to ground my thinking and to challenge my understanding of the significance of these projects, I began to explore what is meant by the values *of* music. I questioned, in what ways might Seán Ó Riada have distilled creative ideas and values within his music related projects? In order to understand this on a theoretical level, readings from aesthetics and the philosophy of art were fruitful lines of inquiry. Levinson for example attempts to understand the value of music itself by delimiting aesthetics in categories of value such as artistic, symbolic, self-affirmative, social, idiosyncratic, mood-enhancement and accompaniment (67). However, such attempts to understand musical value on its own terms fail to account for other potential reasons for continuity or change in musical practice. I further surmised, if an analysis of compositions provides clues to underlying structure of

compositional development, then how might I approach other practices that influence continuity or change within musical life and practice?

By reinterpreting musical practice and questioning my original presumptions, I sought to explore how a change in focus might emerge. I began to seek out alternative ways to reframe the research orientation. Up to this point, the musicological approach to the research topic meant that some crucial factors of musical practice had been ignored. As explained above, engaging with the analysis of creative trajectory from the evidence of music notation alone emphasised one element of musical practice over another. It became increasingly clear to me through initial visualisations that Seán Ó Riada was a dynamic individual who engaged with a number of modes of musical practice, collaborated with organisations on a deep and consistent level over extended periods of time during his career. Attempting to contextualise his experiences in a holistic manner required a more equal focus on a variety of different music related projects from the Collection. To gain a better understanding of my research question then, my research emphasis moved away from musical analysis towards theories of social practices in music.

## **1.7 Theoretical Changes**

By moving the emphasis of research towards theories of musical practice, I also changed methodological focus towards performance. The reorientation of research towards focus on the context of music performance practice required a fundamental shift in methodology. As a result, a theory for understanding performance emerged, and this approach required that materials within the SÓRC be accounted for in terms of their social reification through events rather than their significance as documents.

A number of ideas would have suited this new approach to the Collection documents. For example, reception theory was considered as it portrays a web of interpretations through the reflexive reading of musical experiences. This would have enabled the research to examine ways in which society responded to Seán Ó Riada's creative outputs. However, such theoretical perspectives fail to account for the constraints and conventions associated with the organisations involved with facilitating the performance of the material in question. Instead of attempting to understand how these projects were received, I decided to examine how they were performed in their first instance.

### **1.7.1 Practice Theory**

One theory that is used to examine musical practice through performance is practice theory. This theory has previously been used by scholars, in particular ethnomusicologists, to focus attention on the act of locating performance within a specific social universe, at the intersection of performance in practice.<sup>15</sup> As noted by Barber, in order to understand popular arts,

We need to ask by whom and by what means, in what circumstances, under what constraints, in whose interests, and in accordance with what conventions, these arts are produced. (Barber 5)

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<sup>15</sup> See for instance: Small, Christopher. *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening*. Wesleyan UP, 2011., Danielson, Virginia. *The Voice of Egypt: Umm Kulthūm, Arabic Song, and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century*. Univ. of Chicago P, 2008., Blum, Stephen, et al. "Juju History: Toward a Theory of Sociomusical Practice." *Ethnomusicology and Modern Music History*, U of Illinois P, 1993, pp. 49-68. Or Alexander Smith, Benjamin. *Samba in Practice: Motivations for Joining the UIUC Samba Ensemble and an Explicit Theory of Practice for Ethnomusicology*, University of Illinois, 2011.

This theory supports social investigation by placing emphasis on logistical and material evidence as agential in the process of change. In practice theory, the representation of historical materials as cultural production does not reflect social or cultural values but instead aids in constituting values.<sup>16</sup> The responses to these performances are then seen to condition the performer's next engagement with them. Material artefacts, such as scripts from the SÓRC, represent catalysts in the formation of change or continuity as Seán Ó Riada's career evolved.<sup>17</sup>

Through the underlying principles of practice theory this research seeks to understand performances as important indications of the process of ever-evolving social structures within society. The research became focused on how engagements occurred between collaborators, organisations, and listening audiences in their negotiation of continuity or change. The engagements of performers and the wider cultural milieu becomes the concern, to understand their accepting or rejecting of certain modes of artistic expression.

This thesis and digital project focus on social history from the viewpoint of Seán Ó Riada's performance practices with music related projects from the SÓRC. I look at the nature of Seán Ó Riada's professional life in logistical terms, such as how material was performed in concerts, radio broadcasts and commercial recordings, play material, scorecards and film collaborations. I also examine how repertoire was rehearsed in order to

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<sup>16</sup>See: Danielson, Virginia. *Introduction in The Voice of Egypt: Umm Kulthūm, Arabic Song, and Egyptian Society in the Twentieth Century*, Univ. of Chicago P, 2008. As argued by Giddens, principles of order can be both produced and reproduced at the level of practice itself, as opposed to some 'ordering' society impinging upon individual actors from above. In this way, Ó Riada's works are seen not as expressions of value, but indicators of change or continuity within a system of constraints.

<sup>17</sup> See: Danielson 16



reveal how Seán Ó Riada's behaviours within society contributed to the emergence of his reputation as an important individual within Irish society. An ethnographic section of this thesis demonstrates how the expressions of colleagues, family, students and concert goers were important contributors to understanding the relevance of these projects. Conversely, a digital section also approaches data gathering, structuring and recombining through the lens of performance. Lastly, I included literature that has become associated with historical studies to account for a number of key events that occurred during Seán Ó Riada's lifetime.<sup>18</sup>

## 1.8 Chapter Outline

In this introductory chapter, an overview of the doctoral thesis was provided. The initial research question was presented as, *How did Seán Ó Riada rise to prominence during his career?* This question is set against a backdrop of how a methodology for understanding the contents of the SÓRC was developed. This narrative was aimed at providing a context and scope for the thesis investigations and subsequent findings.

In Chapter 2 of this study, the historical backdrop to Seán Ó Riada's career is examined. An account is made of music within Ireland during the 1950s and 1960s. A number of key studies which have been applied to Seán Ó Riada's life and works are also reviewed. Following this, the background and practices involved with archiving the SÓRC are assessed, providing a context for understanding the special collection as a resource for research in ethnomusicology and the digital humanities.

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<sup>18</sup> Recent scholarly critiques of practice theory claim that, "a theory of practice is a theory of history". As a result of this, current theorists see that social practices can then only be understood in their articulations with historical events (Ortner 2006). I use historical studies as an important indicator of changing social trends within Irish society during the mid-twentieth century.

Chapter 3 introduces the disciplinary context of this research by assessing how digital humanities practices have been utilised in ethnomusicology. Knowledge from the field of Digital Humanities is drawn upon to highlight the context within which this research was approached. Following this assessment, a critique is provided of the data gathering process and the development of a digital visualisation framework. This framework serves to examine the documentation and exploration of data in this project, focusing on data connected to the Seán Ó Riada Collection and archives elsewhere in Ireland. The aim of this method of data gathering was to assess its potential for contextualisation of Seán Ó Riada's projects and their subsequent digital visualisation. In conclusion, I argue that the experimental nature of gathering and structuring data for visualisation is an important part of the research process. Data is prioritised in order for the researcher to interpret and represent it more fully. This contributes to a more meaningful engagement with digital visualisation.

In Chapter 4 an explanation is provided of the rationale for theory, methods and processes involved with fieldwork interviews, the transcription process, interview coding and the way in which thematic findings were developed.

In Chapter 5, claims and findings which emerged from the interview process are presented. This chapter is divided into three sections. In the first section, the interview findings are first presented through the concept of polyvocality. This research technique was utilised in order to explore the experiences of normal or regular musicians who were contemporaries of Seán Ó Riada in the 1950s and 1960s. Four biographical narratives are introduced from interview participants. Their career experiences in music prior to their first meeting with Seán Ó Riada are presented. In the second section, the focus shifts towards

Seán Ó Riada's experiences by introducing a brief biography of him. Four main themes relate to his career that arose from thematic coding of interview material. Finally, section three is focused on one event in particular, *Ó Riada Sa Gaiety*. This last section of the interview findings shifts the focus towards an event that had consequences for Seán Ó Riada's legacy. In this section of the study, I argue for long-form ethnography in order to understand digitally visualised data in more nuanced ways.

Chapter 6 is an appraisal of digital humanities practices and ethnomusicology. It begins by detailing how data was represented in the digital visualisation framework. Findings from Chapter 5 are then compared with indications from data represented on the digital visualisation framework. The findings from the digital exploration are assessed with regard to their contribution to the central research question. The conclusion of Chapter 6 suggests that along with method, more in-depth explorations of methodology and theory should also be important considerations for ethnomusicologists when attempting to design research projects that involve digital humanities practices.

In Chapter 7 the study is concluded with a summary and discussion of the research process. The strengths and weaknesses of the study are examined in comparison to past research, suggesting practical and methodological contributions to both digital humanities and ethnomusicology. The methodological contribution demonstrates both that particular theories are arrived at through the act of making in the digital humanities, and also that an extended ethnography is an important activity for informing digital practices with cultural data.

This thesis is a reflection on the ways in which ethnography and digital practices corroborate or contradict each other. An attempt has been made to relate to both areas of

research in equal measure. Despite this attempt, there are some areas where ethnography becomes the leading focus in order to produce a satisfactory level of engagement with practice in ethnomusicology. The next chapter demonstrates this, as the focus turns to historical accounts of music in the literature review.

## **Chapter 2**

### **Literature Review**

#### **2.1 Introduction**

This chapter presents a historical literature review. As outlined in Chapter 1, the ethnographic section of this study is focused on documenting aspects of the career of Seán Ó Riada, as an artist who rose to prominence in mid-twentieth century Ireland. Although this ethnographic section provides a sizeable historical account of musical practice during the 1950s and 1960s, it is acknowledged that a full and comprehensive account of music in this time period is beyond the scope of this thesis. For the purposes of this project, a selection of examples of continuity and change are deemed sufficient. Given these limitations, however, a number of important insights were subsequently produced that informed interview questions later on during fieldwork as outlined in Chapter 4 and Chapter 5.

A challenge arose during the course of this project whereby material evidence of Seán Ó Riada's career reflected his work with a wide variety of organisations and musical genres. As a result, the literature review is broad, and covers a wide range of musical practice from this period of history. The following chapter demonstrates the insights that can be gained from using qualitative methods to support digital research.

The chapter begins with a discussion of the rationale for the scope and reasons for pursuing specific areas of the literature. This is followed by a discussion of various themes, including policy and music, music performance and scholarly accounts of Seán Ó Riada's career. Texts from ethnomusicology studies form the core of this literature review.

Literature was consulted on three primary genres of music in reference to; traditional, popular and classical music. Film, theatre and radio studies are also addressed, in respect to the media used in Seán Ó Riada's music projects. Undertaking a study of special collections material also dictated that the archival practices be addressed in suitable measure. Therefore, I also add to this literature review a brief outline of archival practices relating to the SÓRC. This chapter is concluded with a discussion of findings from the literature review.

### **2.1.1 Literature review rationale and scope**

A number of avenues for exploration in this literature review stemmed from the outline of the central research question in Chapter 1. Two important questions were identified which were pertinent to this project: *How did Seán Ó Riada's music-related projects aid his rise to prominence within Irish society? How did he negotiate the agendas of institutions and organisations connected with the performance of these documents?* In order to contextualise his experiences, this investigation largely focused on the period of Irish history from the year 1952 onwards. In 1952, Seán Ó Riada was a student of the Bachelor of Arts in Music at University College Cork. Starting the study here is an appropriate point to indicate the relevant working in which Seán Ó Riada would later be engaged.

As the review required a focus on a number of music genres and a layered perspective, this review required an approach to musical practice and related activity in the widest possible sense. In order to achieve this, the parameters of this review were set to encompass music related activities of important organisations and individuals. Two texts from music studies influenced this decision. Firstly, accounts such as O'Flynn's in *The Irishness of Irish Music* - of the problematic nature of the categorisation of musical style was most helpful in this discussion, as the fluidity between genres of music were fully considered

in this study. In his text *Vernacular Music-making and Education*, instead of attempting to polarise the activities that seem to define different genres of Irish music, O'Flynn collapsed the distinction and demonstrated this fluidity in a term entitled *vernacular* (140). O'Flynn's approach served to complicate notions of a mutually exclusive set of genres within the history of Irish music.

Christopher Small's *Musicking: The Meanings of Performing and Listening* also provided guidance on considering musical practice in its widest sense. The term *Musicking* was coined by Small to refer to any activity relating to musical performance. Small emphasises that,

To music is to take part, in any capacity, in a musical performance, whether by performing, by listening, by rehearsing or practicing, by providing material for performance (what is called composing), or by dancing. (Small 9)

This literature review was approached in the spirit of *Musicking* in order to distil meaning from the actions of key agents within the musical landscape of Ireland during the period in question. Seán Ó Riada's music related practices were also approached through the ways in which these activities contribute to musical life (Small, 19). With this perspective, musical activity was seen as part of wider social activities in the agendas of organisations and their subsequent policies, in musical performance and music education.

During the initial reading phase, I also challenged the definition of what "Irish society" meant. O'Flynn's study, *The Irishness of Irish Music* was also helpful here for contextualising this definition (4). The geographical parameters of this study are confined to within the twenty-six county Republic of Ireland. I do this for two reasons. Firstly,

government policy with regard to music in this era was focused on twenty-six counties, therefore negating the influencing of agenda on musical practice from government in Northern Ireland. Secondly, the majority of Seán Ó Riada's involvements with music were situated within the Republic of Ireland.

When focusing on twenty-six counties in Ireland, it must also be acknowledged that a number of other important factors relating to musical activities outside of this region must be considered with respect to this particular period in history. Seán Ó Riada's artistic activities reached beyond the Republic of Ireland, such as a) his attendances as adjudicator at *Feiseanna* competitions in Tyrone b) his achievement as Composer of the Year at the Belfast Festival in 1967 and c) his travels to and engagement with cultural activity in the United Kingdom, France and the United States. Furthermore, on the island of Ireland during the 1960s, the effect of political events such as the Civil Rights Movement affected communities north and south.

During this era, organisations were also operating outside of the twenty-six county Irish Republic. The Gaelic Athletic Association, Gael-Linn and Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann have traditionally operated throughout thirty-two counties, as island wide organisations. The involvement of these organisations in political events throughout the island is brought to the fore in relevant sections of the thesis where they relate to music projects involving Seán Ó Riada.

#### **2.1.1.1 Literature review search process**

At the beginning of this literature review, an initial exploration of the relevant literature focused on institutional and organisational policy in the English language. While



there is a body of Irish language material that could have informed the debate, one of the limits of this literature review was that English language material was mostly considered. My level of proficiency in reading Irish language material efficiently was developing during the initial phases of the research but improved towards the end of this process. A number of texts were added at a later stage of the review process, for example *Seán Ó Riada: A Shaol agus a Shaothar*. Texts focusing on historical accounts from this period in history that focus on theatre and poetry were omitted from the literature review process. Examples of these texts include: *Ó, Siadhail P. Stair Dhrámaíocht Na Gaeilge: 1900-1970*, *Anois Tacht an Eala: Filí Chorcaí Innti Agus an Réabhlóid Chultúrtha*. Consequently, thematic areas which were addressed in the first part of the review do not include perspectives from Irish language literature and would have deserved close scrutiny. The literature review is divided into three thematic areas as outlined in Fig. 2.1 below.

| Thematic Areas of Literature Review  |  |   |
|--|--|---|
| Policy and practice in organisations   | Music Performance  | Seán Ó Riada's Career                               |
| Evidence of organisational funding, incentives for music making                                      | Areas of access within formal and informal domains of musical practice | Biographical accounts of Seán Ó Riada               |
| Vision and strategy of organisations involved with music making, production, recording, broadcasting | Spaces for performance   | Scholarly critique of Seán Ó Riada's life and works |
|  | Crossovers between formal and informal music performance               |   |

**Fig. 2.1.** Thematic areas of the literature review

The narrative of the literature review is presented in chronological order, beginning with broader aspects of Irish institutional policy in the early 1950s, then moving towards an organisational level, and finally towards aspects of performance in the musical landscape. Crucially, insights from the literature review are referenced throughout chapters five and six to complement the discussion of the interview findings.

## **2.2 Policy and music**

The thematic area of policy and practice in organisations is presented in this section. A key question that drove this area of inquiry was, 'How was music supported or facilitated by institutions and organisations during the 1950s and 1960s?' I focus on these aspects of music in order to reveal cultural activities.

### **2.2.1 The Arts Council**

In 1951, legislation for Ireland's first Arts Council was introduced by the Irish government and after the first Arts Act was passed into law, funding for the arts grew in some areas during the following two decades. Direct governmental funding for music became a reality in this period for the first time in the history of the Irish Free State (Arts Act). A number of historical accounts emerge in the literature concerning the Arts Council and its funding practices. Despite engagement from the Irish government, the Arts Council's impact on musical life in Ireland in the 1950s and 1960s is generally regarded as minimal (Stoebel 48). Between its inception and the revisions of the Arts Act in 1973, numerous commentators have highlighted that this lack of impact was due to the absence of a defined policy (Kennedy 98).

Further to the lack of a defined policy for the arts in this period, some biases in cultural policy are apparent and reveal attitudes towards music at this time. Lauren Weintraub Stoebel highlights the Arts Council's lack of support for the traditional arts in particular (76). She notes that, "A 1960 revision to the Council's standing order or mission statement further codified its commitment to the 'fine' or 'high' arts to the exclusion of all else" (48). Her account relates the prevalent attitude towards various genres of music within this period and demonstrates the Arts Council's commitment to "high" art and the consequent alienation of the traditional arts (76). Stoebel's research exposes the value system that was expressed through Arts Council policy and provides an interesting insight into how post-colonial, semi-governmental agencies such as the Arts Council articulated the prevailing attitudes of a specific segment of Irish society.

Stoebel provides a limited critique on *how* decisions were made by the Arts Council of Ireland during this period. An insightful account of Arts Council decision-making processes is found in Brian Kennedy's *Dreams and Responsibilities*. Containing more detailed information on exchanges between members of the Arts Council during this period, Kennedy's text informs this study in a number of ways. Though published by the Arts Council itself, Kennedy's account provides much factual information on the developing social structure of the Council. He highlights the roles of individual board members in the development of policy. He views the activities of these board members as guided not by policy, but by their individual interests (119-148). In lieu of a coherent and articulated policy, individuals within the Arts Council are seen to have been the key influencers in determining the expenditure of funds throughout this period. Kennedy detailed the various recipients of Arts Council awards. In the period between 1951 and 1973, in the majority of cases, funding was

allocated towards festivals, associations and musical societies, as support for applications from individual artists was not yet in place (15). Kennedy recounts the fact that only one Irish artist (Brian Boydell) was on the board for the Arts Council throughout the 1960s. He explains how this fact made it easy for “critics of the Council to claim that it was out of touch with the practical needs of artists” (97). This detail is insightful for this study as the lack of support by the Council for individuals occurred during a period of time where Seán Ó Riada rose to prominence as an individual.

Kennedy’s claim that Seán Ó Riada had never received any recognition or assistance from the Arts Council may not be entirely correct, particularly in the case of assistance from the Council. In the year 1970 the Council issued funding for Claddagh Records in connection with the works of Seán Ó Riada (An Comhairle Ealaíon). The official Arts Council announcement read as follows “Claddagh Records, Ltd. in connection with the production of a gramophone record of the work of Seán Ó Riada” (An Comhairle Ealaíon). Although indirectly funded through Claddagh, he became the first individual musical artist to receive funding from the Council. The project, entitled *Vertical Man*, was a Long Playing (LP) record that featured two of his original compositions, which were composed over twelve years previous to the year the funding was allocated, in 1970-71. One composition was orchestral, the other vocal with translations of poems from the German language. Also featured were four poems in English by three Irish poets. The LP was released for sale by Claddagh Records. Even though Seán Ó Riada had been supported in this project, the fact that most of the music had been composed a number of years previously only serves to highlight the lateness of arrival of this funding during his career.

Kennedy also notes how the allocation of funding centred on Dublin. He points out that the county “absorbed” 73% of the allocations, whilst Cork took in 9% with the remaining 18% being given to other counties” (109). The concentration of spending on the arts in specific areas of Ireland sheds light on the fact that the Arts Council limited its reach to musical life and activities mostly located in urban centres. Seán Ó Riada moved from an urban centre, Dublin, to the rural village of Cúil Aodha in 1963. Investigating the Arts Council’s activity in funding for specific locations during this period is outside the scope of this thesis. The subject is ripe for discussion and warrants further research, however.

While the Arts Council is not seen to have been influential for artists during this period, this review shows how Seán Ó Riada was the first individual to benefit from their support, albeit indirectly. It also reveals the Council as directed not by policy but by individual interest and that in most cases that funding had an urban centred focus. This complicates the understanding of its role within Irish society, and Seán Ó Riada’s experience with the Arts Council in the latter phase of his career.

The next section focuses on important organisations involved with musical practice. It centres on their strategies, practices and the development of these organisations during the period of this study.<sup>19</sup> The rationale for discussing a selected number of organisations is that they were either a) important mediators of music within Irish society or b) they became important mediators of music in society during Seán Ó Riada’s lifetime. A focus on the developments of these organisations facilitated an exploration of the types of social

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<sup>19</sup> When referring to the term “Irish music” here, I intend to cover the broad spectrum of Irish musical genres, including traditional, classical and popular genres.

structures that supported or enabled musical practice during this period in time. It also highlighted where their activity overlapped with Seán Ó Riada's music related projects.

### **2.2.2 Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann**

In parallel to the growth of the Arts Council, the revivalist organisation Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCÉ) also grew in status in the early 1950s and had significantly altered their policies by the early 1970s. In recent years, some scholarly accounts have emerged which have addressed the role CCÉ from the 1950s up to recent times. One such account, *Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann: (Re)shaping Tradition 1951-1972*, by Dr. Méabh Ní Fhuartháin, documents the chronicles of the organisation in the period between 1951 and 1971. Her study focuses on the identity building aspects of this organisation through its aims, objectives and its activities. Ní Fhuartháin charts the development of the organisation and focuses on its publications and its open debates between members of the organisation during its formative years. Her account of the growth of CCÉ reflects a developing sense of purpose for the organisation that eventually became more united over time. She highlights the ways in which the organisation developed from gatherings the Pipers Club in Dublin and then sought to spread its influence around the country through community engagement at a local level.

The promotion of performance of traditional music became the purpose of the CCÉ. Ní Fhuartháin describes their identity focused debates between 1951 and 1956. She contrasts these identity-forming debates with a decline in the concerns of the organisation's staff with its sense of purpose after 1956. Instead of resting on these questions, CCÉ is seen to have moved towards encouraging and providing places for traditional musicians to play. In a subsequent lecture on the topic in 2018, Ní Fhuartháin provided further insight into the

socio-cultural climate of this era, challenging the common perception that the 1950s was a time of cultural stasis. In her analysis of the early years of CCÉ, she outlines how some clear signs of shifts in cultural activity were occurring during its first ten years of the organisation. Ní Fhuartháin noted how, in this period of history, Comhaltas gradually moved towards a more mature position in Irish cultural life. She notes that overall during its first two decades, as an organisation it:

Successfully provided new platforms for traditional music performance, built a comprehensive network of branches, and raised the public profile of traditional music significantly while shepherding traditional music at a time when there were little or no supports available elsewhere. (Ní Fhuartháin 20)

No formal support infrastructures were available for traditional music prior to the early 1950s. Ní Fhuartháin sees the practices of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann as having a significant impact on the musical revival, acknowledging the fact that support structures were created by them and improved during this time.

Other accounts of CCÉ provide a different narrative of their activities during this time period. Lauren Weintraub Stoebe addresses the role of CCÉ from its inception in 1951 to the end of the twentieth century, focusing more on the concept of "musical community" as the "musical performance of collective selfhood" (11). Her work looks at the process of change through the role played by practitioners rather than focusing on the organisation's development. She highlights the nuanced ways that musicians "perform themselves into or out of various collectives over time" (11). Stoebe's account demonstrates a more nuanced perspective of traditional musicians and the roles associated with them in communities of

Irish traditional music. In this study it is helpful to note that a fluidity between musical practices is illustrated despite the introduction of more formal structures for music making.

In her discussion of the process of change during this time, Stoebel echoes the emerging sense of policy development in CCÉ described by Ní Fhuartháin. Her description deviates from Ní Fhuartháin's. She highlights factors affecting change within the organisation from the early 1950s, and in particular how Comhaltas shifted from adult-focused communities towards family and children focused communities. She also highlights changes in processes for teachers, the uses of technology and rules and procedures for competitions. Stoebel's analysis demonstrates Comhaltas' methods for promoting Irish traditional music and highlights the practical interventions that the organisation made within musical practice as it grew Irish traditional music branches at this time.

Stoebel portrays the 1950s as the "beginnings of social, political and economic shifts that would set the stage for more radical growth and change in the 1960s and beyond" (27). She highlights the end of the 1960s as a restructuring period when Comhaltas communities looked for new ways to maintain relevance in the face of commercial development and changing populations, which led to more family focused branch activities. Shifts in policy for organisations such as Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann provide much insight for the debate around how musical practice broadened within the organisation from a revival led focus to what Stoebel defines as "increased media exposure and cross-cultural experimentation" in this period (41). This perspective informs my discussion in later chapters, particularly the



ways in which experimentation of musical practice was negotiated by Seán Ó Riada and his colleagues.<sup>20</sup>

Stoebel also focuses on other activities relating to CCÉ and on one event in particular, the *Fleadh Cheoil* (feast of music). The *Fleadh* became a hugely popular event in Irish traditional music during the 1960s, one which impacted on the musical landscape in great measure for Irish traditional music. Apart from popularising Irish traditional music, by the late 1960s the *Fleadh* had become subject to increased media attention but also to criticism. Stoebel relates how cultural experimentation with the ballad boom and folk revival were becoming major influencers on the event. In 1968, CCÉ received funding from the Irish government for the first time, which allowed them to expand significantly as an organisation.

The growth and changes that occurred within revival organisations such as CCÉ during this period are important considerations for this study. They reveal the nuanced ways in which such organisations evolved as infrastructure for Irish traditional music practice began to emerge.

### **2.2.3 Gael-Linn**

The studies discussed above address the ways in which the Irish Arts Council and CCÉ approached musical activities during a period of great change in the musical landscape of Ireland. In the following sections, I look at the activities of organisations more closely associated with the production and broadcasting of media during this period. Three texts in particular inform my discussion about Gael-Linn, a company that was set up as an

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<sup>20</sup> Stoebel 41

entrepreneurial organisation with the aim of fostering and promoting Irish throughout Ireland as a living language. The company was closely related to Seán Ó Riada and his career. Mairéad Ní Chinnéide's text *Scéal Ghael Linn (Gael-Linn's Story)*, *An Damer: Stair Amharclainne (The Damer: A Theatre's History)* and Máire Ní Fhinn's *Ceannródaí Ildánach (Versatile Leader/Pioneer)* prove important to this discussion.

Ní Chinnéide's *Scéal Ghael-Linn* provides insight into policy formation and activities within the Irish musical landscape for Gael-Linn, another key revivalist organisation that was established in this era which grew in stature at the same time as CCÉ. Written as a historical account and accessible to a general readership in the Irish language, it was commissioned on the sixtieth anniversary of the inception of the organisation, in 2013. Ní Chinnéide recounts the story of Gael-Linn with evidence from the organisation's archive and interviews with people involved with Gael-Linn from its inception in 1953.

Ní Chinnéide provides an abundance of factual information concerning the agenda and activities of the organisation. Of particular relevance to this study are sections concerning projects and initiatives conducted by Gael-Linn in the late 1950s and throughout the 1960s. The accounts of their support of projects within the arts and industry reflect Gael-Linn's unique development and strategic decision making as an organisation during the 1950s and up to the present day. In contrast to CCÉ's activities described earlier, Gael-Linn engaged with unique ways to promote the Irish language. Their reach with Irish language communities was widespread not only in urban centres, but also in rural communities throughout Ireland. Ní Chinnéide focuses in particular on the concentration of Gael-Linn's

activities in Gaeltacht<sup>21</sup> areas. Her narrative demonstrates Gael-Linn's niche market and commitment to both urban, rural and all-Ireland Irish speaking audiences.

Music is discussed by Ní Chinnéide under a section entitled "Siamsa" (Entertainment). This discussion is particularly relevant to this study as it contains a number of entries concerning Seán Ó Riada's involvement with the organisation. Gael-Linn's strategy was to establish and continue with successive projects, based on the success of preceding ventures. Such ventures emanated from the organisation's involvement with a country wide network that funded the organisation through money that was raised through means of football pools. Ní Chinnéide provides an interesting insight into the ways in which Gael-Linn reached and maintained a connection with its audience as the organisation grew. Responding to popular demand, the organisation became a success less than a decade after its inception. Seán Ó Riada's involvement with Gael-Linn began at the same time as its rise in the mid-1950s and both he and Gael-Linn continued to enjoy a level of success into the 1960s. The way in which this happened is the subject of the next section.

As an entrepreneurial organisation, decisions for embarking upon projects in Gael-Linn were made on a case by case basis, with a contingency on financial success. Ní Chinnéide provides explanations for the reasoning behind investments in various projects at key points during the 1950s and 1960s. In many cases, projects were developed in response to demands from the general public and the commercial success of previous ventures. As a result, Ní Chinnéide exposes the improvisatory nature of the enterprise when they engaged with projects within industry and the arts in particular. Ní Chinnéide also provides insights

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<sup>21</sup> Gaeltacht is an Irish word for an Irish speaking region, primarily in the Republic of Ireland. Gaeltachts were set up by the Irish government after the founding of the Irish Free State as a means to restoring the Irish language as a living language in communities throughout Ireland.

into the day-to-day management of the company and background information about Gael-Linn personnel. As a former employee with the company, she was well placed to explain how management worked at Gael-Linn. She emphasises how individuals directed strategies within the organisation, as they invested in a variety of initiatives that were largely based in Gaeltacht areas such as Connemara and Donegal. The discussion about Gael-Linn's activity during this period indicates that decision making was the preserve of a small number of individuals, usually male, who initiated or rejected projects.

The decision-making of personnel within such organisations aided my understanding of the environment within which music related projects materialised with Seán Ó Riada. This was particularly insightful for understanding activity relating to Gael-Linn's film, drama and vinyl record (LP) projects. For example, in *Ní Chinnéide* provides evidence about the reasons for decisions made with the venture of LP record production in Gael-Linn from the release of their first commercial project featuring Seán Ó Riada in a prominent role. A drama night, *Oícheanta Seanchais* (Nights of Tradition), at the Damer Theatre became a popular event with audiences in Dublin in the late 1950s. The success of this event became the impetus behind the release of LP records. This demonstrates the type of market audience that the company was aimed at, in particular a niche of Irish language speakers involved with the culture of communities from Gaeltachts throughout Ireland. It is unclear, however, what developments provided the impetus for the release of subsequent vinyl record releases. It is unclear, for example, whether Gael-Linn responded solely to the interests of arrangers and performers. It is also unclear whether in each project a specific demand in the market provided the impetus for Seán Ó Riada's material or indeed if the success of Gael-Linn after

1958 allowed Seán Ó Riada to have freedom of choice in the material that was to be produced.

Another side of Gael-Linn's activities is revealed in Ní Chinnéide's text, *An Damer: Stair Amharclainne (The Damer: A Theatre's History)*. Though brief, it provides valuable insight into the organisation's developments with drama in Dublin. She focuses on the history, development of the theatre up to 1961 and throughout the 1960s - providing an important insight into how the theatre was managed and revealing the level of professional standards upheld by the cast and crew. Importantly for this thesis, the events surrounding the first play written by Seán Ó Riada's, *Spailpín a Rúin*, are described within context of the working nature of members of its staff. The cast involved with these plays are described by Ní Chinnéide as semi-professional. Ní Chinnéide shows that even though *Spailpín a Rúin* is quoted as a drama that was one of the most interesting that had been shown in the five years since *The Damer* had opened, a review in *Comhar* magazine describes Seán Ó Riada's lack of understanding about the craft of drama at that time and the reactions of the magazine column comment on the amateurish nature of the play. An accompanying appendix also provides the programme schedule of all plays at the Damer, and in some cases newspaper reports of the plays. Chapters 3 and 4 are also particularly insightful, as they describe the seasonal shows at the Damer throughout the 1960s and the organisation's aspirations and attempts to establish funding from the state in order to establish it as a professional theatre between 1966 and 1970. During the 1950s and 1960s, it is clear that *The Damer* was expanding and attempting to become a professional theatre. Attempts were made to receive government funding during the 1960s in order to realise the goal of a professional Irish language theatre. Unlike CCÉ, these attempts were not successful.

Another text focusing on Gael-Linn and written by Máire Nic Fhinn entitled *Riobard Mac Góráin: Ceannródaí ildánach (Riobard Mac Góráin: Versatile Pioneer / Leader)* provides fruitful insight into aspects of Gael-Linn's administrative activities. Nic Fhinn's text covers the life and leadership of Gael-Linn founder Riobard Mac Góráin. Besides this, Nic Fhinn draws attention to the various music related projects of the organisation throughout the period. Interview material gives critical insight into the relationship between artists, producers and the organisation. The 1960s are discussed with particular reference to the production and issuing of LP records. As Seán Ó Riada was seen to be central to the emergence of LP records by Gael-Linn, a number of projects from this partnership are recounted and descriptions of the relationship between Seán Ó Riada and the organisation are most insightful for this study. In particular, the era of this partnership is celebrated by Nic Fhinn, as she highlights the ways in which LP record projects blossomed as a result of this success of the EP record *Mise Éire* in May 1960. The importance of the relationship between Seán Ó Riada and Gael-Linn is shown to have influenced the direction of the organisation. Ties between both sides are shown to have emanated from the relationships formed between Riobard Mac Góráin, Seán's wife Ruth and Seán Ó Riada when they were students some years beforehand at University College Cork. In the work environment in Dublin later in the 1950s, Nic Fhinn illustrates the benefits that emerged from these close ties. For example, Mac Góráin played a supportive role to Seán Ó Riada as work was given to him for articles written in Gael-Linn's magazine, *Comhar*. It is revealed that Seán Ó Riada also appeared as accompanist to a range of Gael-Linn's 78 rpm acetate discs during the mid-1950s. Ó Riada's partnership with Gael-Linn is seen to continue well into the 1960s as he became an artist who was a focal point for a number of LP projects and concerts that were

subsequently organised by them. It is worth noting here that both founders of Gael-Linn attended University College Cork at the same time as Seán Ó Riada, indicating close connections and networks were made between workers and organisations.

The nascent nature of the record industry in Ireland and the underdeveloped sense of legal rights for payment to artists is exposed through later interviews conducted during the course of this study with Seán Ó Sé. He recalled that once off payments were sometimes issued without royalties at a later date, for example in successful Gael Linn projects such as the EP record *An Poc Ar Buile*. It is also worth noting that the composer of the song had not received a payment for the use of the song, which was issued to him as a reactive measure after the record was issued. Such insight indicates that structures and resources were under-developed during the period that Seán Ó Riada engaged with Gael-Linn.

The experimental nature of Gael-Linn's activity is highlighted by Nic Fhinn in an account of the concert, *Ceolchoirm Chuimhneacháin Pheadair Uí Dhoirín* which later became the LP recording *Ó Riada Sa Gaiety* in March 1969. Importantly for this thesis, Nic Fhinn recounts a key narrative concerning the event. She exposes organisational matters such as Gael-Linn's concern that the number of tickets being sold for the event was not substantial as the occasion drew near. This anxiety had emanated because it was thought that the followers of Irish traditional music would not agree with the new style of music supported by Gael-Linn at the time. Despite this worry, she concludes that the theatre was full on the night. The challenges faced by Gael-Linn in ensuring success in concerts is also related by Nic Fhinn in her account of another event in June 1970 entitled *Ceolchoirm Cheiliúrtha Uí Chearbhalláin, Corcaigh (Concert in Celebration of O'Carolan)*. Ní Fhinn again worked on the publicity for this concert, but on the night, despite Gael-Linn's team efforts

and the success of the previous concert *Ó Riada Sa Gaiety* a year earlier, the concert venue was described as only half full. It is interesting for this thesis to note that no other record was mentioned as being discussed between Gael-Linn and Seán Ó Riada after the release of *Ó Riada Sa Gaiety* on LP in 1970. Nic Fhinn indicates that Seán Ó Riada began to try new avenues of exploration after the official disbandment of Ceoltóirí Chualann on the 3rd of November 1970, and at that at that time he attempted to setup a talent agency and record company in direct opposition to Gael-Linn.

It is clear that Gael Linn was a pivotal organisation in Seán Ó Riada's career. It is essential to understand the wide range of activity that they undertook as they emerged. Nic Fhinn demonstrates a vibrant evolving music scene that emerged and Gael Linn's attempts at accessing the dominant media channels or markets in the 1960s. The ballad boom of the 1960s is addressed in terms of its impact and also the relationship that Gael-Linn had to this phenomenon. Nic Fhinn highlights the way in which centres for Irish language were set up in Dublin and how their organisation intermixed with the ballad boom during this period. In particular, O'Donoghue's Bar in Merrion Row is singled out as an important music venue in this time where individuals from the worlds of Sean Nós and folk singing, Irish language speakers, fashionable Dubliners and Gael-Linn staff were intermixed. Gael-Linn's ventures into the production of LP and EP (Extended Play) records for sean-nós singers, ballad singers and folk groups indicates that the organisation attempted to interact and collaborate with these nascent and soon to be dominant musical genres as the 1960s progressed. This highlights a contrast with the status of funding music in the 1952 symposium *Music in Ireland*, described in section 2.3 of this review.



Finally, Nic Fhinn provides an index of Gael-Linn's 78 rpm records, LP, EP and 45" single records with factual information regarding dates and artists in an appendix. This section of Nic Fhinn's book is helpful for this study, as it highlights the changes in the use of technology at specific points in time and the quantity of records produced in different formats. The inclusion of these exact details aided my understanding of the process of change within this particular organisation as it became a producer of entertainment within a transformative period in Irish history.

A number of important points emerged from the above discussion. Issues concerning cultural revival in Ireland and the strategic decision making of small organisations like Gael Linn influenced how music related projects developed from the mid-1950s. Success was dependent on the financial return on investment, with small networks of collaboration being prevalent in some cases. These experimental initiatives were set up during times of great socio-political change, as Gael-Linn adapted and mediated their projects through dominant media channels or markets. Overall, this section of the review highlights key factors relating to the attempts of one key organisation to evolve within a changing society.

#### **2.2.4 Radio Éireann & Radio Teilifís Éireann**

The narrative outlined so far has dealt with some of the major organisations within the Irish musical landscape of the 1950s and 1960s. A number of key studies have provided further insight into a range of related issues from this period. These texts include: Gibbons (1996), White (1998), Brown (2004), Morash (2002) and De Barra (2006). In addition to this literature, it is important for this study to recognise the role that radio and television broadcasting, and in particular, the cultural activities involved with broadcasting music, played during this time.

Richard Pine's *Music and Broadcasting in Ireland*, looks at a broad history of broadcasting in both radio and television, and covers much detail from the 1950s onwards (Pine xxiv). The reason for dedicating a substantial amount of focus to the Radio Éireann and Radio Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ) orchestras is that the creation, sustenance and growth of the Radio Éireann Symphony Orchestra (RÉSO), or its station orchestra, was the "most important achievement of RTÉ in the field of music" (xxiv). Pine identifies RTÉ as a custodian of its performing groups, and places performance at the centre of his analysis. However, even though Pine's work is weighted in favour of classical music, his insight is helpful for understanding Sean Ó Riada's experiences in this side of the Irish musical landscape. A substantial effort is also made to create an index of the ideas and aspirations of the officials of 2RN/RÉ/RTÉ and their critics over a seventy-five-year period.

Pine's emphasis is placed on the culture of its management as an indicator of how it promoted or restrained musical development at various points during its history. In his introduction, he divides RTÉ's developments into two significant eras. He describes that from 1926 to 1960 RTÉ's role is as a semi-state authority with civil servant employees operating under the constraints of its service. After 1960, he sees the organisation as in control of its own responsibilities. This account sets the context for the environment in which a great number of Seán Ó Riada's projects were realised.

The first years of RTÉ in the early 1960s did not feature the presence of the symphony orchestra on television, and Pine sees this as a great error in decision making within the organisation. Such insights illuminate the reasons why political decision making affected the broadcast of some genres over others during this time, as television became more widespread in the Irish Free State during the 1960s.

Pine refers specifically to the organisation's lack of a properly articulated policy for the role of music in broadcasting. He claims that this created underlying assumptions and prejudices which then contributed to a lack of Irish composition. It is not clearly stated what he means by Irish composition, although it is assumed that he referred to classical music, in accord with his later chapter which is dedicated to the genre and entitled 'Composers at Work'. He highlights the constraints that existed in musical expression and sees the effect that this had on composers - that Radio Éireann was the only cultural organ capable of broadcasting the performance of orchestral works to a large audience. Pine describes how venues such as the Phoenix Hall were essentially studios for recording. In the absence of a concert hall, this severely limited the interaction between composers of new works and their audiences. In terms of broadcasting, he explains how throughout its history, RTÉ had the responsibility of sustaining all forms of music yet had seldom been in a position to bring them all together. He sees training as the practical barrier to this since the Irish education system from the 1920s had not concentrated on instructing pupils through a variety of musical genres.

When it comes to composition, Pine concentrates on contemporary composers and the nature of Irish music broadcast by RTÉ between the years 1958 and 1988. He details specific problems inherent between composers and the broadcasting station. Two major difficulties are identified for composers during these years. These examples illuminate my understanding of their predicaments, the interactions between them, and the broadcasting and performance of their music.

Pine also focuses on a programme broadcast by Radio Éireann which included the contributions of seventeen composers on the subject of composition in the future of Irish

music. This chapter indicates that their policy formation was guided by a set of individuals and provides much insight into the impetus or lack thereof for composers to produce original works for the concert hall setting. He points out that in comparison to other periods in history, the output of classical music between 1958 and 1988 was small in scale. This indicates that by comparison to broadcasting, Radió Éireann did not prioritise the public performance contemporary classical music during this period.

The detail of the chapter on the radio series *Composers at Work* is particularly relevant to this study. Pine selects two programmes from this radio series and explores the relationships and relevance that the composers A.J. Potter and Seán Ó Riada had with RÉ. From his analysis of both programmes, he situates the crux of the problems both men faced as composers at that time and in the years subsequent to the event. Firstly, he describes the anxiety surrounding socio-cultural expectation that compositions should take on the elements of traditional music in their work. Secondly, the difficulty of obtaining repeat performances of composer's work was dependent on the view taken by the Director(s) of Music on the composer in question. As will be demonstrated in later chapters, Seán Ó Riada worked with RÉ and RTÉ as an employee and later on a freelance basis between 1953 and 1971. A significant amount of his compositions were directly associated and reliant upon RÉ and RTÉ orchestras.

Pine explains further some other problems that existed for composers, placing the activities of RÉ and RTÉ at odds with their artistic goals. He identifies other difficulties that Seán Ó Riada and his contemporaries faced, including a more deep-seated anxiety about the place of the composer within society. His account faults the system for not providing a stable base for composers which could ground them in the direction of contemporary

artistic directions. Pine hints at other difficulties including the “generic” nature of the station’s output being presented in a format not concerned with quality but rather on market forces. A sense pervades throughout the above accounts that state broadcasters became increasingly influenced by market forces in the late 1950s and into the 1960s. This is particularly helpful for this study, as it highlights the issues that were inherent between artistic independence and organisational constraints.

Included in this text are lists of works by Irish composers that were performed by the Radio Teilifís Éireann Symphony Orchestra and the Radio Teilifís Éireann Light Orchestra throughout the history of the orchestras. These listings became important sources for compiling datasets regarding the documentation of events and Seán Ó Riada’s compositions for RÉ and RTÉ.

A number of themes arose out of the above discussion concerning the activities of national media broadcasters Radió Éireann and Radió Teilifís Éireann. It is most indicative that their management chose to broadcast some genres over others. A pervading sense of the general lack of performance spaces or impetus for composers also contributed to a dearth in original music. Market forces drove the organisation’s criteria for broadcasting material. This influenced the types of compositions that were submitted by composers to the station.

## **2.3 Music Performance**

In an account of musical activity within a changing socio-political and socio-cultural environment, it is important to include a discussion on the performance of music. Music performance in this review is focused on the range of years between 1952 and 1971. As the

subject is vast and broader than the scope of this thesis, only key areas of literature have been selected, beginning with an outline of a historical document from 1952 entitled *Music in Ireland: A Symposium* (Fleischmann). Following this outline, an examination is provided of a number of relevant entries. This section is concluded with an overview of accounts that have been written by scholars in more recent years.

The publication *Music in Ireland* emerged as part of a symposium organised by Professor Aloys Fleischmann at University College Cork in 1952. It included essay contributions from a number of selected academics, broadcasters and practitioners who focused on the condition of music in Ireland and also Northern Ireland. In most entries a sense of optimism for the growth of music (such as the growth of orchestras) pervades. On the other hand, a number of accounts also highlight that musical practice in Ireland lacked adequate structures or services during this period (for example the lack of a publishing house). As a document focused on these issues, *Music in Ireland* has been a much-cited resource by academics when relating the status of musical infrastructure and activity from this period (Ryan 1991, White 1998, Pine 1998, McCarthy 1999, Lawlor 2012, Gubbins 2016). It is important, particularly as many of its entries relay insightful factual information about the status quo of music in Ireland in 1952. A number of essays in this collection address the lack of institutional structures and resources in the education and performance of music, and are suggestive of the need for funding from national institutions to support improvements.<sup>22</sup> The publication of the collection is significant in its timing, as it arrived

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<sup>22</sup> For example, Brian Boydell's essay "Orchestral and Chamber Music in Dublin" asks that "those who have the welfare of the country more directly in their hands ... do something which may improve our musical culture" (222). See also Frederick May's entry Radio Éireann Symphony Concerts "since the state has become everywhere more powerful in recent years and has assumed control over an ever-widening field of activity, it cannot afford to leave its creative artists to the mercy of chance." (168).

within a year of the Irish government passing legislation for an Arts Act in 1951.<sup>23</sup> It is evident through many of the challenges within this collection were related to the lack of infrastructure. In some accounts, the need for development was also linked to the poorly structured and under-funded education system. The focus on national problems indicates that contributors were directing their appeals towards institutions such as the Arts Council.

In each entry in this collection, a particular emphasis on classical music persists, with a small number of entries referencing other genres such as military, opera, choral music and folk song. Contributors noticeably ignore analysis of music performance in genres such as jazz, dance orchestras, theatre or domestic scenes of Irish traditional music that were present in Ireland during the 1950s. This narrow focus of a wider spectrum of music suggests that the symposium and its report perhaps replicated a hierarchy that existed within musical practice at the time. Nonetheless, *Music in Ireland* provides important insight into a number of performance related issues and developments in the years leading up to 1952.

### **2.3 Music Performance in 1952**

Music performance is addressed in broad terms mainly within its second and third sections. In section two, *The Profession of Music*, the focus is on church music, composition, performance and training. Aloys Fleischmann, the editor, wrote about classical and church music training within schools. It is important to note that Fleischmann focuses on professional musicians throughout this account, as he envisaged the future of music would

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<sup>23</sup> The Arts Act, published in 1951, was passed in order to “stimulate public interest in, and to promote the knowledge, appreciation, and practice of, the arts and, for these and other purposes, to establish an arts council, and to provide for other matters in connection with the matters aforesaid.”

have a distinct movement towards more formal, professional activities in music. His account demonstrates the dearth of church, choir and classical music in schools (Fleischmann 82). He calls for more professional bodies of music making in Ireland. Fleischmann goes on to point out that:

The Irish country towns and villages are starved of music, and the inhabitants of the vast majority of them have never seen an orchestra nor a chamber music ensemble, nor have they experienced any form of music other than charity concerts, or at the best musical comedy and pantomime. In some of the cities the position is little better. (Fleischmann 84)

Fleischmann's account of the performance of chamber music throughout Ireland resonates with the idea that adequate structures for the performance of classical music had not yet been adopted by 1952. This commentary highlighted the barrier that existed for orchestras arranging concert tours and the limited reach of classical music into rural Ireland, beyond the broadcasting and activities of R   and its orchestras.

In another entry, Charles Lynch describes the state of music performance from the perspective of a concert hall pianist in 1952. In tandem with the tone set by other articles in the collection on the lack of institutional structures, he reiterates a distinct lack of musical organisation in professional musical life. What is significant about this entry, however, is that the author calls for the organisation of "concert agencies in Dublin and Belfast, and the creation of a body on the lines of the British Council in England" (Lynch 184). Lynch calls for a similar development in Ireland. He envisions that this improvement would:



Organise the careers of the best Irish musicians, obtaining engagements for them in London, New York and the continental capitals, in return for bringing the best foreign artists to perform in this country. (Lynch 184)

The author claims that this would encourage young musicians to become whole-time professionals in order for "semi-professionalism" to "disappear" (184). Lamenting the status quo, however, he concludes that "at the moment there is not the faintest shadow of such a development on the Irish musical horizon" (184). Lynch sees the establishment of concert halls as a way for Irish musical culture to "live up to our reputation as a musical country" (184). He also highlights a number of other performance spaces that were available to musicians at the time such as theatres, cinemas, festivals and recording studios. As they are written from the perspectives of an important educator and musician, both accounts above highlight the lack of facility or support for fully professional artists during this time.

### **2.3.1 Broadcasting**

An essay entitled "Music in the Broadcasting Service" was written by Séamus Ó Braonáin (Ó Braonáin 197). His account discusses Radio Éireann in Dublin and BBC Northern Ireland in Belfast as musical organisations which supported the growth and development of musical activities in Ireland since the 1920s. The content of this entry mentions a number of performance issues relating mostly to classical music and Cór Radio Éireann (CRÉ), the station choir, with just one paragraph dedicated to céilí bands. It is indicative of the attitudes of the directors of music within the station. Ó Braonáin claims that,

It is scarcely necessary to say that the growth and development of good class music within the Broadcasting service went largely hand in hand with the growth and development of the Station Orchestra. (Ó Braonáin 98)

Ó Braonáin equates orchestral music in Radio Éireann with “good-class music” suggested an attitude within the station towards non-classical forms of music (Ó Braonáin 198). For example, when addressing the subject of the céilí band in Radio Éireann, Ó Braonáin finds fault with the repertoire of these groups and notes that a dearth of suitable material inhibits the preparation of suitable and varied programmes. This attitude further indicates a hierarchy that existed within the organisation relating to broadcasting. In a biography of Seán Ó Riada, Tomás Ó Canainn recounts several instances of Seán Ó Riada performing with jazz bands during the early 1950s. Notwithstanding the broadcasting of traditional Céilí Band groups that had performed on RÉ at this time, a number of popular genres of music at the time are not mentioned by Ó Braonáin. Groups such as dance orchestras are not mentioned, hinting that particular genres of music were privileged over others by those in power within the organisation.

Ó Braonáin highlights the type of improvements that directors felt were needed within broadcasting, but this was only envisaged in accordance with their own sensibilities and not with musical change in general. He suggests that the station orchestra tour the country regularly, “as the B.B.C., Hallé and other orchestras do in England” and claims this as “what is really a national want” (203). His description of the lack of touring by the orchestra reiterates the editor Aloys Fleischmann’s view that the rural population in Ireland had no engagement with classical music. Overall, Ó Braonáin’s account give insight to how there was a direct preference for the practice of classical music as broadcast on Radio

Éireann.<sup>24</sup> His emphases on orchestral activities and their importance in being promoted above other genres correlate with a number of other attitudes within the symposium collection.

### 2.3.2 Festivals

The composer, adjudicator and director of music for the Abbey theatre, Éamonn Ó Gallchobhair provided an analysis of musical performance at festivals in an entry entitled “The Cultural Value of Festival and Feis”. This section is particularly helpful as Ó Gallchobhair added a factual listing of *Feiseanna*, *Oireachtas* and other festivals that were occurring in the Republic of Ireland and Northern Ireland. The focus in this account, however, was to describe the aims and purposes of both Festival and *Feis*, and in doing so to draw out the inconsistencies with the *Feis* movement. Ó Gallchobhair noted that both *Festival* and *Feis* were used interchangeably and that they had borrowed from each other, but later acknowledged their distinct differences. Ó Gallchobhair described the “Feis world” as loosely organised and diverse as a result of rules and regulations which had been imposed, such as the concept of an “ideal performance” (212). He noted that this created a standard which kept “performance in line with general cultural aims” (212). It is insightful that the presence of other festivals in Ireland at this time are not mentioned, the *Feis* and *Oireachtas* being seen as the important festivals.

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<sup>24</sup> See Gubbins, especially chapter two and four, for an insightful analysis of Radió Éireann’s attitudes towards studio auditions and popular music between the 1920s and 1960s.

### 2.3.3 Music and composition

The composer Frederick May submitted an entry to this publication entitled “The Composer in Ireland”. In his contribution, the discussion was confined to discussion on public symphony concerts in Dublin and the activities of the Radio Éireann Symphony Orchestra within the city, which reinforces the perspective that orchestral music in this era was concentrated in large towns and cities. May provided a brief historical context to these activities since the nineteenth century, and then focused more closely on activities leading up to the early 1950s. He reiterated the viewpoint that improvement had taken place within the orchestra and the quality of broadcasts. May pointed out that the regular concerts at the Phoenix Hall “would have been undreamt of not so long ago” and that the broadcasts of RÉ had “built up a wider general public for music” (May 165). Echoing Ó Braonáin’s call for up to date resources with specific regard to their area of expertise, May envisioned the building of a concert hall in Dublin as a “common forum”, which would create a demand for “the great music of the world” but also “music native and local in its origins” (May 166).

May followed this with a call for improved publishing, he saw the state of publishing in that “a certain amount of Irish music, chiefly arrangements of folk song, has been made available, but little original music of a serious kind” (May 166). It is insightful that the composer acknowledged a barrier to the creation of “original music” and compares it to the start of a revival comparable to that of the Gaelic revival of the early twentieth century (166). Overall, he shared the perspective of others that there was a lack of supporting institutional structures in Irish musical life. The plea that is reiterated for the creation of institutions such as a national concert hall to act as a stimulant for composers, performers

and the public is insightful for this study. This vision would remain but not bear fruit throughout the 1950s and 1960s.

On the subject of composition, May was sombre in tone. He noted that, “the commissioning of new works has latterly been discontinued or is at least extremely rare” (May 168). May claimed that up to 1952 composers had been paid unduly and irrespective of artistic integrity. This perspective held insights for this study. When considered in light of section 2.2.4 above, the practice of commissioning works at R  mirrored the way in which broadcast material was selected by the station.

May’s final point resonated with the general tone of his essay and the envisioning of a new musical landscape. He hit out at musical criticism’s “unwarrantable premise ... such that all good music must be demonstrably national in feeling” (May 169). This evocation emerged on Radio  ireann as the 1950s progressed, and was closely examined in the seminal series *Composers at Work* in 1958. *Composers at work* received much attention from scholars such as Richard Pine as they related the predicament of composers to the nationalist political status of this era.<sup>25</sup>

From the evidence of the above account, the condition of classical composition in 1952 was dependent on a number of factors including but not limited to: the activity and abilities of the R  station orchestras. That composition was described as also being tied to a sense of “national feeling” reveals the ways in which classical music was perceived in Ireland during this time. Despite the fact that this entry was entitled “The Composer in Ireland”, no

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<sup>25</sup> For a detailed analysis of this radio programme, see: Pine, Richard. "Composers at Work." *Music and Broadcasting in Ireland*, Four Courts Press, 2005.

mention is made of composition in other genres of music, hinting that composition was only seriously considered in a classical context.

### **2.3.4 Teaching Music**

Part one of this collection, “Music and the Institutions” also addresses music related policy in four distinct areas of Irish life: primary schools, secondary schools, universities and in the Irish army. All eight essays are written by trained musicians and scholars from within these systems of education. The aesthetic mindset of these entries, in line with the report in general, is focused on the history of teaching of classical music in Ireland. A general sense pervades that music in the education system was improving in general, and that the policy which had existed for the education of music was effective. One entry, John F. Larchet’s “Music in the Secondary Schools” detailed the progress which had been made in departmental examinations. Larchet claimed that a “marked awakening interest in good music” had occurred not only through broadcasting and the gramophone, but also through “the improved teaching in our secondary schools.” It is not immediately clear which genre of music Larchet is referring to, but in light of the topics in this symposium it is most likely a reference to classical music. Many felt that an awakening of interest was occurring by the teaching of music and the broadcasting of gramophone records. This indicates that a greater access to music was already occurring in Irish society due to education and media.

The subject of Irish traditional music in education was also addressed. An entry entitled “The Place of Irish Music in Education”, Seán Neeson claimed that “the syllabus makes reasonable provision for Gaelic song” and praised the facilitation of choral music in the curriculum (Neeson 54). However, he also noted the lack of what he called “Gaelic music” in secondary school education (55). In the case of university studies this was more

acute, “the lack of published material is a serious handicap” (57). This claim echoed Frederick May’s assertion that the lack of publishing was seen as a serious detriment to the access and development of formal musical education and materials.

From the evidence of the symposium report, it is possible to see that the facilities for teaching and performing music were considered to be improving throughout this period in Ireland, albeit from a low standard. There are several notable mentions of the instruction of traditional music of Ireland. The symposium in general relates important practitioners who were focused on classical music in training and in practice. As a group, it is apparent that its contributors did not see the need for infrastructure to be developed for other forms of musical practice.

### **2.3.5 Musical Change and 1952 Onwards**

Despite calls for improvements within musical education, performance and infrastructure in 1952, change emerged in the Irish musical landscape that were radically different to how it was envisioned by contributors to *Music in Ireland*. In particular, the late 1950s and early 1960s in Ireland are generally regarded as a time of great change in the cultural landscape of popular music, which saw boundaries of musical practice being crossed as societal customs began to be reshaped. A number of other important organisational developments within Ireland also shed light on aspects of the changing musical landscape of Ireland during the early 1950s. It is insightful to note that the *Music in Ireland* symposium mentioned above makes no mention of Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann. As shown from sections 2.2.2 and 2.2.3, revivalist organisations such as the newly formed Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann and Gael-Linn began to emerge and made a strong impact on Irish musical landscape from the early to mid-nineteen fifties. Despite the similarity of activities between

the *Feis* and other festivals during the 1950s, the evolution of festivals promoted by organisations up to 1970 was differentiated. For instance, CCÉ's event, the Fleadh Cheoil, began as an occasion for members of CCÉ to socialise, the event grew out of its original intended function and became cross-fertilised with other genres of music such as ballad singing and folk groups as the 1960s progressed. In contrast, the *Feis* maintained a consistent identity.

Some key texts relate these changes were also important for this study. These texts include discussions about the way that musicians negotiated formal and informal performance practice during the big band era (Ó hAllmhuráin 2016), the showband era (Smyth 2005) and the ballad boom (Dowling 2014). A number of texts also approach the subject of broadcasting activities during this time of change also provide detailed analyses of music broadcasting history. These include Pine (2002), Ó Murchú (2000) Gorham (1967) and Dowling (2014). In general, broadcasting is shown to incorporate a larger amount of popular music over time. These genres would go on to be far more prominent in the media and in performance.

## **2.4 Perspectives on Seán Ó Riada's Career**

Since the early 1970s, a number of publications have focused directly on Seán Ó Riada's life and work experiences. Amongst them, three key texts are important to understanding key moments in his career. The first, *The Achievement of Seán Ó Riada*, was a book published on the tenth anniversary of his death in 1981. It is a collection of essays written by Ó Riada's contemporaries in an anecdotal fashion. The contributors report an insight into Ó Riada's achievements, albeit without extended analysis. In one section, Seoirse Bodley provides a brief overview of the composer's classical music scores, entitled



“The Original Compositions”. Despite the abundance of information, each contribution fails to contribute any in depth critical discussion about Seán Ó Riada’s music related projects or his experiences within the wider social structures of that period in time.<sup>26</sup> Instead, some of the essays contained therein burnished his reputation.

A follow up to this text is the 1993 publication of *Seán Ó Riada – A Shaol agus a Shaothar (Seán Ó Riada – His Life and Work)*, written in two sections by Tomás Ó Canainn and Gearóid Mac an Bhua (Gerard Victory). In a closer look at Ó Riada’s career, both authors deal with separate accounts of Ó Riada’s life and works – Ó Canainn providing a documentation of his life with regard to the various institutions he was involved with, and Mac an Bhua taking a closer look at the published scores of Seán Ó Riada and in particular, his relationship with the “European tradition”. In this work, Ó Canainn, who was a former student and Seán Ó Riada’s colleague, intersperses a descriptive overview and chronology of a number of Seán Ó Riada’s projects outside of classical music, alongside a biographical account of his life experiences. Ó Canainn’s account, written in the Irish language, provides anecdotal evidence for these experiences. He builds a picture of Ó Riada’s musical journey through a number of Ó Riada’s colleagues and family members in the fashion of a memoir. The interview material is not cited but it does include substantial evidence about Ó Riada’s education and his experiences as an educator, the performance of a number of his projects, brief contextual descriptions for these projects and some constraints such as financial burdens that Ó Riada encountered during his lifetime.

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<sup>26</sup> Incidentally, the year of this publication coincided with a Radio Teilifís Éireann documentary by Seán Ó Mordha, featuring a profile of the composer’s life in music.

The aesthetic of this work is closely aligned with the previous book of essays, where anecdotal evidence provides the support for our understanding of Seán Ó Riada's experiences. Most of the contextualisation of these experiences is described through descriptions of Ó Riada's actions throughout his life, placing him at the centre of the discussion. One chapter in particular, "Amharclann na Mainistreach agus Ceoltóirí Cualann" deals mostly with Ó Riada's band Ceoltóirí Chualann. Despite the abundant descriptions of incidents involving Ceoltóirí Chualann, the narrative ignores the types of plays that Ó Riada was involved in, or even the repertoire that was used for these performances. Ó Canainn's writing continues an approach where Ó Riada is the central figure upon which the success or failure of each project rests.

In the second major section of *Seán Ó Riada – A Shaol agus a Shaothar*, the composer and colleague of Ó Riada, Gearóid Mac an Bhua (Gerard Victory), provides a close analysis of the published works that were composed by Ó Riada. Curiously, the layout of the book illustrates the divide placed by the authors between Ó Riada's creativity first with mostly non-notational, less composed and more arranged music and in the second section with classical music notation. This shows a clear attempt by the authors to reveal Ó Riada's work through separate genres in order to account for his contributions to classical and traditional music in a comprehensive manner. For example, in order to explain Seán Ó Riada's artistic direction during the 1950s, Mac an Bhua describes three paths. The first path is described as in a direction of compositions of art music for more scholarly, serious audiences. Secondly, he describes Ó Riada's light orchestral music, and thirdly he notes Ó Riada's path in the direction of classical composition based on Irish traditional music. These artistic paths or directions are demonstrated by Mac an Bhua through the examples of Ó

Riada's published scores and broadcast material in classical music on Radió Éireann. Mac an Bhua indicates that Seán Ó Riada moved towards the third direction for the remainder of his career.

One limitation with both of these texts, however, is that they both place Ó Riada at the centre of the argument, attempting to explain Ó Riada's career through memoir evidence and the close analysis of the published documents. The context and performance of these projects is alluded to in only a handful of cases. Performance is mentioned mostly in terms of the premiere of compositions and on subsequent LP and cassette recordings that were available at the time of the book's publication in the early 1990s.

The first relevant academic publication in 1998, by Prof. Harry White treats Seán Ó Riada as a subject of what White defines as a "Crisis of Modernism". In his chapter, White places Seán Ó Riada in a unique position as both the receiver of a "burden" that White claims existed in the 1950s between the ethnic tradition and "the aspirations of an emancipated art music" (125). White sees Seán Ó Riada's movements into a range of musical genres as evidence of an unsettled progress, and posits this as a reason for Seán Ó Riada's "restless address", as he was accepted into the fabric of Irish culture whilst at the same time living with a sense of indirection. White sees poor infrastructure and unclear aesthetic within Irish musical life as the reasons for the "plight of the composer" and uses the evidence of Seán Ó Riada's classical and film works to support his argument (125). Ironically, it is the success of these works which White sees as the obstacles to creating original art music compositions.

White first casts his argument of Seán Ó Riada's "crisis of identity and/or purpose" through the cultural backdrop of the 1920s through to the 1950s (129). He also supports his

case through descriptions of Ó Riada's identity alterations and the problems brought about by the polarising effects of cultural revivalism. Within his narrative, he portrays Seán Ó Riada's activities as exemplary of a rejection of European *status quo* and in doing so, silencing the claims of art music. A sense pervades that White is attributing Seán Ó Riada's activities as evidence of defiance of his duties to the art music world, a socio-political musical background that he had interacted with during his early career experiences in Dublin. By rejecting these duties, mostly through the lack of composition in art music and the switch towards Gaelic culture, White sees this as the demise of Ó Riada's career as a composer in the European tradition. Furthermore, White also describes the artistic crisis for Ó Riada as the result of not being able to find a "compositional mode or language" through his film scores and his ensemble group, Ceoltóirí Chualann (142). It is insightful here that White relates Seán Ó Riada's plight to a wider problem where art music did not enjoy the same relationship with, "painting, sculpture and architecture", during this time (143). He concludes that the issue lay within the combination of expectation and reputation that was placed on and emerged for Seán Ó Riada - of both "the political condition of being Irish when added to the then unstable notion of a 'great composer'". This was seen by White to contribute to Ó Riada taking on a polarised condition of music in Ireland. For White, this coupled with the loss of a unifying aesthetic ultimately became "too much to bear" (149). White sees Seán Ó Riada's career as a demise in terms of art music, and in the wake of this demise, the work for which he became most famous contributed to the lack of creativity in original art music.

Another text, contributed by Ó Canainn in 2003 and entitled 'Seán Ó Riada – His Life and Work' could largely be described as a second, expanded edition of Ó Canainn and Mac

an Bhua's 1993 text outlined earlier. Ó Canainn wrote this publication in the English language. Reference is made to a greater number of Ó Riada's projects with different institutions or companies, and a closer focus is given to the dates of performance, concert preparations and the impact of the performance in general. Of note in this text is that Ó Canainn draws upon evidence from an early version of the papers that would later become the Seán Ó Riada Collection, the subject of this thesis. In this study, I place an emphasis upon contextualising the social structures inherent within society during Ó Riada's lifetime. Ó Canainn's biography provides an important backdrop for the interpretation of interactions between Ó Riada, his contemporaries and the performance of his music related projects.

Richard Pine provides another perspective on Seán Ó Riada's career in a chapter entitled *The Enigma of Seán Ó Riada* in 2014. Pine describes Seán Ó Riada as a "disconnected bridge" (423). In comparison to Harry White's analysis of Seán Ó Riada's career, Pine sees the activities of the composer as a "bridge builder" between Irish musical revival in classical and traditional genres. It is insightful that Pine sees Ó Riada's career activities as encompassing attempts to translate both musical and social genres. In comparison to White's account of his career trajectory, Ó Riada is portrayed as "fully conscious" of his musical and personal journey (425). Pine documents the historical rise in Irish society of the want for the "great Irish composer" during the first half of the twentieth century, and in doing so illustrates the lack of imagination that existed within the early years of an emerging Irish state to prioritise "music of all kinds" (439). Pine correlates the lack of appreciation of a more holistic sense of music with reasons for why the atmosphere and environment experienced by Seán Ó Riada would constrict how a composer could approach the creation of music in Ireland during the 1950s and 1960s.

Pine's claim to the unbridgeable gap referred to in the title of his chapter is of two Ireland's that were "irreconcilable" - the Gaelic nation and the Anglo-Irish state, mental boundaries in Irish life as quoted by Ó Riada himself. Pine attempts to relax the polarisation described by White in how Ó Riada moved towards Gaelic culture. He demonstrates that after Ó Riada had moved from Dublin to Cúil Aodha, he had not completely abandoned the genre of art music. He cites a number of film scores involving art music in the mid to late 1960s which had been recorded and also adds evidence from the SÓRC of music related projects from this period in order to support his argument. Pine identifies the crisis of modernism not as the work of composers such as Éamonn Ó Gallchobhair or Seán Ó Riada, but rather "how musical life was to be conducted in Ireland once the freedom to conduct it had been won" (464). Building upon Pine's arguments, this study seeks to address elements of how musical life was conducted. It focuses on how projects were performed, and this investigation becomes central to understanding the ways in which Seán Ó Riada's rose to prominence. A number of other accounts also provide analysis of Seán Ó Riada's career experiences (Fanning; Ó Súilleabháin; Ó Laoire; Ní Fhuartháin; Cooper; Mason Love).

## **2.5 Background of the Seán Ó Riada Collection**

As this study focuses on the analysis of a thematic collection and digital humanities perspectives, it is crucial to incorporate an awareness of archival methodologies, archiving techniques and the cultural aspects associated with exploring digital collections of metadata through the creation of digital tools. My initial research ideas and the results of explorations of the thematic collection were guided by perspectives stemming from the digital humanities, the history of this thematic collection and archival standards.

### **2.5.1 Metadata and the archiving process**

Knowledge of the process involved with archiving collections through background research and current perspectives on Seán Ó Riada's legacy led me to further understandings on how thematic development aided the current representations of material within the Seán Ó Riada Collection. The archivist imposed an artificial order when processing the Collection for archival purposes. As a result of thematic description, a particular emphasis was imposed on the representation of the material as a result of the use of ISAD(G), the general International Standard for Archival Description. ISAD(G) is a set of archival standards used by archivists for describing collections of archival material. The focus of the standard is to provide definitions for a set of elements to be included in archiving finding aids. By reviewing this standard, I was in a position to understand the ways in which archivists approach the construction and standardisation of finding aid metadata descriptions more clearly. The implications involved with engaging with ISAD(G) standards are outlined in Chapter 3. Email correspondence with the original archivists also provided context for how the archiving process was approached.

### **2.6 Historical and Political Contexts**

Finally, throughout this study it is important that I maintain an awareness of the research contexts of both the time period in question and representations of the legacy of Seán Ó Riada. My research is guided by greater awareness around the political and historical aspects of music performance in Ireland from the 1950s up to the present day. During the course of this research, I consider performance practices and the effects of social structures upon musical expression in Ireland are considered. Understanding the wider social agendas

of organisations and their practical day-to-day operation enrich my overall understanding about the practical limitations or privileges involved with the production of music at the time of this study.

## **2.7 Discussion**

This literature review employed a thematic narrative in order to manage the scope of enquiry. The investigation covered literature that focused on organisational policy, music in education and performance between 1950 and 1971. Literature from this period and more recent studies formed the core of the review. Key findings to be taken from the literature review can be summed up in table 2.1 as follows:



| Policy and practice in organisations   | Music in Practice in Irish Society   | Seán Ó Riada's Career  |
|--|--|--|
| <p>Governmental policy towards the arts was initially focused on funding festivals and events rather than individual artists</p> <p>Decisions within organisations were made by a number of key individuals, mostly men</p> <p>Market forces played a key role in the changes that occurred within organisations</p> <p>Music revival organisations in the 1950s grew rapidly and by the end of the 1960s had expanded into communities across Ireland</p> | <p>Limited reach for classical music into rural parts of Ireland during the 1950s.</p> <p>Radio broadcasting was initially centred on classical music, with popular and traditional music being peripheral</p> <p>Dearth of studies of popular music from the era of 1950s Ireland</p> | <p>A number of texts focus on Seán Ó Riada's career. There is a distinct lack of analysis of performance of projects that the artist was involved in.</p> <p>Texts fail to take account of Seán Ó Riada as an artist in a broad sense.</p> <p>Analysis is based on published works only.</p> |

**Table 2.1:** Summary of literature review findings

The purpose of the literature review in this thesis was to reveal background evidence of the institutional, organisational and practice related histories surrounding musical life in mid-twentieth century Irish society. This evidence is later used as prompts for forming interview questions in preparation for ethnographic fieldwork. The subsequent findings revealed through thematic coding then served to produce evidence of Seán Ó Riada's rise to prominence in Irish society.

## **Chapter 3**

### **Groundwork**

#### **3.1 Introduction**

This chapter follows the literature review by including insights and approaches from the application of practice from digital humanities. One important aspect of the following chapter is the project methodology. This research takes an iterative approach, detailing the ways in which data and design progressed in the course of this study. Data from the Seán Ó Riada Collection is introduced, explained and investigated in detail. The information gained during the reading and literature review informed some of the developments detailed in the subsequent narrative.

The outline here traces the process of developing the digital component of this project. This follows a practice-based approach for building datasets and making a digital visualisation framework during phase one of the prototyping. The focus here is on the ways in which the framework developed with reflection on the contents of evolving dataset content and subsequent revisions of the data designs. This forms a novel documentation of strategic issues that are encountered when gathering, structuring and representing archival data during the process of digital humanities research. Ultimately, this chapter leads towards the evaluation of the digital visualisation framework later in Chapter 6. After conducting fieldwork interviews as outlined in later chapters, a period of time followed

where data gathering and design changes were temporarily put on hold. This allowed interview findings and representations of digital data to be examined.<sup>27</sup>

The material selected for analysis in this study was initially focused on the Seán Ó Riada Collection (SÓRC) and its accompanying finding aid. In addition, many of the sources in the literature review indicated viable, if conflicting sources of information such as listings of projects, performances and radio shows. As datasets were assembled alongside visualisations of this data, a number of indications from this preliminary data prompted a search for material from sources outside of the SÓRC. This case study aimed to achieve a more comprehensive account of discographic and event related data from Seán Ó Riada's career. This broader search encompassed scholarly accounts, digitised newspapers and archival collections, including the gathering of data from the following institutions:

- The Contemporary Music Centre (CMC), Dublin (May 2016)
- The Irish Film Institute (IFI), Dublin (May 2016)
- The Irish Traditional Music Archive (ITMA), Dublin (Oct. 2016)
- The National Folklore Collection (NFC), University College Dublin (Oct. 2016)
- The Abbey Theatre Archive, National University of Ireland (NUI), Galway (Dec. 2016)
- The Radio Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ) Archives, Dublin (Dec. 2016)

As the design of a prototype of Seán Ó Riada's activities progressed during this period, new data was discovered on a continual basis. When adding this data to datasets, new clues and discoveries about design began to emerge. For example, the noticeably large

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<sup>27</sup> Access to the most up to date version of the digital visualisation framework is at: <https://o-em.org/oriada/>

number of arrangements from Seán Ó Riada's time at Radio Éireann in 1955 demonstrated that his working style was often concentrated within a short, highly productive period of time. As a result of the unpredictable nature of this data gathering process, iterative design was selected as a suitable approach for developing the digital prototype. In a similar manner to practice research, iterative design is a software development process that allows information technology developers to create a prototype and then to test and evaluate that prototype whilst at the same time allowing new ideas to emerge in the process of carrying out a redesign. As it is a cyclic approach, it enables a continual refinement of the prototype at each phase of the design process as new data emerged.

This chapter begins with an outline of the disciplinary context of my research. It continues with an outline of the background to the creation of the SÓRC at the Boole library, University College Cork. Preliminary data gathering, structuring of datasets and subsequent database development from the early stages of this project are discussed. Gathering data was seen as a crucial component of the development and selection of particular tools and frameworks for this project. Data was also assessed as small data, in contrast to what is commonly referred to as big data. Small data can be manageable, but not representative. Big data can be useful for larger, accurate generalisations about phenomena, but can also be laborious to process. As a result of using small data, this chapter demonstrates how a relatively small size of dataset material allowed a close understanding of the research data to emerge over time.

The design and building of the digital visualisation framework are introduced as an initial sketch, which then developed into different versions, individual component parts and visualisation assessments. Meanwhile, each stage of data gathering, design and

representation is outlined. During each phase of development, the concept of data-driven design is used in order to account for changes and decisions that were made as data was discovered. In this project data driven design is used as an alternative to research through design. This approach deviates from research through design as it uses the discovery of new data as a way to determine how to develop the design of the prototype.

This chapter concludes with a critique of the data and software tools that were used in this stage of the project. It provides the groundwork for the next phase of the prototyping process, which is presented in chapter 6, following fieldwork interviews and interview analysis.

### **3.2 Disciplinary focus and context**

The field of Digital Humanities has now become multifaceted but has its roots in an area previously defined as “humanities computing” (Svennson). My interest in this field developed during my undergraduate studies in the discipline of Information Technology. Since 2007, I became especially interested in the possibilities afforded by computing for the humanities, and in particular how these possibilities might intersect with research in ethnomusicology.

In this study, I focused on digital humanities practices as a set of processes and techniques that facilitate the construction of a digital visualisation framework. In the context of this project, the prototype sought to depict the nature of the SÓRC through an initial exploration and visualisation of its contents. As a result, the practice of prototyping served to indicate deeper understandings about the material within the Collection, so that more informed questions about the research subject may be posited after this exploratory

period. Several rounds of prototyping also revealed evidence which allowed for a reflection and reconsideration of the prototypes themselves and how data can be represented.

In this next section I discuss the significance of my approach in comparison to recent engagements by ethnomusicologists with digital humanities processes and techniques. I argue that ethnomusicologists can engage more deeply with these digital humanities practices in order to discover more fruitful ways to explore research.

### **3.3 Digital humanities in ethnomusicology**

Research using digital tools and digital resources is not new in ethnomusicology (Cooper and Sapiro 301; Clayton 135; Lysloff 23). In recent years, some ethnomusicologists have begun to engage with the digital practices in profound ways. Scholars disposed towards these practices are now considering more carefully how digital tools and data may have a more important role to play during the research process.

One of the most elaborate projects involving the use of digital practices with ethnomusicology is *The Global Jukebox*. This project was undertaken to reflect the research, mission and legacy of the ethnomusicologist Alan Lomax and his team of researchers (Matthews). *The Global Jukebox*, dubbed by Anthony Seeger in 2006 as “one of the largest comparative projects ever imagined for the study of music, dance and speech”, features over seventeen thousand recordings made by Lomax during fieldwork carried out in the mid-twentieth century (217). The project incorporates Lomax’s self-devised categorisation system which classifies performers throughout the world based on a number of their performance traits. In Lomax’s system, the concepts of Cantometrics, Choreometrics, Parlametrics, and Phonotactics were united in an attempt to relate elements of vocal music

to features of social organisation (The Global Jukebox). Lomax attempted to model key patterns of “co-action” in the everyday lives of performers, in an attempt to link art and social life (14). In 2012, a digital version of Lomax’s project was realised when *The Global Jukebox* was launched by the Association of Cultural Equity, a group he established in order to “explore and preserve the world’s expressive traditions” (Association for Cultural Equity). A digital version of *The Global Jukebox* allows Lomax’s research to be more fully realised with the aid of digital tools.

Despite the possibilities afforded by *The Global Jukebox* in digital form, the datasets which were used in Lomax’s work have not been made available on the World Wide Web. As a result, the data gathering process is not transparent for users and visitors to the digital project on the World Wide Web. Lomax’s work demonstrates one way by which ethnomusicologists can engage with digital tools and techniques for research. It also demonstrates how the digital is sometimes utilised without academic rigour, or a focus being placed on the sharing, interrogation or examination of underlying digital structures and data sources that were used to create the project. Indeed, critiques of Lomax’s methodology have been forthcoming in recent years. Ethnomusicologists such as Middleton have criticised the ways with which concepts such as cantometrics has emphasised and exacerbated issues of cultural homology (147). Without the availability of access, understanding or explanation of how all data was interpreted in projects, users and researchers are left to guess about data consistency and the way that data is gathered. Digital interfaces also present a range of challenges, biases and omissions. Some scholars within the field of Digital Humanities place awareness of these issues at the centre of their

research. Understanding these issues is a key part of digital practice in the field of Digital Humanities.

In their research, digital humanists have demonstrated the ways in which they place a strong emphasis on interrogating underlying processes and the ways in which digital tools and resources are constructed (Drucker, Kräutli). Researchers such as Johanna Drucker examine datasets and digital tools in order to reveal errors, whilst ensuring that they critique the lack of transparency (LeHigh IMRC). Some ethnomusicologists have begun to conduct digital research in a similar fashion, by examining and reflecting upon their engagements with digital tools and resources. An example of this deeper engagement appears in a PhD thesis written by Dr Wendy Hsu in 2011.<sup>28</sup> As an ethnographer, Hsu explores her fieldwork with digital content from social networks on the World Wide Web as "digital ethnography" (172). She uses digital humanities processes to add reflexive understanding and explicitness to her fieldwork. She confronts the challenge of what methodological approach means for digital practice, in a similar way to how reflexive processes are carried out in ethnomusicology. Furthermore, her work utilises advanced digital techniques such as web scraping techniques (see Fig. 3.1) through learning programming languages and mapping technologies. These digital tools enable her to explore the concept of transnational social networks of rock musicians.

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<sup>28</sup> Hsu, Wendy. *Redefining Asian America: Politics, Aesthetics, and Social Networks of Independent Rock Musicians*. 2011. University of Virginia, PhD Dissertation. 69.89.31.173/~beingwen/wp-content/uploads/2010/01/WHsu\_Dissertation\_SubmissionCopy.pdf. Accessed 5 Apr. 2018.





**Fig. 3.1:** Screenshot of transnational networks studied by Hsu. Myspace friend groups are clustered together by location.<sup>29</sup>

It is notable that as an ethnomusicologist, Hsu later demonstrated her findings with an article published in 2012 in the *Journal of Digital Humanities*. For Hsu, digital ethnography and traditional ethnography are interrelated by the sense that *doing* is fundamental to both. Hsu perceives that the act of "doing in the form of participation .... pushes the boundaries of our horizons" (Digital Ethnography Toward Augmented Empiricism). There is a difference here between the historical significance of Lomax's and Hsu's research. In an age of digital data, Hsu advocates for a more engaged, reflexive approach to digital practices, in much the same way as an ethnomusicologist would push the boundaries of their understandings through participant observation during fieldwork. During the era within which Lomax's project was produced, self-reflexivity became a more important part of the research

<sup>29</sup> Hsu, Wendy. Screenshot of Myspace friend groups clustered together by location. Screenshot. *Journal of Digital Humanities*, [journalofdigitalhumanities.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Hsu6.png](http://journalofdigitalhumanities.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/04/Hsu6.png). Accessed 5 Apr. 2018.

process. Hsu's research signifies how self-reflexive, experimental approaches to digital research now allow us to understand how we can better negotiate and critically reflect upon the decisions we take when using technology to produce research. Arguing for moving beyond the "black box of ethnographic methodology" evidenced through the example of datasets not being available for *The Global Jukebox*, Hsu calls for redefining the role of ethnography in the digital age (Hsu).

Building upon the research from her doctoral dissertation within ethnomusicology, Hsu organised a roundtable discussion at the annual Society of Ethnomusicology conference in 2014. Her panel focused on the topic "Digital Ethnomusicology" (SEM Preview). This engagement reflects an acceptance within the community for the need to consider new types of fieldwork practices and complementary approaches to fieldwork. In a small way, these engagements might help to raise awareness of how we interact with the digital as a medium, in a more important way they might cause researchers to reformulate what it means to conduct research in the humanities.

A number of scholars have echoed Hsu's call for deeper engagement with digital practice. In the spirit of digital humanities inquiry, a text entitled *Theory and Method in Historical Ethnomusicology* was published in 2014. Its authors, Jonathan McCollum and David Hebert, view contemporary practices (with an emphasis on digital approaches) as crucial to the emergence of the field of Historical Ethnomusicology. McCollum and Hebert emphasise the need for "careful consideration" of "contemporary theories and rigorous methods uniquely suited to historical inquiry in the field of music" when addressing issues of the boundaries of time and space (371). They emphasise how arrays of data, such as interviews, notation, newspaper articles, letters, and other primary sources held in archives

enable the expansion of knowledge. Their tone is cautioning, however, when they highlight the point that “robust analytical strategies” must be used (23). The authors see the value for research in the development of comprehensive discographic and bibliographic references from their perspectives as ethnomusicologists. In a similar manner, the digital approach to this study attempts to chart the full range of Seán Ó Riada’s music related activities.

McCollum and Hebert’s text demonstrates how exploring, representing and enabling the discoverability of data are becoming ever-important central research activities.

### **3.4 Criticism**

When utilising methods inherited from hard sciences, it is inevitable that this type of research should be criticised for the epistemological challenges that they create. In particular, these challenges often demonstrate a lack of attention to broader aspects of qualitative research and soft science interpretations. In soft sciences, much of research is focused on interpreting the data itself as multi-faceted and emphasis is placed upon exploring the multiple possibilities of meaning that can be understood. On the other hand, quantitative analysis, through activity such as categorisation (especially when applied to music-related phenomena), narrows the potential scope of understanding about data, very often dividing and limiting interpretations.

Systems such as Alan Lomax’s Cantometrics outlined above demonstrate insightful ways to understand how we may learn from attempts to capture and systematise data. The processes involved in Cantometrics have been derided by a number of ethnomusicologists

for their over-elaborate classification method and an attendant focus on material culture.<sup>30</sup> Savage notes how, in the years after it was published, “the ethnomusicological community ultimately appeared neither to try it nor to like it” (2). On a more detailed level, Savage described some examples of the project’s shortcomings, “Lomax often did not make clear the difference between the data he had available and the data actually used in his analyses” (4). Furthermore, statistical analyses of his data were “highly complex, changed often and rarely were fully explained” (6). The overriding issue with such an elaborate project demonstrated that understanding the broad sets of data required even closer attention to detail in order to interpret Lomax’s findings. Such criticisms highlight the shaky ground upon which large systems are based in attempts to classify phenomena, which is in direct contrast to the interpretive thrust that is so commonly espoused by ethnomusicologists.

These arguments have reaffirmed calls for such caution from humanities scholars. They highlight that scholars should remember that in order to gain a greater understanding of the role of digital in humanities research and vice versa, greater care and understanding must be applied to data. It must be upheld that data is not neutral in the activities of asking specific questions, selecting data and creating frameworks for visualisation. As I have shown earlier, this qualitative worth is examined by the interrogation of digital processes and structures, through researchers being self-reflexive and mindful in their research practices. This is a theme that I will return to throughout this chapter.

At the beginning of this project I attempted to approach the research with a rigorous set of procedures from both ethnomusicology and digital humanities. Methodology in

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<sup>30</sup> For example, the instrument classification system utilised by Hornbostel and Sachs has also been criticised: Smith, Thérèse. "The Beautiful, the Broken-down and the Half-forgotten: Songs for Singers." Léacht Chomórtha an Riadaigh 17 - O Riada Memorial Lecture 17, 2007, University College Cork. Cork. Lecture.

ethnomusicology had the potential to inform digital humanities approaches, and conversely, some digital approaches were suitable for humanistic enquiry. My methodological quest became: how might I consider, select, structure and represent humanistic data in a meaningful way through digital humanities inquiry?

### **3.5 Methodological approach to the digital**

The two-pronged approach of this research became significant on a practical and theoretical level for both the disciplines of digital humanities and ethnomusicology, with each discipline holding potential to inform the other. By including digital exploration and ethnography through fieldwork, the digital process and interviewing are allowed to proceed independently of each other, where both methods of enquiry arrive at unique sets of findings, or indications.

The exploration with computer code and data during the production of a research tool is pertinent to this study. Full engagement with digital practices requires a deeper understanding of our agency with born-digital data.<sup>31</sup> In particular, I am responding here to the rhetoric of McCarty in his chapter *A Telescope for the Mind?* published in the seminal publication *Debates in the Digital Humanities* in 2014 (McCarthy). In this text, McCarty asks researchers to challenge “what we think we know” during our consideration of the digital tools with which we work. McCarty highlights how with practices borrowed from more explorative computing, the researcher can more fully engage with digital practices and more fully understand the idea of the computer’s value to the humanities. In essence, he asks us

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<sup>31</sup> Born digital resources have been defined by Ricky Erway as “items created and managed in digital form”. See Erway, R. (2010, November). *Defining Born Digital*. Retrieved from <http://www.oclc.org/content/dam/research/activities/hiddencollections/borndigital.pdf>

what is computing in the humanities for, and what are we for? McCarty writes about a pioneer of humanities computing that:

Summing up his experience and observations in research ... Fr Roberto Busa wrote with evident impatience (evinced the prevalence of the error) that the computer was not primarily a labour-saving device, to be used to free scholars from drudgery, but a means to illumine ignorance by provoking us to reconsider what we think we know. (McCarty 2012)

The approach to this research foregrounded Busa's call for illuminating ignorance. Instead of using digital tools just to represent data, a digital tool was created in order to understand what the data represented, and of equal importance, how the tool itself could be communicated. In particular, digital humanities theory is concerned with the approach to gathering, creating, using and interpreting data. This research therefore detailed the work of a digital humanist who designed and built a set of data structures, who involved the perceptions and processes of research in the humanities, and who narrates at the intersections of human agency with computing. In this chapter, I reveal how design practices produced biases and how subsequent interpretation affected phase two of the prototype that are later described in Chapter 6. I analyse the way in which I created datasets, the patterns which have emerged as a summation of this investigation, and the perceptions that have been developed in the subsequent narrative in order to understand the implications of the digital approach to research.

### 3.6 Background to the Seán Ó Riada Collection

The Seán Ó Riada Collection (or Bailiúchán Sheáin Uí Riada), are the papers from the Seán Ó Riada estate in Cúil Aodha, County Cork, Ireland. The collection was acquired by University College Cork in 2004 from the Ó Riada family who had preserved the documents at the family home since the death of Seán Ó Riada in 1971.<sup>32</sup> The material in the collection was transferred to UCC in over 53 boxes, which contain a sizeable quantity of various different types of documents, a book collection and a number of other items which belonged to Seán Ó Riada. A significant amount of material was assembled by the family into the collection prior to handover. These materials included copyrighted scores that were previously stored in the archives of the national broadcaster, Radio Teilifís Éireann.

The collection was archived between 2004 and 2006 by two professionally trained archivists. During this time period, a standard archiving practice of artificial order was imposed upon the collection, but file-type arrangements had been preserved. Access to the collection was made possible through the creation of a finding aid, both as hard and soft copy. The finding aid was structured in a thematic fashion. A number of different sections were generated as part of a digital and physical thematic collection by the archivist. The following themes were produced by the archivist: Ó Riada as composer; as public figure; his professional life; illness and death; his wife Ruth's papers; ephemera and film work.

The finding aid was created using the International Standard for Archival Description ISAD(G). ISAD(G) is a standard for archival description that allows archivists to accurately describe materials to be archived. It has been developed by the international archivist

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<sup>32</sup> See: "Sean Ó Riada Collection / Bailiúchán Sheáin Uí Riada - UCC Library." Page Redirection, 19 Aug. 2014, [booleweb.ucc.ie/index.php?pageID=289](http://booleweb.ucc.ie/index.php?pageID=289). Accessed 5 Apr. 2018.

community, and is applied by identifying, dating and describing documents. The online version of the finding aid for the SÓRC is available in an electronic, keyword searchable PDF format. This document became the starting point for my work with the collection contents.

### **3.7 Data exploration strategy**

A strategy was developed for understanding Seán Ó Riada's rise to prominence which was based on how visualisations of data could bring data together in meaningful ways. The literature review highlighted previous attempts that were made in order to list all of Seán Ó Riada's published material, and in later cases to fill gaps in areas of his career where projects had not been listed or published. One observation was that a more holistic view of the artist's career would aid in understanding the specific time periods of their creation. It was posited that the process of adding data would lead to serendipitous connections between datasets, unexpected patterns in data and the co-location of data points. A wireframe sketch (Fig. 3.2) was created that introduced the concept of a utopic interactive visualisation based on the information already known about the contents of the collection contents.



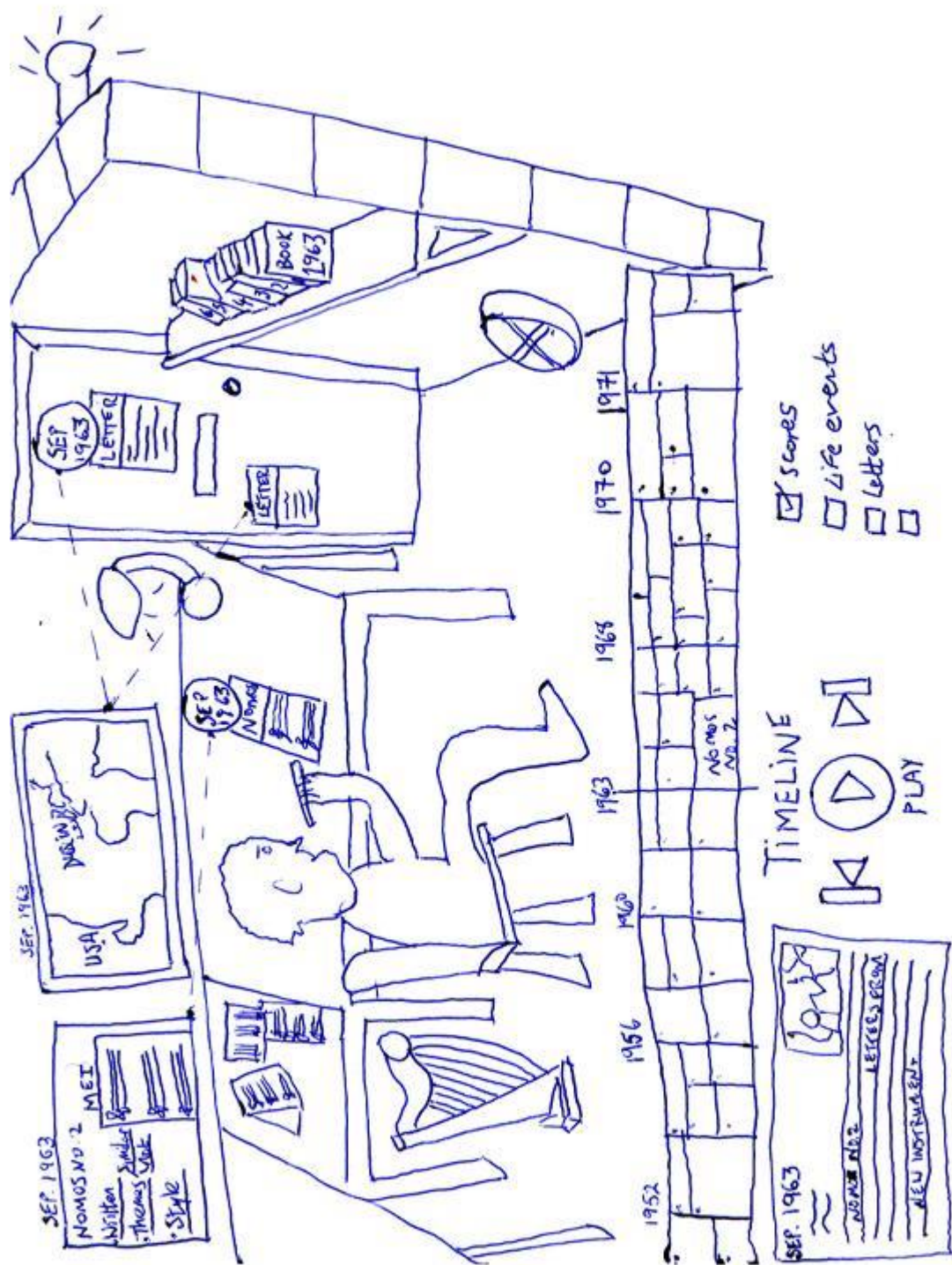


Fig. 3.2. Wireframe sketch of an interactive visualisation of the SORC

The initial wireframe demonstrated how data might arrive in this utopian situation, a digital visualisation of Seán Ó Riada's workshop. During simulation, letters would have been mapped and available to view as the visitor scrolls (plays) through a timeline at the bottom of the screen. Each data point on the timeline would have revealed a score that would also pinpoint the date of composition. Life events would be selected along this timeline, which would have then corresponded to the arrival of letters. The publication of books would signal dates where Seán Ó Riada would have had access to contemporary literature. Compositions might have related to the above documents and other possibilities could have been produced by the presence of data. To sum up, it became a vision of an ideal immersive environment which would reveal overlaps and precise records of events from evidence in the Collection's data.

### **3.8 Methods and materials**

To realise this wireframe sketch, a plan was devised to list data in MS Excel and experiment initially with CartoDB software.<sup>33</sup> To structure the timeline, life events, letters and book library, a Javascript library (D3.js) was utilised in order to provide the ability for data to be visualised in browsers in a customisable fashion.<sup>34</sup>

As a point of entry into the documents that were contained within the SÓRC, the finding aid became crucial in the search for music related projects within the collection. It

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<sup>33</sup> MS Excel, or Microsoft Excel, is a software programme included in the Microsoft Office suite of applications. It provides a semi-structured layout for data and also allows users to organise data in a variety of ways including filtering, sorting and data extraction. MS Excel was an attractive option for this project as data can also be saved in formats which are compatible with web development software, and in particular databases. Carto (formally CartoDB) is a cloud computing platform that provides Geographical Information Systems (GIS) and web mapping tools for display in a web browser. This software was attractive to this project, as it provided a number of tools which allowed data to be mapped within a relatively short period of time.

<sup>34</sup> For more about D3, see: [d3js.org/](http://d3js.org/)

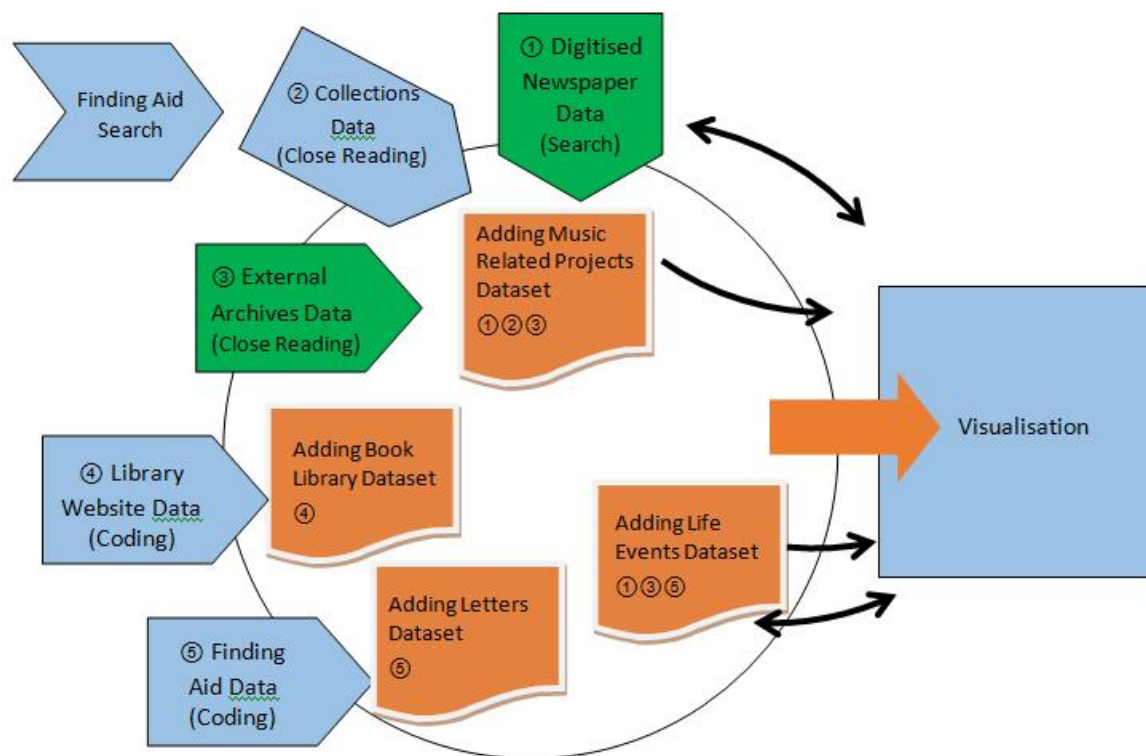
also served as a “digital collection” itself, as within its three hundred pages the metadata descriptions were sufficiently detailed and informative so that interaction could take place with the material found in the collection. The finding aid was then treated as a digital collection in its own right, as it contained valuable metadata which described most of the collection’s contents.<sup>35</sup>

### **3.9 Exploring the Collection - Phase 1**

As highlighted in Fig. 3.3, data collection was conducted using a number of disparate sources of evidence.

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<sup>35</sup> Finding aids are sometimes considered by scholars as digital collections. See: Kräutli, Florian. *Visualising Cultural Data - Exploring Digital Collections Through Timeline Visualisations*. 2016. Royal College of Art, London, PhD Dissertation. [researchonline.rca.ac.uk/1774/1/kra%CC%88utli\\_florian\\_thesis\\_phd\\_2016.pdf](https://researchonline.rca.ac.uk/1774/1/kra%CC%88utli_florian_thesis_phd_2016.pdf). Accessed 21 Apr. 2018. Kräutli defines the digital catalogue as a collection in its own right. Thanks to this rich metadata, the digital catalogue becomes more than just a list of things, it becomes a resource in its own right. It turns into a digital collection, which is not a mere reproduction of the ‘original’ analogue collection. Neither is it imperatively, by any standard, better or inferior to a physical archive, but a resource that can be used both in conjunction as well as independent from it.



**Fig. 3.3.** The process of data gathering, visualisation and dataset updating

The illustration above represents sources that fed into the creation of the resultant datasets. Sources that were consulted only once (or through one specific time period of archival visitations) are highlighted on the left-hand side in blue. Sources in green, however, were referred to on a continuous basis throughout data gathering. Each dataset constituted segments of other datasets as determined by the use of software or coding (see numbers 4 and 5). In other cases, however, the manual entry of data was the primary operation for creating the dataset (see numbers 1, 2 and 3).

### 3.9.1 Listing contents

Scholars such as the Force11 community recognise the important role of discoverability, accessibility, shareability and sustainability of data in order to make the

research process more effective (Force11). Working with digital tools and techniques, digital humanists place emphasis on these qualities, which in turn allows researchers to make more informed choices with tools for data and software development. The first task for this project in the digital phase was converting the finding aid PDF document from a human readable document into a dataset which could be read by machines and visualised. Microsoft Excel was used for this process. This software tool also provided a number of helpful utilities for sorting data. Excel also supports a number of formats including Comma Separated Values (CSV). This format is particularly attractive as it allows the developer to easily import data into a database, or to convert tabular data into other accessible formats, such as JSON or in an Application Programming Interface (API).<sup>36</sup>

A number of options for automating the conversion of the finding aid PDF were explored, as a number of online resources currently exist for the task. Despite the abundance of websites available for this work, in the end I decided to carry out this task manually for two reasons. Firstly, the use of these tools does not ensure that the resultant data file will have the exact copy of data from the original document. Secondly, and more importantly for this project, the physical act of copying each item of metadata allowed me to get to know both the methods involved with the archiving process, and the type of data which is present. As we shall see later on, this decision was crucial for the next steps in my research as archival practices had a major impact upon the visualisation of the letters within the SÓRC.

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<sup>36</sup>Application Programming Interface is a set of functions and procedures that allow the creation of applications which access the features or data of an operating system, application, or other service. JSON (JavaScript Object Notation) refers to a data interchange format that is programming language independent. In this instance it is an essential format which represents data in an API.

The following Fig. 3.4 shows how each item in the finding aid was copied into MS Excel, in a structure that closely resembles how CSV files are created and represented.



Each column in this file included descriptions in the finding aid. The item number, date of creation, number of items and description of the item were placed from left to right. Once each section of the finding aid had been successfully copied to a folder on my computer, a MS Excel “macro” (a set of programming instructions used to aid in manipulating data in MS Excel files) was used to combine each individual CSV into one unified CSV document.<sup>37</sup>

### **3.9.2 The Letters Dataset**

Once a CSV copy of the finding aid had been successfully created, it became clear from analysis of the CSV file that the bulk of materials relating to communications within the collection were taken up with letters with a small number of telegrams and a number of postcards. This observation was complemented with a deeper consideration of the relative value of these letters. It enabled reflections to be made on the potential value of information relating to letter senders, the subjects they were concerned with and the locations of correspondences. By assessing the usefulness of data in this way, digital methods enabled closer interpretation of the letter descriptions in the finding aid. As a result of this process, thoughts soon led to separating these items from the rest of the finding aid in order to understand their potential.

Finding aids usually provide structured information but sometimes can only be as helpful to a digital humanist as the accuracy and the way that data is entered by the archivist. Fortunately, the metadata descriptions which were originally provided by the

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<sup>37</sup> See Appendix A for code used to combine these CSV documents. CSV files were created with sections that mirrored the finding aid, I had also decided that this would allow me to create an EAD file for archivists to use. Work on the EAD file began in 2014, but was halted until the project was completed.



archivists in the finding aid proved to be standardised and consistent in both content and layout. In most cases, the letters contained three things: a date, a sender and an address. The potential for such knowledge representation and modelling was realised, as each letter could allow the researcher to discover patterns connected to place of sending and also the time of sending. A filter was chosen - data from the finding aid CSV was sorted by searches of the keywords: letter, postcard and telegram. The result of this filtering process culminated in a set of over 600 rows of metadata.

### **3.9.2.1 Senders**

The resultant set of letters bore descriptions and dates, but in order for mapping to occur, addresses and the information on senders needed to be extracted. Through the use of the keyword search, each instance of the word “from” was examined and noted that on the right-hand side of each instance of the word was a name and address of the sender. The consistent nature of this occurrence allowed another Excel formula to be written which extracted a number of characters from each letter description and placed the contents within the adjacent cells. In the vast majority of cases, this method worked. However, there were a number of letters which deviated from this consistency due to omissions of the word “from”. In these cases, entering the addresses manually was required.

### **3.9.2.2 Sender Addresses**

The metadata descriptions of the finding aid were rich in details. Considerations were made that these letters could have been mapped to help in further understanding the locations and interests of the senders. Despite the promise of this idea, when reading through the letters CSV file, it became evident that unlike the “sender” name information,

no keyword existed on the left-hand side of the address descriptions. Each address needed to be entered manually.

Throughout this process of manually inserting address fields, it was discovered that a large section of these entries included addresses written in the Irish language. In order to account for these occurrences and to stay truthful to the data, the English language version of each address was included in the main address column of MS Excel. This resulted in retention of the original Irish language version of the address in adjacent columns (Fig. 3.5).

| Copy of Full Num - Missing Num - Date From To - Mail Letters - DitrRange - Brackets - BirtPlaces - Guessed Places 2.xlsx - Microsoft Excel non-commercial use |                                     |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |
|---|-------------------------------------|---|---|---|---|---|--|--|--|
| p74   |                                     |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |
|   | K                                   | L | M | N                                       | O   | P |  |  |  |
| 53  | Gerard Gillen                       |   |   | Department of Music, University College | University College Dublin                       |   |  |  |  |
| 54  |                                     |   |   |   | Armagh  |   |  |  |  |
| 55  |                                     |   |   | Irish Export Board                      | Ballsbridge, Dublin 4                           |   |  |  |  |
| 56  | Arthur G. Moynihan                  |   |   |   | 18 Altamont Park, Kilkenny                      |   |  |  |  |
| 57  | George Vaughan                      |   |   | Inishowen Adult Education School        | Carronagh, Co. Donegal                          |   |  |  |  |
| 58  | Brendan Flanagan                    |   |   | county council offices                  | McDermott Street, Ballina, Co. Mayo             |   |  |  |  |
| 59  | Seán Mac Éil Éa                     |   |   | The Communications Centre               | 236 Great Clowes Street, Ballford 7, Lancashire |   |  |  |  |
| 60  | Noel McCloskey                      |   |   | Comhóidil Náisiunta na Gaeilge          | Limerick  |   |  |  |  |
| 61  | Marion Seelie                       |   |   | Common Market Study Group               | Dublin  |   |  |  |  |
| 62  | Dr. Ruth Kidson                     |   |   |   | Dublin  |   |  |  |  |
| 63  | Nóra Ní Dhomhnaill                  |   |   | Market Defence Campaign                 | 26 Carlton Close, Luton, Beds, England          |   |  |  |  |
| 64  | E.F. Anstey [Anstey]                |   |   | An Oumam Ceoil                          | 24 Belgrave Road, Dublin 6                      |   |  |  |  |
| 65  | the Common Market 32                |   |   | University College Dublin               | 63 Clonsilla Road, Blanchardstown, Dublin       |   |  |  |  |
| 66  | Cúdagh Ó Riogán                     |   |   | "Liffey House"                          | Delaware, Illinois                              |   |  |  |  |
| 67  | Mary B. Darcy                       |   |   |   | 3 Union Quay, Cork                              |   |  |  |  |
| 68  | Ann Willis                          |   |   |   | 24 Belgrave Road, Dublin 6                      |   |  |  |  |
| 69  | The Common Market Defence Campaign  |   |   |   | Ballia, Co. Mayo                                |   |  |  |  |
| 70  | Dr. W. Joseph Maguire               |   |   |   | National University of Ireland, Galway          |   |  |  |  |
| 71  | An tAchar Fiontán Ó Murchú          |   |   |   | Earlsfort Terrace, Dublin 2                     |   |  |  |  |
| 72  | Brendan Ó Buschalla                 |   |   |   | 6 Steele's Road, Hampstead, London, NW 3        |   |  |  |  |
| 73  | John D. Cully                       |   |   |   | Newbridge, Co. Kildare                          |   |  |  |  |
| 74  | D. [Craddock]                       |   |   |   | Rochestown, Co. Cork                            |   |  |  |  |
| 75  | Br. Maíneadh Mac Saighéir           |   |   |   | Cappoquin, Co. Waterford                        |   |  |  |  |
| 76  | An tAchar Binscam                   |   |   |   | Highpoint Park, Dunleavy, Co. Dublin            |   |  |  |  |
| 77  | Draíon Breatnach                    |   |   |   | 8 Dundrin, Connaught Avenue, Corcaigh           |   |  |  |  |
| 78  | Seán Mac Carthaigh                  |   |   |   | Belfast   |   |  |  |  |
| 79  | Aine Morton                         |   |   |   | 32 Richmond Grove, Monkstown, Dublin            |   |  |  |  |
| 80  | the Irish-Soviet Friendship Society |   |   |   | Irish House, 31 Stephen's Green, Dublin         |   |  |  |  |
| 81  |                                     |   |   |   | 7 St. Mary's Road, Ballsbridge, Dublin 4        |   |  |  |  |
| 82  | Mike Emmerson, Michael Whewell      |   |   |   | New York  |   |  |  |  |
| 83  | Maurice Hurley                      |   |   |   | 22 Belgrave Road, Dublin 6                      |   |  |  |  |
| 84  | Máire Cruise O'Brien                |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |
| 85  | Roy Johnston                        |   |   |   |   |   |  |  |  |

Fig. 3.5. Letters dataset (CSV file) highlighting Irish and English language versions of addresses from SÓRC finding aid

### 3.9.2.3 Letter dates

Another issue encountered during the process of building the Letters Dataset was the ambiguity produced by dates as a result of the archiving process. An example of this ambiguity from the finding aid in item number 516, where description of the date of creation for this item was estimated within a number of years: “c. 1955 – c. 1961 [or later]”.

Archival description is limited by the available detail provided by archivists, as a result of time and knowledge acquisition constraints in the archiving process and standards that are used for description. The international archiving standard ISAD(G) has been outlined with a distinct set of rules for date conventions which make it easier for archivists to describe ambiguities in the date conventions for a) accumulation in “the transaction of business or the conduct of affairs” or b) the date that the document was created.<sup>38</sup> When attempting to reconcile these date conventions for use in a dataset, however, a number of problems were encountered. As shown by Table 3.1, twenty-six archivist metadata descriptions used by archivists needed reconciling before they could be rendered machine-readable.

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<sup>38</sup> See: ISAD(G): General International Standard Archival Description. Ottawa, 2000.  
[www.ica.org/sites/default/files/CBPS\\_2000\\_Guidelines\\_ISAD%28G%29\\_Second-edition\\_EN.pdf](http://www.ica.org/sites/default/files/CBPS_2000_Guidelines_ISAD%28G%29_Second-edition_EN.pdf).

| Number | Description                        | Example Workaround                   |
|--------|------------------------------------|--------------------------------------|
| 1      | undated                            | omitted                              |
| 2      | c. 17 August 1971                  | Finish: 17/08/ 1971                  |
| 3      | c. January 1964                    | Finish: 01/01/1964                   |
| 4      | March 1968                         | Start: 01/03/1968 Finish: 31/03/1968 |
| 5      | 9 April 1965 – 9 May 1968          | Start: 09/05/1968 Finish: 09/05/1968 |
| 6      | c. 1969                            | Start: 01/01/1969 Finish: 31/12/1969 |
| 7      | [1969]                             | Start: 01/01/1969 Finish: 31/12/1969 |
| 8      | February 1955                      | Start: 01/02/1955 Finish: 31/02/1955 |
| 9      | 9 – 10 March 1955                  | Start: 09/03/1955 Finish: 10/03/1955 |
| 10     | [March] 1955                       | Start: 01/03/1955 Finish: 31/03/1955 |
| 11     | 1955                               | Start: 01/01/1955 Finish: 31/12/1955 |
| 12     | 30 <sup>th</sup> August 1962       | Finish: 30/08/1962                   |
| 13     | 8 March -19th Sept 1968            | Start: 08/03/1968 Finish: 19/09/1968 |
| 14     | September 1961 – 1972              | Start: 01/09/1961 Finish: 31/12/1972 |
| 15     | Christmas 1976                     | Finish: 25/12/1976                   |
| 16     | 1947 – c. 1960s                    | Start: 01/01/1947 Finish: 31/12/1969 |
| 17     | 1961 - 1965                        | Start: 01/01/1961 Finish: 31/12/1965 |
| 18     | 26 March – 14 May 1965             | Start: 26/03/1965 Finish: 14/05/1965 |
| 19     | [1960] – 29 March 1962             | Start: 01/01/1960 Finish: 29/03/1962 |
| 20     | c. 1955 – c. 1961 [or later]       | Start: 01/01/1965 Finish: 31/12/1961 |
| 21     | 12-20 June 1970                    | Start: 12/06/1970 Finish: 20/06/1970 |
| 22     | 1954 – 19 January 1971             | Start: 01/01/1954 Finish: 19/01/1971 |
| 23     | Summer 1960 – 6 December 1973      | Start: 01/06/1960 Finish: 06/12/1973 |
| 24     | [October 1971]                     | Start: 01/01/1971 Finish: 31/10/1971 |
| 25     | September 1972 – 29 September 1974 | Start: 01/09/1972 Finish: 29/09/1974 |
| 26     | 19 August [1962]                   | Finish: 19/08/1962                   |

**Table 3.1.** Date descriptions used with the SÓRC finding aid with workarounds, listed in order of occurrence

Table 3.1 above demonstrates the ambiguity encountered during the process of converting the finding aid data into a dataset. The right-hand side column highlights the best-fit approach for approximating dates, based not on accuracy, but the ability to represent each letter on a timeline.

### 3.9.2.4 Linked Open Data

At this point in the study it became possible to test the Letters Dataset to see what it might reveal when visualised. During the first year of the project, I had the opportunity to learn digital humanities techniques for visualization. In March 2015, I attended a visualisation workshop at Queen's University Belfast entitled "Data Visualization".<sup>39</sup> During this event, I acquired some much-needed skills on querying online datasets which store Linked Open Data. Building upon this experience, an attempt was made to use the addresses gathered from the finding aid to plot a geographic map of letters in the collection. This attempt highlighted the inaccuracies and problems that are inherent in the data retrieval process, as when querying the Placenames Database of Ireland's database, it was not possible to match some Irish language addresses from the Letters Dataset.<sup>40</sup>

The result of this process proved unfruitful to some degree due to the lack of accurate description of place names within the Placenames Database<sup>41</sup>. This issue resulted

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<sup>39</sup> The workshop entitled "Data Visualization for the Arts and Humanities" covered topics like working with archival data through technologies such as Linked Open Data (LOD).

<sup>40</sup> See: "Project Information." *Logainm.ie*, [www.logainm.ie/en/inf/proj-about](http://www.logainm.ie/en/inf/proj-about). Accessed 21 Apr. 2018. As described on this website: "The Placenames Database of Ireland was created by Fiontar & Scoil na Gaeilge in collaboration with The Placenames Branch (Department of Culture, Heritage and the Gaeltacht). This is a comprehensive management system for data, archival records and placenames research conducted by the State. It is a public resource for Irish people at home and abroad, and for all those who appreciate the rich heritage of Irish placenames."

<sup>41</sup> For more information on this process, see Appendix A

in the use of Google Maps instead, where English language addresses were read from Google's API.

### **3.9.2.5 Testing the letters dataset**

By using off the shelf software such as Carto DB it was relatively easy to upload the Letters Dataset and customise the display of the items across varying geographical locations and different time periods during the initial stages of this project. Carto DB was created by a company called Vizzuality, who provided Geographic Information System (GIS) and web mapping tools to plot locations of letters on world maps on a free basis for end users and organisations.<sup>42</sup> Since 2015, the software has been renamed to Carto. Carto has now become less accessible as it became a commercial product and its website address has also been modified to reflect this. Due to these changes it became more difficult to rely on this resource, which indicated that the future integration of this software with the Seán Ó Riada Collection visualisation would be unpredictable.

The aim with using Carto for this project was to explore the potential for visualising the letters over time and geographic location. Testing with this software allowed locations to be mapped easily for the addresses of letters and how they were spatially clustered. This revealed insight into the places where letters from the collection were sent from and the locations where they arrived. This exploration was pursued in an improvisatory nature in order to experiment and attempt to discover new understandings regarding the data from the finding aid.

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<sup>42</sup> CARTO. "CARTO - Location Intelligence Software." Location Intelligence Software. CARTO, Vizzuality, [carto.com/](https://carto.com/).

The results of mapping revealed some important insights about the letter data. As expected, the majority of letters received were from the cities where Seán Ó Riada lived and worked, such as Dublin and Cork. The following Fig. 3.6 shows a map revealing the clusters of letters received in these locations.

Fig. 3.6 demonstrates where letters were sent from, with the majority of correspondence with the Ó Riada family coming from the cities where they lived. Another experiment that focused on mapping the letters over time was achieved using a torque map (Letters Finish). In a torque map, data is animated directly on an interactive map, as it grows, moves or changes. In this experiment, a noticeable growth occurred in the number of letters received by Seán Ó Riada, particularly in the year 1968. In early 1971, Seán Ó Riada's wife Ruth and communications between other senders were revealed. There were also noticeable absences of letters before 1955 and during the year 1958. A number of reasons might be posited for this absence. A closer inspection of the descriptions of some letters revealed clusters of letters relating to personal matters between John Reidy and his wife Ruth, both during the year 1955 and in 1957. It is possible that other letters were not preserved by the family at this time. Another reason for the lack of letters might relate to the fact that the family moved to a new house a number of times between 1953 and 1958 during the period of time that they lived in Dublin.





**Fig. 3.6.** Distribution of letters from the first visual exploration of the SÓRC contents, centred on Ireland and excluding the international entries.

The finding aid letters also show converting a finding aid and visualising its contents facilitated different insights into the collection. Working with the letter data facilitating deeper insight into the various ways in which metadata was created by the SÓRC archivist. As shown above, it also provided an alternative narrative detailing the extent of Ó Riada's communications as represented by the collection. Some indications arose through the examination of the letter data that suggested that letters from specific periods in time were absent.

Despite the ability of digital tools to provide a nuanced way of viewing a collection's contents, when attempting to utilise and assess archivists' data, problems emerged in the process of visualisation. These issues introduce challenges for digital research, for example it was not possible to edit the algorithm for calculating dates with the Carto DB software. As a result, the inability to customise off the shelf software demonstrates the type of problems that emerge where there are specific research aims and objectives. This shows that more flexible, complex ways to customise software must be in place in order to facilitate the adequate interpretation of data.

### 3.9.8 The Ó Riada Scores Dataset

The building of a Letters Dataset and conversion of the finding aid was carried out from October 2014 until January 2016 when phase two of the prototype coding began. Meanwhile, at the start of November 2014, visits were made to the Boole library at UCC in order to locate and document the range of music which was held within the SÓRC. These visits became crucial to the building of a comprehensive dataset of Seán Ó Riada's musical activities, or "creative outputs" as they became known during discussions with supervisors.

During each visit to the Collection, data was gathered on Seán Ó Riada's projects. As an ethnomusicologist, prior experience in music studies enabled me to evaluate each item that was discovered. Important information was identified as the search progressed. During this search, Microsoft Excel was used to structure this data, as it became encoded in a human and machine-readable format. Detailed descriptive data was being added to each item in the Collection order to comprehensively account for each individual music related document. The final document included a description of this process, which explained how the search was conducted, and read as follows.

The following were documented in conjunction with the Finding Aid on the Seán Ó Riada special collection, to gather an overview on all scores [music] that exist at UCC.

An online version of the Finding Aid is located at

<https://booleweb.ucc.ie/documents/O%20Riada.pdf> - Apart from working through

headings of sections of Ó Riada's professional works, I used the following relevant search terms within the PDF to source any documents that might relate to manuscripts/score material: "score", "sheet", "suite" and "arrangement",

"manuscript", "autograph". (Patrick Egan)

This process culminated in a dataset that was later entitled the *Ó Riada Scores*. During the compilation of this listing, it was also noted where each score was stamped with the copyright of Radio Éireann. By recording this stamp information, the approximate date between creation of each document and performance was estimated. In other cases, however, there were a number of scores that had no copyright stamp, and no date was recorded. The titles of these scores were also ambiguous. For example, one was named *Irish Concert 4* or *Unsuspecting Heart*.<sup>43</sup> This made the process of cataloguing and dating music related projects more difficult.

Although many music related projects in the Collection were undated, upon viewing the vast majority of material bore evidence of the time period of their creation. This occurred in most cases where documents had been signed and dated in Seán Ó Riada's own handwriting, or where scores had been copyright stamped by Radio Éireann. From these identifiers of time, approximate dates were attributed to projects which were not already identified on each document.

The wide range of literature outlined in Chapter 2 also allowed new insights to emerge on most of Seán Ó Riada's published projects and revealing insightful evidence concerning dates of composition. For example, one text in particular, *Seán Ó Riada – A Shaoil agus a Shaothar* by Tomás Ó Canainn and Geróid Mac an Bhua, contains a largely accurate a discography which listed the year of publication of a large range of Seán Ó Riada's published works.

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<sup>43</sup> See *Ó Riada Scores Dataset* in Appendix B. In particular, BL/PP/OR/512

By using the *Ó Riada Scores Dataset* with evidence from scholarly text, it became possible to start updating and adding new information to the growing list of Seán Ó Riada's projects on a continual basis. The advantages of digital representation of Seán Ó Riada's discography soon became clear. Digital representation enabled a more comprehensive, detailed and accurate listing of music related projects, surpassing attempts that were made by scholars in previous publications.

### **3.9.9 The Projects dataset**

By May 2015 the *Ó Riada Scores Dataset*, in CSV format, had been compiled in full. The search had exhausted all known avenues of keyword search from the finding aid. The dataset constituted a comprehensive account of the music related projects within the SÓRC. This facilitated insight into the status of project that were either internal or external to the Collection. With this dataset, another important observation was possible. The material which was not published within the SÓRC was ready to be identified. A column was added to the Projects Dataset entitled "Published?" which allowed me to capture details on whether projects had been broadcast, printed or shared with an audience in any way. Each project was also colour coded in order to highlight citations, as shown in Fig. 3.7 and Fig. 3.8 below.

| Date Start | Date Finish | Work   | Description  | Movements | Length | Company | Commissioned By |
|------------|-------------|--|--|-----------|--------|---------|-----------------|
|            |             | 1953 Eight Short Preludes  |  |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | 1953 Setting for four poems by Ezra Pound "Lustra" (opus 1)  |  |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | 1954 Suite for unaccompanied violin (opus 3)   |  |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | 1954 Prelude and Fugue for Harpsichord (Opus 4) (BBC)  |  |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | Jul-54 Sonata for Pianoforte, 9 short preludes for pianoforte (Opus 5) (Radio diffusion Francaise)   |  |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | 1954 Songs for Voice and Piano   |  |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | 1954 Trí Dhán le Tomas Kinsella (Night Song 1, Night Song 2, Clí Soprano Voice and Piano   |  |           | 6.00   |         |                 |
|            |             | 1955 Four songs for Baritone and Piano (opus 6) "Oh Mistress Mine" – Shakespeare, "D'une Prison" – Verlaine, "Atthis" – Pound, Song without words. |  |           |        | RTE     |                 |
|            |             | Symphony no 1 (opus 7) "L'homme Armé"  |  |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | Suite "Thomas Moore" (Opus 9)  |  |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | Divertimento for wind quartet, voice and side drum (Opus 10)   |  |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | Jun-55 Kate of Gamavilla   | SATB & piano (voice quartet)   |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | Jun-55 The Woods of Kyllin   | Tenor Solo with SATB and Piano   |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | Jun-55 The King's Cave (Graves, Stanford)  | Baritone solo, SATB, + piano   |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | Jul-55 Cnocáinín Aerach Cill Muire   | Baritone Solo with Mixed Choir   |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | Jul-55 The Shaskeen Reel   |  |           |        |         |                 |
| Apr-55     |             | Sep-55 Slán le Maighie   | N/91A. Arranged for small orchestra by John Reidy, April 1955 (No. 2 in the suite "Three |           | 2.30   |         |                 |
|            |             | Aug-55 An Garraighceac Malluighe   | Baritone and Mezzo-Soprano Soli with Mixed Choir   |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | Aug-55 Ag Taisteal na Sliabh   | Baritone solo with piano accompaniment, arr. John Reidy Aug '55                          |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | Aug-55 Cois Abha Móire (Blackwater Side)   | Mixed choir and piano  |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | Aug-55 The Banks of Sullawn  | Mixed Choir  |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | Aug-55 Bios-sa lá i bPortlárge   | Baritone solo with mixed choir + piano   |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | Aug-55 Maidin Luain Gíngise  | Bass or Baritone Solo with Choir   |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | Aug-55 The Lovely Sweet banks of the Bride   | arr. John Reidy Aug '55  |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | Aug-55 Caiseal Muman   |  |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | Feb-55 The Trip to Gougane   | Baritone solo with Men's Choir and Accordeon   |           |        |         |                 |
|            |             | Sep-55 A Drúinnillín Deasac  | Baritone solo with mixed choir   |           |        |         |                 |

Fig. 3.7. Early version of project listing, later known as "The Projects Dataset"

| Type of Project           | Project Date Start | Project Date Finish | Published? | Recording?        | al Col | Title of Project   |
|---------------------------|--------------------|---------------------|------------|-------------------|--------|--|
| Conducting                |                    | 1945                |            |                   |        | Conducting a Limerick Orchestra (14 years old)                                   |
| Writing                   |                    | 1950                |            |                   |        | Auditor - Literary and Philosophical Society                                     |
| Orchestra                 | 1948               | 1952                |            |                   |        | Cork Symphony Orchestra  |
| Performance               |                    | 03/02/1952          |            |                   |        | Gala Concert at Opera House, Cork  |
| Performance               |                    | 1952                |            |                   |        | Winner of the Pigott and Egan Cups   |
| Composition               |                    | 1952                |            |                   |        | Schumann composition   |
| Radio Programme           | 1952               | 1953                |            |                   |        | Handel's Visit to Ireland  |
| Preludes                  |                    | 1953                |            |                   |        | Eight Short Preludes   |
| Settings for Poems        |                    | 1953                |            |                   |        | Setting for four poems by Ezra Pound "Lustra" (opus 1)                           |
| Sonata, 9 Preludes        |                    | Jul-54              |            |                   |        | Sonata for Pianoforte, 9 short preludes for pianoforte (Opus 5) (Radio diffusion |
| Suite for Violin          |                    | 1954                |            |                   |        | Suite for unaccompanied violin (opus 3)  |
| Prelude and Fugue         |                    | 1954                |            |                   |        | Prelude and Fugue for Harpsichord (Opus 4) (BBC)                                 |
|                           | performed:         | 08/10/1954          |            |                   |        | Solistes Oeuvres Pour Piano  |
| Songs for Voice and Piano |                    | 1954                |            |                   |        | Songs for Voice and Piano (Night Songs 1,2 & Classical)                          |
| Irish Language Poems      |                    |                     |            |                   |        |  |
| Set to Voice & Piano      |                    | 1954                | Woodtown   | CMC Sound Archive |        | Trí Dhán le Tomas Kinsella (Night Song 1, Night Song 2, Clí Soprano Voice and    |

Fig. 3.8. Early version of project listing, later known as "The Projects Dataset"

In the summer of 2015, a search of historical Irish newspaper archives was undertaken in order to find performances of works found within the Collection and mentioned in the literature. In order to contextualise the creation of music projects in the SÓRC, it also became necessary to document their performance. Each source was cited as newspaper articles were discovered and as notes from the literature were recorded.

It became clear during the development of these datasets that accurate contextual information would be key to understanding the Collection. After each update, it became increasingly obvious that some of the information collected from the literature was not as

accurate as data from the SÓRC. For example, as explained earlier, dates which were collected from *A Shaol agus a Shaothar*, whilst corroborating other sources regarding the composition of scores, provided only a rough indication of the actual dates of composition.<sup>44</sup> As the exploration of digitised newspaper archives and archival visits progressed, dates of performance provided specific information on when projects were produced. Dates from the literature then became replaced with more precise, informative data that related specifically to the performances of projects. The use of alternative sources of information began to aid in making historical records more accurate. This resulted in revealing new and specific evidence that challenged long-held ideas relating to the creation of projects during Seán Ó Riada's career (Fig. 3.9).

|    | A                  | B                  | C                   | D             | E         | F                 | G                      | H   |
|----|--------------------|--------------------|---------------------|---------------|-----------|-------------------|------------------------|---|
|    | Type of Project    | Project Date Start | Project Date Finish | Accurate Date | Published | Recording         | In Special Collection? | Title of Project  |
| 1  | Conducting         | 01/01/1945         | 31/12/1945          | No            |           |                   |                        | Conducting a Limerick Orchestra (14 years old)                  |
| 2  | Writing            | 01/01/1950         | 31/12/1950          | No            |           |                   |                        | Auditor - Literary and Philosophical Society Centenary Ina      |
| 3  | Orchestra          | 01/01/1948         | 31/12/1952          | No            |           |                   |                        | Cork Symphony Orchestra   |
| 4  | Performance        |                    | 2/3/1952            | No            |           |                   |                        | Gala Concert at Opera House, Cork The Cute Kidd                 |
| 5  | Performance        | 01/01/1952         | 31/12/1952          | No            |           |                   |                        | Winner of the Pigott and Egan Cups                              |
| 6  | Composition        | 01/01/1952         | 31/12/1952          | No            |           |                   |                        | Schumann composition Scored a schu                              |
| 7  | Radio Programme    | 01/01/1952         | 31/12/1953          | No            |           |                   |                        | Handel's Visit to Ireland Series of scrip                       |
| 8  | Preludes           | 01/01/1953         | 31/12/1953          | No            |           |                   |                        | Eight Short Preludes  |
| 9  | Settings for Poems | 01/01/1953         | 31/12/1953          | No            |           |                   |                        | Setting for four poems by Ezra Pound "Lustra" (opus 1)          |
| 10 | Sonata, 9 Preludes | 01/07/1954         | Jul-54              |               |           |                   |                        | Sonata for Pianoforte, 9 short preludes for pianoforte (Opus 5) |
| 11 | Suite for Violin   | 01/01/1954         | 31/12/1954          | No            |           |                   |                        | Suite for unaccompanied violin (opus 3)                         |
| 12 | Prelude and Fugue  | 01/01/1954         | 31/12/1954          | No            |           |                   |                        | Prelude and Fugue for Harpsichord (Opus 4) (BBC)                |
| 13 | Composition        |                    | 10/8/1954           |               |           |                   |                        | Solistes Oeuvres Pour Piano Played "Sonati                      |
| 14 | Composition        | 01/01/1954         | 31/12/1954          | No            |           |                   |                        | Songs for Voice and Piano (Night Songs 1,2 & Classical)         |
| 15 | Arrangement        | 01/01/1954         | 31/12/1954          | No            | Woodtown  | CMC Sound Archive |                        | Trí Dhan le Tomas Kinsella (Night Song 1, Night Soprano Voice)  |
| 16 | Composition        | 01/01/1955         | 31/12/1955          | No            |           |                   |                        | Four songs for Baritone and Piano (opus 6) "Oh Mistress Mine    |
| 17 | Composition        | 01/01/1955         | 31/12/1955          | No            |           |                   |                        | Symphony no 1 (opus 7) "L'homme Armé"                           |
| 18 | Arrangement        | 01/01/1955         | 31/12/1955          | No            |           |                   |                        | Suite "Thomas Moore" (Opus 9)                                   |
| 19 | Composition        | 01/01/1955         | 31/12/1955          | No            |           |                   |                        | Divertimento for wind quartet, voice and side drum (Opus 10)    |
| 20 | Arrangement        |                    | Jun-55              |               |           |                   | Yes                    | Kate of Garnavilla SATB & piano                                 |
| 21 | Arrangement        |                    | Jun-55              |               |           |                   | Yes                    | The Woods of Killynoe Tenor Solo wit                            |
| 22 | Arrangement        |                    | Jun-55              |               |           |                   | Yes                    | The King's Cave (Graves, Stanford) Baritone solo,               |
| 23 | Arrangement        |                    | Jul-55              |               |           |                   | Yes                    | *Cnocáinín Aerach Cill Muires Baritone Solo                     |
| 24 | Arrangement        |                    | Jul-55              |               |           |                   | Yes                    | The Shaskeen Reel   |
| 25 | Play               |                    | Jul-55              |               |           |                   |                        | Blood is thicker than water conductor                           |
| 26 | Arrangement        | Apr-55             | Sep-55              |               |           | CMC Sound Archi   | Yes                    | *Slán le Maighe N/91A. Arrang                                   |
| 27 | Arrangement        |                    | Aug-55              |               |           |                   | Yes                    | The Trip to Gougane Baritone solo                               |

**Fig. 3.9.** Projects Dataset showing “Type of Project”, “Accurate Date?” and “In Special Collection?” fields

As the Projects Dataset grew, the complexities multiplied. Building the dataset enabled the separation of each project by genre as each project was tagged using a field entitled “Type

<sup>44</sup> Ó, Canainn T, and An B. G. Mac. Seán Ó Riada: A Shaol Agus a Shaothar. Garton, 1993.

of Project”. By introducing this categorising field, however, my own interpretation was being placed upon these projects in lieu of conclusive evidence. Issues began to emerge as a result of this process, where some projects belonged to more than one category. For example, I initially categorised the project *Spalpín a Rún* as a play. Further evidence from the literature at a later date indicated that this play was also written by Seán Ó Riada. In order to counteract this issue, a field entitled “Extra Role” was added.

The development of the Projects Dataset facilitated three important developments, 1) a deeper insight into the period in time when projects were carried out and Seán Ó Riada’s varied roles during their creation, 2) a more nuanced perspective about the complexity and limitations of metadata descriptions and 3) that metadata descriptions influenced the design of the dataset itself.

Developing the Projects Dataset also indicated that a large number of arrangements existed in particular during the year 1955. The presence of a number of these arrangements overlapping caused me to reconsider some aspects of the dataset’s temporal dimensions. In order to more fully comprehend the nature of the dates of these entries, overlaps needed to be represented more accurately in the project visualisation.<sup>45</sup>

### **3.9.10 Engaging with SQL and API**

As outlined in Fig. 3.2, discovery in the digital visualisation framework was envisioned through the serendipitous discovery of patterns between all datasets. In order to

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<sup>45</sup> Work was also carried out on creating a dataset of all of Seán Ó Riada’s books, which are located in another section of UCC special collections. A full list of 752 books were located on the UCC library website, and imported into a list using MS Excel. The listing also contains notes on some of these books, their year of publication and genre. Due to time and resource constraints for this project, the books dataset was not included in the final version of the digital visualisation framework.

achieve the linking of data, information technology developers engage with relational databases using a programming language called Structured Query Language (SQL). My experience and expertise in web development and relational database design provided me with the impetus to restructure these datasets into database tables for a number of reasons, in order to set up a customised framework for facilitating interactive visualisation.

It is important to acknowledge that in this project it was possible to utilise the format of the existing datasets in order to visualise data. As shown in this chapter, during the process of building datasets, Comma Separated Values (CSV) files had been used to structure data. Kräutli highlights the advantage of using CSV files over database files, as they allow developers to both see and work with the complete contents of datasets when developing visualisations (145). In contrast to this, the use of database technologies sometimes only provides a subset of all data that can be available to the developer. Despite the advantage of using CSV files, in this project databases were considered helpful for processing data and as only two datasets were being queried at one time, it was possible to retrieve all records without excluding other data.

There were some advantages related to utilising relational database structures in this project. It allowed the *Ó Riada Scores Dataset* to be linked with the Projects Dataset in order to more adequately facilitate visualisation and viewing of scores. The *Ó Riada Scores Dataset* contained detailed information about each project that was discovered within items that were numbered in the Collection finding aid. It was therefore considered advantageous to link projects from within the Projects Dataset with their corresponding item numbers the *Ó Riada Scores Dataset*, to more easily relate database records with associated images. As a result of this linking, it was envisioned that if digitised images became available, they could



automatically link to records and for viewing selections within the digital visualisation framework.

A number of other advantages of using a database became helpful with regard to workflow. Database structuring allowed SQL code to be written which would separate data that was usable from data that was redundant before it was processed at the visualisation stage. For example, data that had no date in the Projects Dataset was removed early on before being visualised. In order to select projects that were not dated, the value of NULL was queried:

```
SELECT TitleOfProject, DescriptionOfProject FROM projectsdataset WHERE (DateStart  
IS NULL) AND (DateFinish IS NULL) ORDER BY TitleOfProject
```

The result of this query demonstrated that dates that were recorded as unknown in the finding aid by archivist descriptions were removed from the database selection using SQL code. Those projects that had unknown dates were then placed in a section beneath the timeline for undated projects.

Another advantage of using a database to structure data was that relational database software is sometimes accompanied by an interface. A number of features were available as I used a PhpMyAdmin interface (an interactive interface for manipulating an SQL database). This enabled me to work with the database when updating, adding and sorting projects, with the benefit that it was also familiar to me as an information technology developer.

This process began by importing data into a MySQL database. Next, a service was created in order to make the data available through an API.<sup>46</sup> This allowed data to be accessed in the JSON format, a flexible and popular Javascript language which may be accessed by a number of different software frameworks and programmes.<sup>47</sup>

By using a relational database and converting data into Javascript format, data was prepared before being visualised. This laid the foundation for the iterative model, a process of manipulating data and design.

### **3.10 The iterative model**

Exploration of the process of building the digital visualisation framework enabled a constant evaluation of visualisations to occur during the data gathering phase. A reflection on each change of this design was carried out with supervisor guidance and peer group testing. As outlined in Fig. 3.2, development was employed through the use of sketches in the spirit of the process of informal wireframing, a process common within the web development industry. The realisation of the initial wireframing was then attempted through dataset and database development. By interacting with algorithms and reflecting on the results of data visualisation, the second phase of research included a more data-driven approach to the design of the digital visualisation framework. As a result, this phase of the design changed direction a number of times as the data was produced

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<sup>46</sup> MySQL (My Structured Query Language) is a freely available open source Relational Database Management System (RDBMS) that uses Structured Query Language (SQL).

Application Programming Interface (API) is a set of functions and procedures that allow the creation of applications which access the features or data of an operating system, application, or other service.

<sup>47</sup> JSON (JavaScript Object Notation) is a lightweight data-interchange format. For this project, JSON makes it easier read and write. It is also easy for machines to parse and generate.

### 3.10.1 Development with D3

In January 2016, a number of datasets were now restructured as tables in a MySQL database. Tables were listed as Projects Dataset, Scores, Events, Letters and Books. A number of scripts were written in the programming languages, PHP and Javascript.<sup>48</sup> This then allowed me to turn the database tables into an API service.<sup>49</sup> I was finally in a position to combine all data into a digital visualisation framework.

Building a digital visualisation framework for these datasets presented a number of options for exploration. I decided to employ web technologies for a number of reasons. Firstly, being trained in the use of PHP, MySQL, Javascript and HTML, I was already familiar with the possibilities that these programming languages afforded. I decided that the datasets outlined above could be recombined using a visualisation which is built on the nascent JavaScript library D3 JS.

The official website for D3 states that:

D3.js is a JavaScript library for manipulating documents based on data. It helps you bring data to life using HTML, SVG, and CSS. D3's emphasis on web standards gives you the full capabilities of modern browsers without tying yourself to a proprietary

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<sup>48</sup> PHP (Hypertext Preprocessor) is a dynamic web programming language which allows users to interact with servers. Files are requested from the server side by users, and the results are fed back to the user as HTML.

<sup>49</sup> Application Programming Interface is a set of functions and procedures that allow the creation of applications which access the features or data of an operating system, application, or other service. JSON (JavaScript Object Notation) refers to a data interchange format that is programming language independent. In this instance it is an essential format which represents data in an API.

framework, combining powerful visualization components and a data-driven approach to DOM manipulation.<sup>50</sup>

I chose to use this JavaScript library to obtain a high degree of control of the way in which data is manipulated and represented. Other timeline authoring software that could have been used includes Visual Eyes, Timeline JS or Time Mapper. These are open source tools allowing publishers to efficiently create interactive, media rich timelines. However, an effective analysis of the datasets described above would require advanced customisations of the software with regard to dates, multiple datasets and ultimately developing ways to allow interaction to occur with a document viewer envisioned in Fig. 3.1 above.

The numerous benefits of engaging with D3.js seemed attractive. Utilising the D3.js library allows developers to enjoy a balance between complete freedom of customisation with JavaScript and the benefits of JavaScript libraries that automate some of the underlying processes. In addition, I was equipped with a background in multimedia and information technology. As outlined in section 3.9.10, being familiar with programming languages was also quite helpful and suitable to this project. These languages included JavaScript, HTML, PHP, MySQL and CSS.

I learned how to use this JavaScript library through taking online tutorials from D3 expert Scott Murray.<sup>51</sup> This resource provides a rich general introduction to concepts in D3, progressively becoming more difficult as the learner achieves each goal. The fundamental

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<sup>50</sup> DOM (Document Object Model) is a W3C (World Wide Web Consortium) standard or platform that allows programmed scripts to dynamically access and update content, structures and styles in a web document or webpage. Also see: Bostock, Mike. *D3.js - Data-Driven Documents*. D3.js - Data-Driven Documents, [www.d3js.org](http://www.d3js.org).

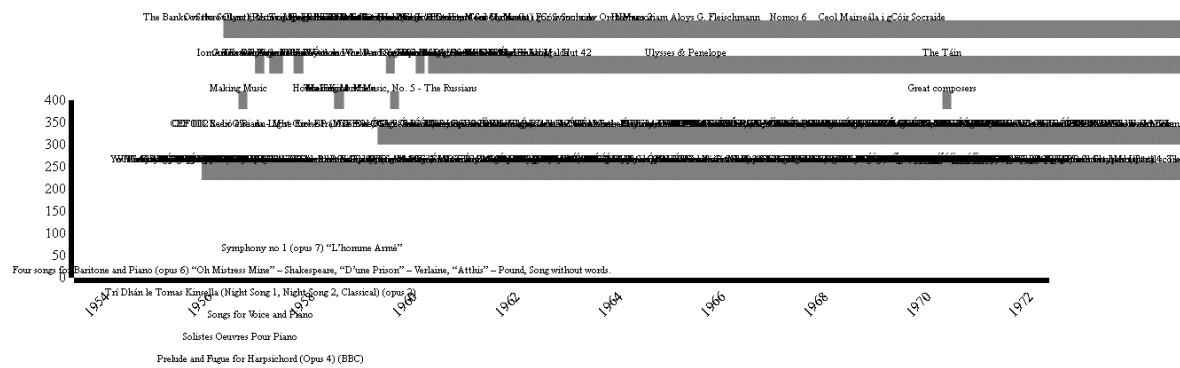
<sup>51</sup> Murray, Scott. "D3 — Scott Murray — Alignedleft." Scott Murray — Alignedleft, [alignedleft.com/tutorials/d3](http://alignedleft.com/tutorials/d3). Accessed 21 Apr. 2018.

concepts were relatively easy to follow. Experimenting with different types of layouts ranging from bar graphs to more complex visuals such as force directed graphs provided a solid grounding to prepare for more advanced customisation.

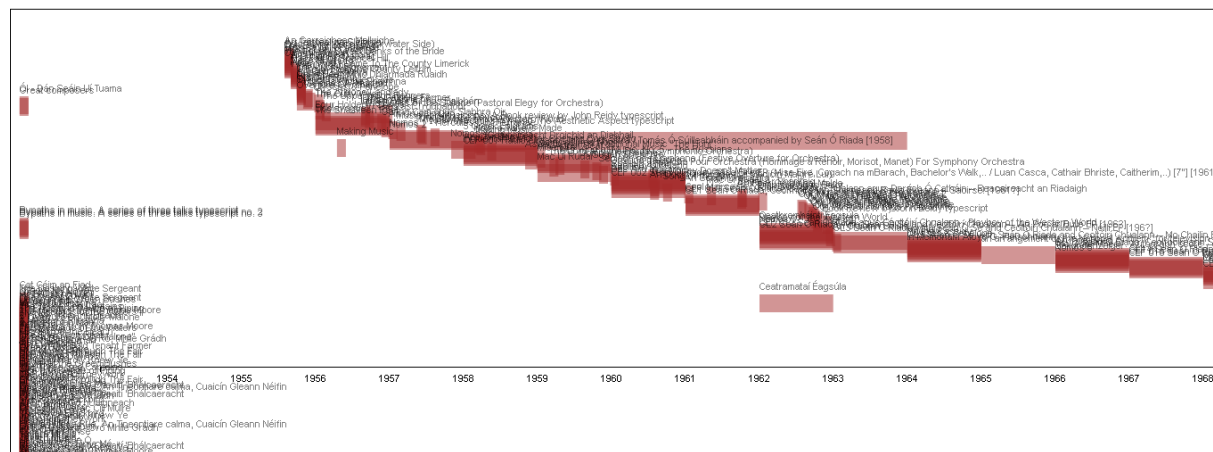
The first attempt to construct a timeline by utilising the Ó Riada data then became a natural progression on from Scott Murray's tutorials. Data was extracted from the Projects Dataset into an API service using PHP and MySQL. The extracted data was then mapped onto an X axis in D3 in a series of iterations referred to here as "Axis1", "Axis2", etc. Data points rested at specific dates. Each data interval was determined by a calculation of its end date minus its start date. The Y value of data intervals and data points were then separated based on musical genre so that I could think about how to place the elements vertically. I tested the accuracy of this graph by widening the horizontal plane of the canvas to produce Axis3. This change to the design started to de-clutter data points and intervals as it brought weeks and months into focus. This visualisation was the first to reveal a readable view of how each data point and data interval interacted.

In prototype example entitled Axis6 (in Fig. 3.10) below, I began to refine each data point by positioning the titles of each project alongside its position in time. This revealed an interesting plot of the data, but again the "y" positions of each genre were overlapping, resulting in the text and data points being indiscernible. In the next version I experimented with pushing each project beneath the last, and finally I was beginning to make out the overlaps that had emerged from the dates of projects.





**Fig. 3.11.** Axis11 revealing data and plotting dates from the dataset of music related projects



**Fig. 3.12.** Axis 16 plotting projects from the SÓRC with data. Note undated projects on extreme left

### 3.10.2 Insights

There are a number of visual issues with this version. The start dates are unknown in some cases. As this research became based on events, the Gantt-style (a type of bar chart for displaying a project schedule) layout later proved to be an important factor in assessing the initial research question. However, as we shall see, event-based timelines place an emphasis on metadata that already as dates. After this, a force directed layout was also explored (Fig. 3.13 and Fig. 3.14).

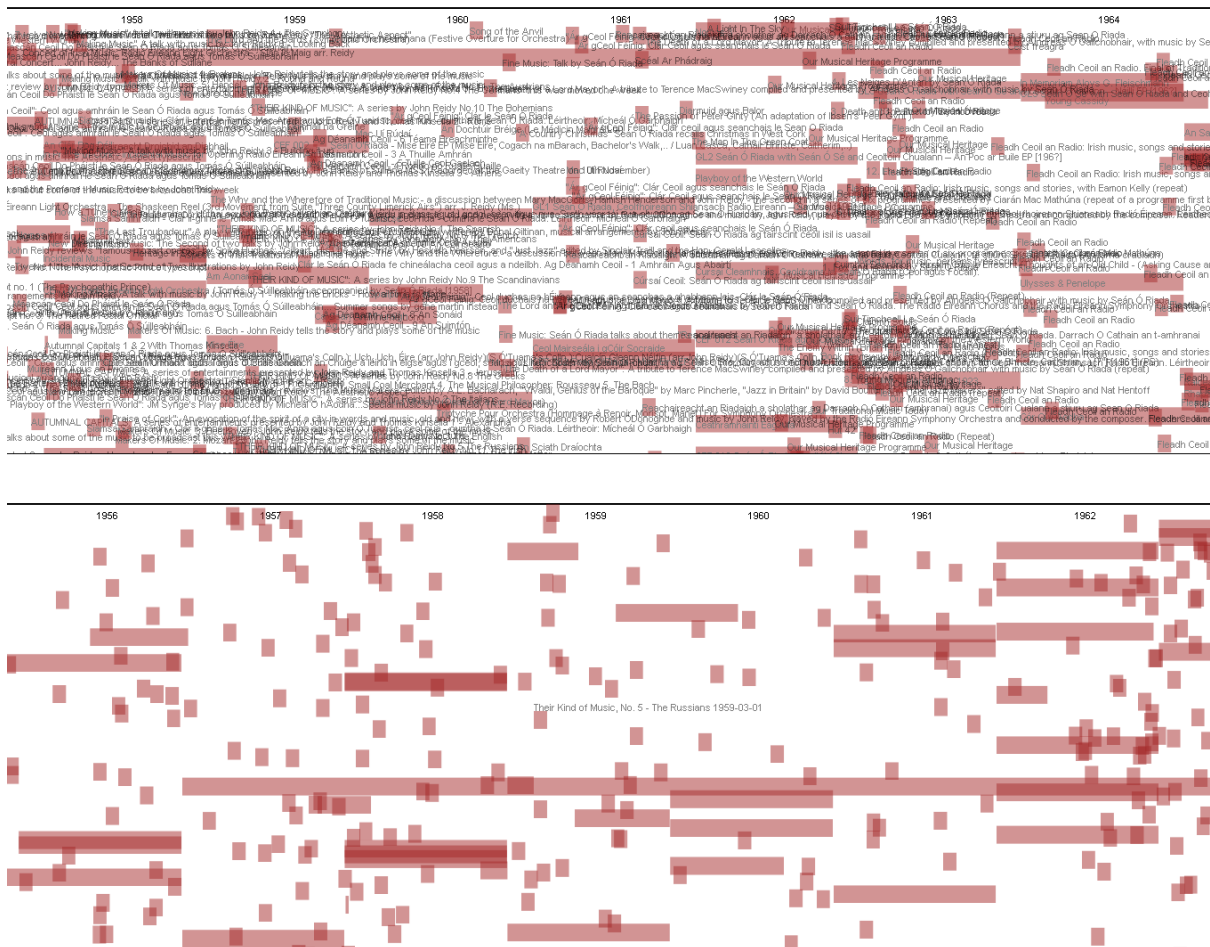
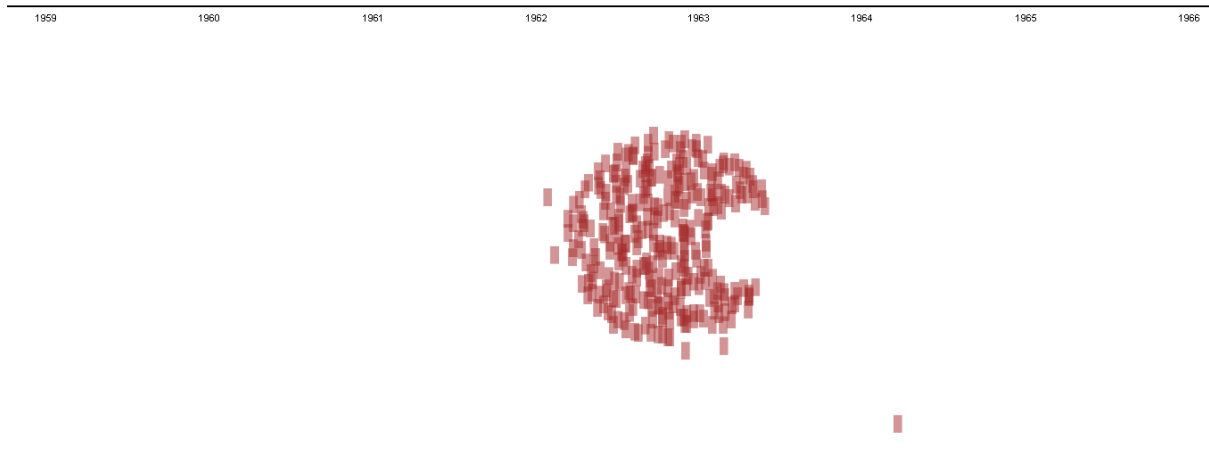


Fig. 3.13. Force directed graphs with interval and data point identifiers included



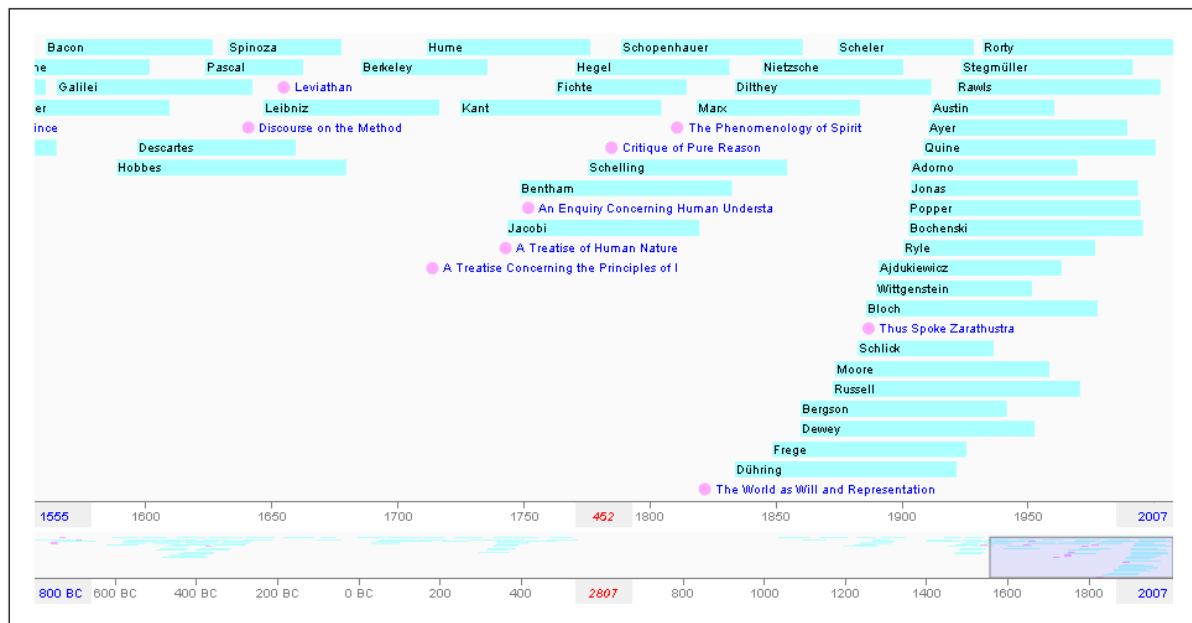


**Fig. 3.14.** Collision detection

By March 2016, I had become proficient with D3 which allowed me to consider altering existing code to suit my own needs. I now began exploring other D3 examples to see if it were possible to develop my own version of their code. I discovered and became interested in a project named *Timeline – Proof of Concept* by developer Reinhard Engel.<sup>53</sup> Using the popular timeline tool, *Simile Timeline* by David François Huynh and *Swimlane Chart using d3.js* by Bill Bunkat, Engel’s work has demonstrated that an alternative version of the timeline concept may be put to fruitful use in D3.<sup>54</sup> The following screenshot (Fig. 3.15) shows the first and only known version of the “tracks” method that Engel used.

<sup>53</sup> Engel, Reinhard. *Reinhard Engel’s Blocks - Bl.ocks.org*. Popular Blocks - Bl.ocks.org, bl.ocks.org, 20 Feb. 2018, bl.ocks.org/rengel-de. Accessed 8 May 2018.

<sup>54</sup> For these examples, see: [//bl.ocks.org/bunkat/1962173](http://bl.ocks.org/bunkat/1962173) and [//www.simile-widgets.org/timeline/](http://www.simile-widgets.org/timeline/)



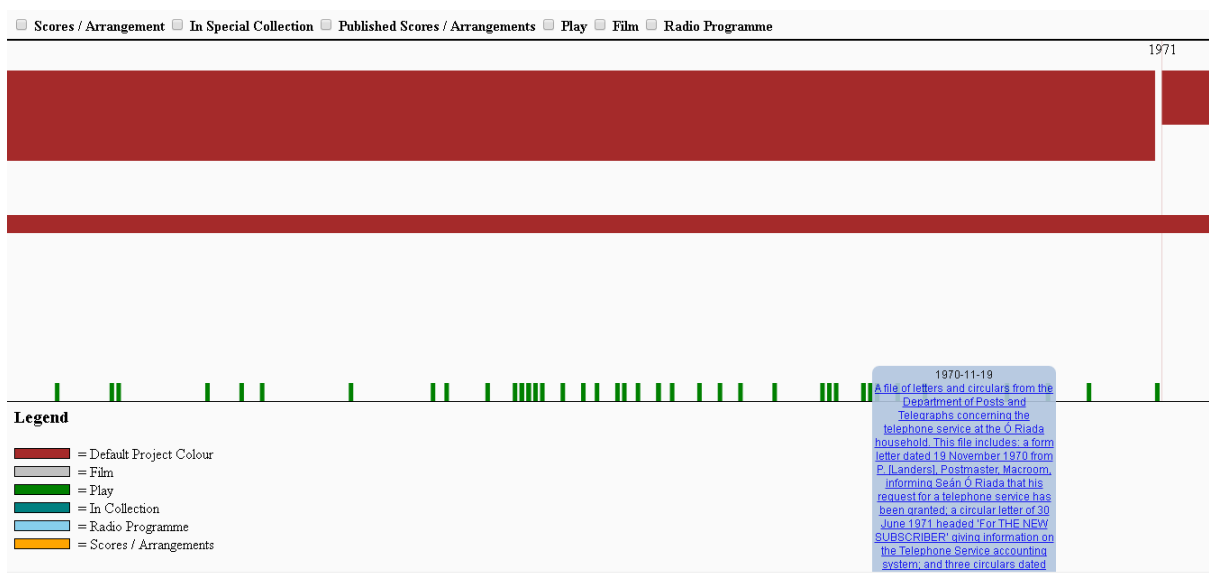
**Fig. 3.15.** Screenshot of “Timeline – Proof of Concept” by Reinhard Engel

Engel used this series of “tracks” to plot each data point along the timeline.<sup>55</sup> The developer’s code selects the very first data point and then draws the next based on the finish date of the previous one, and stacks each result accordingly, eschewing space as the timeline “fills” to accommodate intervals and data points. The result is a manageable set of data points that allow the eye to see each event or period of activity within a structured visualisation. As this example is open source code, I was able to build upon Rengel’s example. I began to design and construct a timeline which would utilise the tracks method, but which would also allow me to add layers of other datasets on to this timeline.

Initially, the width of each activity or “project” became difficult to visualise, as events of one day were extremely thin compared to some project widths of a number of months or a year. I altered the width of each daily occurrence to a standardised width as it was the

<sup>55</sup> Engel, Reinhard. "Timeline for D3 - Proof-of-concept." Popular Blocks - Bl.ocks.org, 20 Feb. 2018, bl.ocks.org/rengel-de/5603464. Accessed 21 Apr. 2018.

minimum visual time which was coherent within the overall context of the visualisation. I further increased the width of the overall visualisation in order to more easily see these one-day events. This also then enabled me to see the relationships between projects. I began altering the heights of projects in order to separate projects which were of the same colour. I also changed the height of the visualisation itself in order to view all projects as they were extending beyond the bottom of the timeline. Fig. 3.16 demonstrates some of these problems that were encountered with the initial engagement with the track method, in particular overlapping colours.

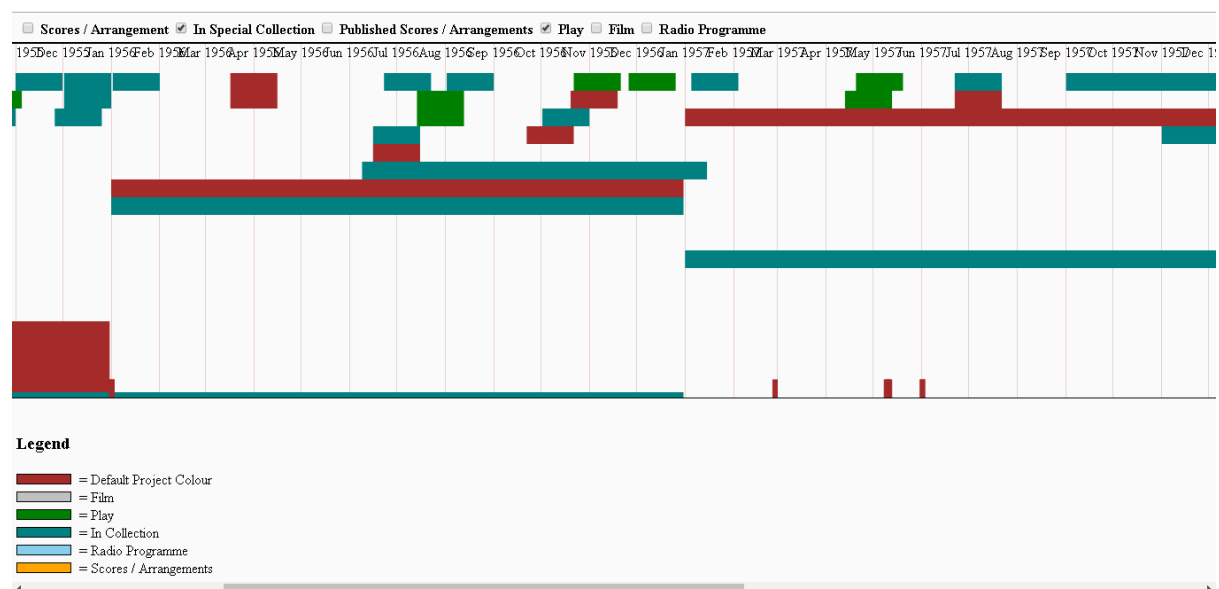


**Fig. 3.16.** Heights of projects (in maroon colour) demonstrating visualisation problems

I had utilised the tracking method to display each project, but attempts to provide a zoom feature proved problematic. Numerous attempts to re-visualise through the use of D3's brush capability failed. This feature is quite common in D3 layouts, as it allows the user to select and zoom into specific sections of timelines. In lieu of a brush, or zoom feature, I instead stretched the visualisation horizontally so that the timeline could be viewed and scrolled over a span of two years.

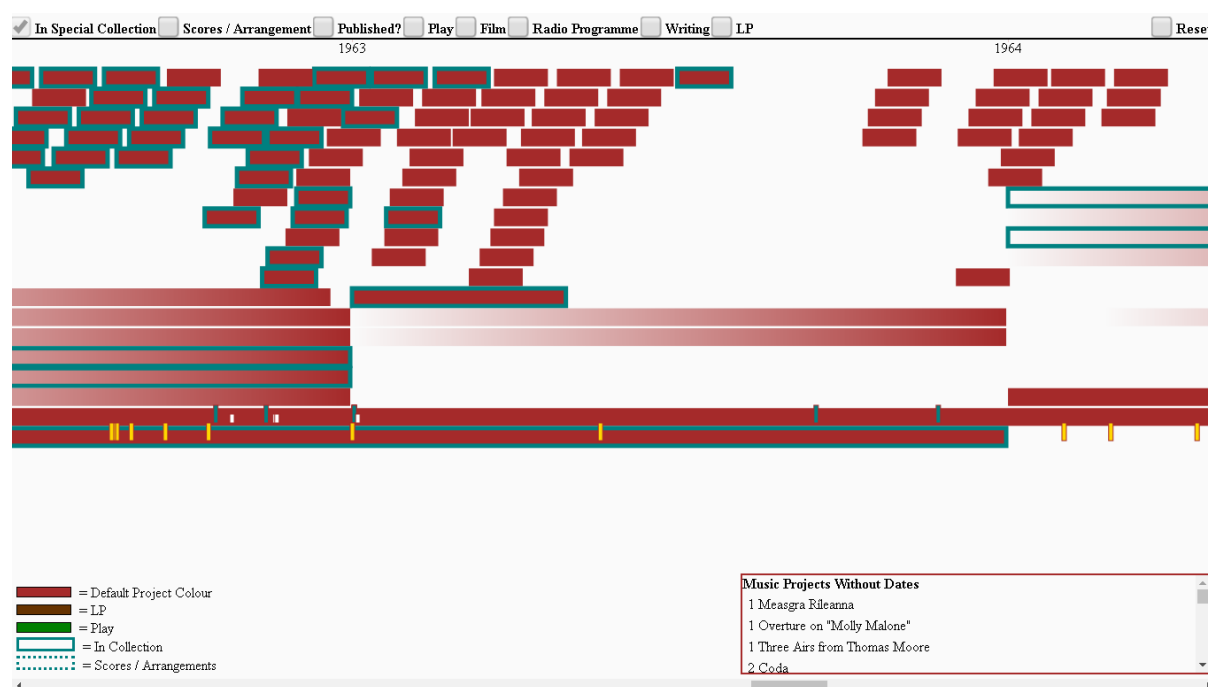
Another limitation to this approach was the way in which the hover feature was created. As the D3 library is focused on visualisation using charts and graphs, the development of frameworks out of this software have not been common or prevalent (Github). Often in D3 projects, the interactive features such as hover and search have not been created, and so examples can be difficult to find. This leaves a steep learning curve for newcomers who wish to provide deeper layers of interactivity in their own projects. As a result of these limitations, I began to seek out other ways to modify the tracking method.

Moving beyond the initial explorations in the tracking method, I began to think about layering a visualisation of letters onto the timeline. It seemed logical that if a dataset of projects could be added to the visualisation, then a layer of data from the Letters Dataset could be added. The result of this attempt was successful, as shown in Fig. 3.17, where each letter that was added to the timeline became visible at the bottom of the visualisation.



**Fig. 3.17.** Separating intervals, data points and adding category colours

Another important addition to the timeline was that of project categories. In an attempt to differentiate project types and also what was located within the SÓRC, I added checkboxes above the timeline which could activate or deactivate various colour representations of projects as needed (Fig. 3.18).



**Fig. 3.18.** Removing colour, adding borders to intervals, colour to letters

### 3.10.3 Visualisation and MEI

Following the first phase of development with the digital approach to this study, I had arrived at a more nuanced understanding about the contents of the Seán Ó Riada Collection. I began to make an overall assessment about the material which was discovered and beginning to be visualised. As a significant amount of this material could not be classified as music notation, my approach to the objectives of this research would not have satisfied the central research questions. As a result of these discoveries, Music Encoding

Initiative became an increasingly problematic method of investigation. There were also some technical issues with applying this method.

In September 2016, I also explored the use of MerMEId editor as a potential tool for analysing, structuring and documenting the material from the SÓRC.<sup>56</sup> MerMEId uses an XML database (eXistDB) in order to store information on MEI files, and its outputs are represented using stylesheets, libraries and the XQuery language.<sup>57</sup> Unfortunately, a number of problems were posed both by this potential structuring of material and its compatibility with Javascript already in use with letters mapping and timeline created in Javascript. Firstly, the software installation proved problematic, and involved a complex set of instructions to install. Attempts to run an installation of eXist failed on a number of occasions.<sup>58</sup> Secondly, with Javascript already chosen as a means to work with data, mixing it with XML files would have introduced issues as it can become problematic to work with XML with Javascript. For example, XML files contain tags that described the information that is included in them. With Javascript, it would have been necessary to access these tags in order to extract the data. This would have added a layer of complexity to the development of the digital visualisation framework. In addition to this, the availability of the music notation was also in question.

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<sup>56</sup> For an example installation of MerMEId editor, see: "Installing and Configuring the MerMEId Editor." Test Page for the Apache HTTP Server on Red Hat Enterprise Linux, [labs.kb.dk/editor/INSTALL.html](http://labs.kb.dk/editor/INSTALL.html). Accessed 24 Apr. 2018.

<sup>57</sup> A stylesheet is a type of template file consisting of font and layout settings to give a standardized look to documents. A software library is a collection of programmes and software packages made available for general use. XQuery is a language that was created for finding and extracting elements and attributes from XML documents.

<sup>58</sup> See Appendix A for an explanation of this process.

In January 2017, I decided to move my endeavours away from using MEI as an intersubjective approach and towards an analysis of all music related documents that were found using D3 and Javascript as primary methods of digital development.

A number of aesthetic design decisions were made during the development of the digital visualisation framework, and during this phase I explored the potential of understanding potential end user experiences with other scholars. At first, a number of responses were forthcoming and proved interesting. Despite the input of those scholars, after a number of weeks I abandoned this activity as it proved to be irrelevant to the aims of my research. An example response is provided in Appendix B.

### **3.11 Concluding thoughts**

This chapter charted the documentation of material from the finding aid of the SÓRC and the gathering of metadata that contextualised music related projects from within the collection. In the digital age, it is now possible to compile discographic and bibliographic reference material, to manipulate and visualise this material in a number of ways that were not possible in the age of the text. Whilst the intention is similar, the tools, speed and possibilities are vastly different to paper-based approaches and raise new challenges.

**Data Driven Design:** At the beginning of the digital phase of this study, I utilised an experimental approach to interrogate data from the finding aid and subsequent building of dataset construction which included projects and letters from the Collection. This approach demonstrated that by engaging with data from the outset, the design process for building tools for representing that data was highly dependent upon the ways in which data is understood and appraised. For example, intervals of time and dates became critical factors

in the design of the prototype, as the majority of documents were interrelated through time. As a result, the emphasis shifts towards dates of composition, dates of performance and an attempt to facilitate multiple activities over time. Despite the omission of a number of projects from the timeline, this approach allows projects with dates to become more accurately represented.

**Interdisciplinarity:** One of the key perspectives I have adapted during the exploratory phase of this research is that data may not only aid the researcher in contextualising archival material, but that data may direct research. As shown in Chapter 6, humanities perspectives are an important aid to digital research. The iterative software development model that I employed during this process was an interesting example of the interdisciplinary practice. In Chapter 6, disciplinary approaches are merged between digital humanities and ethnomusicology.

**Interoperability and Accessibility:** This chapter has demonstrated that the variety of software programs and code used in a project can be approached from different perspectives. This may result in research data that generates radically different results and findings. For this reason, researchers in the field of Digital Humanities advocate for open access and interoperability. The FAIR data principles (to produce data that is Findable, Accessible, Interoperable and Reusable) were set out by the Force11, a community of scholars, librarians, archivists, publishers and research funders who are concerned with improved knowledge creation and sharing. The full project code for this project is available on the freely available platform Github.com, where researchers and developers can explore and add to the digital visualisation framework in an open, shared manner (Github).



In tandem with the aims of Force11 community, this project was developed with an API service which grants access to future researchers to explore the SÓRC for their own ends and to see how data can inform their research in different ways to this project. Combining the consideration and evaluation of documents with software development models enabled the continual refining and updating of the datasets in order to explore the broad range of activities from Seán Ó Riada's career. By manually adding data from external archives to the Projects Dataset, this approach showed how research data was enriched and become more nuanced as information became available from multiple sources. The gathering of data from multiple archives shows that when data is available, connected and discoverable, it is important and useful for contextualising during the research process.

Unique ways to collect, to manipulate and visualise archive collections metadata are revealed in this chapter. During this project, an exploratory approach was used to discover the range of creative outputs of Seán Ó Riada, allowing critical reflection to emerge at each stage of the process of discovery and building of a digital prototype. As a result of this activity, this chapter demonstrates how interacting with data may influence, and evolve *alongside* an iterative design process as new data emerges.

In the next two chapters I examine my approach to the contextualisation of these music related projects in fieldwork and ethnography. The findings from fieldwork interviews substantiate further discussion in relation to data gathering and digital visualisation.

## Chapter 4

### Interview Data Collection

#### 4.1 Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the methodology and process of gathering data from fieldwork interviews as part of this research study. The interviews aimed to interrogate details from interviewees regarding the performance of music related documents in the Seán Ó Riada Collection. Interviews are focused on musical engagements and collaborative projects in order to understand how change and continuity was negotiated during Seán Ó Riada's career in music.

Research in the field of Ethnomusicology has traditionally focused on in fieldwork practices as a suitable approach for meaning-making in ethnography. Stone notes the importance of fieldwork as a basis for ethnographic narratives, arguing that it should be, "carried out on location among the people who perform" (1-23). In order to contextualise Seán Ó Riada's experiences, it was necessary to talk with members of his family, some of his collaborators, as well as former employees of partner organisations and audience members. The following research questions informed my interview questions:

*How might Seán Ó Riada's music-related projects have aided a rise to prominence and its sustainability?*

*What were the material circumstances of Seán Ó Riada's life and how did this influence his career trajectory?*

*What were the roles and agendas of institutions connected with these projects, such as Radio Éireann and Gael-Linn?*

The interview questions were directed towards Seán Ó Riada's experiences before, during and after performances. I sought to draw upon the range of music related projects from the Collection as they were performed. Firstly, I sought personal accounts about encounters with music training and performance and career experiences of the interviewees in Ireland during the 1950s and 1960s. Secondly, I probed for specific information about material from the SÓRC that was composed and selected for concerts and theatre venues, radio broadcasts, commercial recordings, teaching practice and film collaborations relating to Seán Ó Riada. Interview questions focused on the ways in which a wide variety of material was rehearsed and performed.<sup>59</sup> I also concentrated on participants' perceptions of Seán Ó Riada's legacy. The resultant findings from this interview process demonstrated a nuanced and deep understanding of continuity and change within Seán Ó Riada's career.

The literature review revealed a number of insightful accounts of Seán Ó Riada's life and his works. Scholarly narratives demonstrated how his rise to prominence involved a culmination of various music related experiences such as individual composition and arrangement. In these narratives, Seán Ó Riada's success is portrayed as largely through his own abilities but also through his search for an art form (Marcus 1981; Ó Canainn and Mac an Bhua 1993; Ó Canainn 2003; Ó Súilleabháin 2007; Pine 2014). By focusing on Seán Ó Riada as an individual, they indicate key moments in the development of his musical ideas. During the course of my research, I sensed that Seán Ó Riada's career development depended not only upon his personal journey, but also upon his negotiation of change, particularly with colleagues and organisations. This sense first arose through the discovery

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<sup>59</sup> Repertoire here refers to music presented in concert performances, music materials that Seán Ó Riada used in his teaching, and recorded music that was broadcast on radio and long playing (LP) records.

that copyright stamps existed on a large range of manuscript scores that I had found within the SÓRC. This indicated that most projects were greatly tied to organisations such as Radió Éireann. I began to question if projects were contingent upon the practical day-to-day operations of these organisations. The contributions of Seán Ó Riada's colleagues in particular, but also his family members, students and concert goers are then important for understanding the way that these projects were created and performed.

I carried out eleven interviews. The first interview followed the initial exploration and listing of the collection contents, and subsequent arrangement of each project by date of composition or performance. In parallel with the remaining interviews, I was developing a digital visualisation framework, adding data on a weekly basis. This allowed me to formulate new questions and share these developments as I met with some interviewees.

As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, practice theory was posited as a suitable methodology for understanding the process of change within Ó Riada's career. Performance and events relating to the music related projects from the Collection became the central focus of the research. During the analysis of interview transcripts, I used a grounded theory approach to develop emerging thematic ideas about these performances and events.

## **4.2 Ethical considerations**

During the course of the research, I was aware of my position as a practitioner of Irish traditional music, and also of the limitations of my knowledge of other, relevant musical practices. I was conscious too of the subjective values that add to my own perspective as a performer and researcher. It is important, therefore, that I consider carefully my position in relation to the research. As noted by Miles and Huberman, "to know

how a researcher construes the shape of the social world and aims to give us a credible account of it is to know our conversational partner” (4). In order to understand my research position as a researcher, I need to explore and reflect on my own perspectives and background.

During the initial stages of my research, I worked with the library team at the Boole library, University College Cork to explore music related projects in the Seán Ó Riada Collection. While their library project was aimed at identifying manuscript scores of classical music, I found that I was drawn towards including Irish traditional music and Irish language materials in my search. This signalled an ethical concern for me in relation to my investigative procedure. As an Irish traditional musician, I have in-depth knowledge that is related to some of the material in the Collection; as an insider in the Irish music and Irish language communities, I had to develop my awareness of my subjectivity and consider how my research methodology, and the evidence that I would gather might have been impacted by my subjectivity. When carrying out research interviews, for example, I was conscious of the need to remain vigilant, removing my opinion from the conversational flow as a critical ‘insider’. I was obliged to test my data rigorously and critique this awareness of subjectivity by balancing my opinions with counterevidence in the research. As the study progressed, I became more fully aware of these dilemmas, keeping my personal subjectivity to the fore in my thinking and awareness.

In the following chapters, I refer to each person under interview as either an “interviewee” or a “participant”. I consciously attempted to avoid using the term “informant” as this places the researcher in an elevated position during the research process. Instead, I endeavoured to create a sense of cooperation with these interviewees.

Myers claims that fieldworkers should encourage interview participants to comment on writing at different stages (36). This allows researchers to receive valuable commentary on their work, and also to give the interview participant a role in validating their reflections and experiences. I found that in some cases, interviewees were very cooperative, but in others the response rate varied after interviewing was not as forthcoming.

#### **4.3 Research admission**

University College Cork mandates that students seek ethical approval from the Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC) when conducting interviews. The nature of my application was not straightforward as it involved the publication of a traditional dissertation in addition to the possibility of including these findings within a digital visualisation framework. It was necessary in this case to seek guidance for creating such an application. The advice from SREC was that the medium of research publication should be explicitly stated. I was also advised to highlight in my explanation that there was a potentiality that the material might be included in the digital section of the project.

After negotiation of the application wording, approval was granted for all interviews involving individuals between November 2015 and December 2017. I followed this procedure by sending emails requesting interviews to each potential interviewee in turn. Emails were revised a number of times with my supervisor before sending in order to deliver clear and concise intentions behind the project. In some cases it was necessary to contact the potential interviewees by telephone. I found this form of contact more cumbersome as shorter phone conversations did not afford potential participants the ability to re-read the explanation of the purpose of my visit, or the ability to respond in their own time. However, all phone conversations were successful. Subsequent to the initial contact the meetings,

times, timeframes and locations were all confirmed in advance of the interviews.

Agreements maintained a high priority for the convenience of the interviewee. Informed consent was requested by interviewees after each interview. In each case, I was contacting consenting adults. As a result, no parental permission was sought.

During the process of contacting some potential interviewees, I initiated contact through my supervisor. In most cases I was not already acquainted with my interviewees, so I decided to ensure that I maintained a highly professional approach to dealing with non-acquaintances. However, I had met three interviewees on previous occasions, one through the academic environment, and the others through friends at a music festival prior to the beginning of this project. In these cases I ensured to remain friendly but thoroughly professional.

In each interview I made sure to explain to the participant my experience as a performer of concertina in Irish traditional music so as to convey the message that I had at least some knowledge of the performance of music in that genre. As a result, many basic explanations of fundamental concepts in Irish traditional music were avoided, therefore allowing deeper levels of understanding to be reached during the interview process.

The exploratory phase of the project had served to list each music related project within the SÓRC. However, I had continued to list citations of projects mentioning Seán Ó Riada that resided in other archives and in digitised newspaper repositories. In addition to this, I had begun to develop the data visualisation framework which began to display overlaps with Ó Riada's music related projects and life events that were significant. By conducting interviews in parallel to this work, I achieved two important advances in my research. Interviews served to elicit ideas from the subject and to facilitate the confirmation

or rejection details pertaining to dates, omissions and some general feelings towards their significance.

During each interview, my questions were directed at specific projects that were found during the exploratory phase of the PhD. In some cases I produced the latest work-in-progress of the data visualisation framework, and in other cases I produced simply a list of the projects during the interview in order to stimulate further discussion. As my research progressed, I also introduced LP records that I had collected and presenting these to interviewees enabled them to elicit specific details and to enhance memory recall. I took care not to steer the conversations with participants, apart from directing them away from abstract contextual issues. I guided interview questions towards practical events relating to interviewees' individual experiences and attempted to remove my personal opinions during the process.

#### **4.3.1 Consent**

Ethical considerations are most important to the integrity of this research. For example, informed consent and the potential consequences of this study were of paramount importance. I obtained consent forms from the University which addressed the following stipulations:

- The purpose of the study – key developments in the life and works of Seán Ó Riada
- What will the study involve – fieldwork interviewing, which will inform knowledge pertaining to archival documents within the SÓRC
- Why have you been asked to take part – discussion will likely be most informative with regard to contextualising these documents
- Do you have to take part – participation is voluntary, option of withdrawal, may ask to have data deleted
- Will your participation in the study be kept confidential – all data will be identified unless stated, extracts will be referenced unless deemed confidential



- What will happen to the information which you give – information will be confidential unless requested for public use
- What will happen to the results – presented in the thesis and digital project
- What are the possible disadvantages of taking part – it is possible that talking about your experience in this way may cause some distress
- Any further queries – contact Patrick Egan (phone number and email address)

This information sheet provided the general outline of my research which focused on key developments in the life and works of Seán Ó Riada. They were used in my interviews, with written consent being required for use of the material. In the emails leading up to each interview, respondents were informed of the specific nature of my study. These emails outlined that I was exploring aspects of Seán's career experiences with the intent to gain knowledge relating to a specific set of archival documents from within the SÓRC. I provided clear instructions as to how the data would be stored, shared and offered the option of anonymity if the respondents wanted their information to remain confidential. Finally, I informed my potential interviewees that their responses would potentially appear either in a published thesis, a digital project on the internet, or both. These guidelines also included the ability to withdraw at any stage.

I noted that some of the participants had been close relatives and friends of Seán Ó Riada. This highlighted the possibility that recollections could trigger some deeper emotional senses and stresses. In line with SREC regulations, I attached contact information relating to support services should this be the case.

Towards the end of the interview process, I approached some other potential interviewees that had been omitted from my original list, as some interviewees suggested other key figures that would be important for my research. In these cases, I was obliged to contact the SREC committee in order to seek permission to extend the list of interviewees.

Permission was granted to follow through with interviews without the need for submitting a new application.

With regard to ethics, it is important to ensure that these aims comply with the original goals of the interview process. The original aims of the study had not changed during the course of my research. As a result, the ethical considerations that had been considered at the start of this research remained steadfast even when the methods and theoretical standpoint changed during the research process.

#### **4.4 Theoretical underpinnings**

A two-pronged approach underpins this research. On one hand, by designing, building and engaging with a digital artefact, events in Seán Ó Riada's career were examined through the support of time-based visualisation. This digital artefact also complemented the introduction of practice theory because it aided the documentation of specific events that occurred during Seán Ó Riada's career. On the other hand, an interpretive investigation, based on fieldwork interviews enabled themes to emerge that concerned continuity and change relating to these events. As will be shown in Chapter Six, the two-pronged approach became crucial for demonstrating how quantitative digital exploration and qualitative interpretive findings intersect as part of the research process.

Practice theory became a crucial theoretical standpoint through which interpretation of phenomena and music related projects came about before, during and after the interview process. As outlined by Blum the emergent musical performance, "carries traces of the processes through which the performer has effected and realised his choices, has established his personal (and social) 'stance' or position" (53). The focus of interviewing moved towards the interviewees' understandings of "how individuals create and

understand their own life spaces” (Mertens 235). In this sense, the roles of a number of agents (such as performers, organisers and audience members) who participated in events are highlighted to understand a cultural matrix of societal, individual and collective continuity or change.

The material evidence of music related material in the SÓRC is not seen as evidence of value. Instead, this evidence is seen to either constitute change or affirm a cultural continuity. Meaning is ascribed through the vantage point of musical practice as it occurs between the creators (or performers), their listening audience and the organisations connected with the performances of music related projects. The actions of people are given precedence over the reception of their performance in order to interrogate how continuity or change happened. As Sahlins describes, “people are known to creatively reconsider their conventional schemes” where “the culture is historically altered in action” (vii). Through practice theory, this research demonstrates Waterman’s idea that cultural equilibrium, instead of change, is exceptional (52). In other words, the SÓRC documents provide insight into creative practice, but change and continuity are contextualised through the accounts of interviewees as they recall the actions of people during performance.

#### **4.4.1 Reliability**

When conducting qualitative investigations in ethnomusicology, it is important to demonstrate the credibility of the research. In Chapter Six of this thesis, I examined the ways in which findings from the interview process either refuted or corroborated evidence from the building of a digital prototype. It is therefore paramount that the ethnomusicological investigation demonstrated a sufficient standard of rigour to ensure that evidence and claims are based on solid procedures of research.

In this study, a number of interviewees' narratives are drawn upon so as to reveal the unique and individual experiences of musicians who were contemporaries of Seán Ó Riada. As ordinary and exceptional musicians share similar backgrounds, musical lives were understood through the accounts of personal biography. Despite the similarities of upbringing, the exceptional musician was seen to diverge from practices of other musicians. It is these differences that Nettl calls us to consider when attempting to understand individuals within musical culture:

Understanding the musical involvement of the individual, and learning how much alike and how different are the musical lives in any one society, is a significant challenge for ethnomusicology. (Nettl 183)

I explored similarities and differences between a number of interviewees who developed their musical lives at the same time as Seán Ó Riada. Their life histories were narrated through a concept utilised which Clifford and Marcus define as polyvocality, where "many voices clamor for expression" (15). This approach allowed ordinary, regular life experiences to be brought to the fore that might otherwise have remained hidden. Following this introduction to the interviewees' experiences and perspectives, I briefly turned my focus towards the early life experiences about Seán Ó Riada that were recounted in the literature. I then documented how Ó Riada rose to prominence, paying particular attention to how this occurred through interviewee accounts of performances. I followed this by focusing on one event in particular, *Ó Riada Sa Gaiety*. I concluded the interview findings with discussion on legacy surrounding Seán Ó Riada's life.

A combination of approaches to interview evidence outlined above facilitated a dependability and consistency to give a broader understanding of the cultural backdrop and

experiences of Seán Ó Riada's colleagues and those who were connected with his legacy. The approaches also aided me to include narratives that were contained within other scholarly accounts of that took a biographical approach to Seán Ó Riada's career, as an individual, as outlined in the literature review in Chapter 2.

#### **4.5 Interview method**

I approached interviewees with a series of open ended or semi-structured questions. The series of questions allowed participants to reveal deep insight to important events that they witnessed during Seán Ó Riada's career. For older participants who were contemporaries of Seán Ó Riada, their engagement with music related projects was crucial for understanding how the events unfolded. I found that by allowing interviewees to express their own understandings of what happened, I could elicit tacit knowledge which resulted in expanded dialogue on specific events. In order to keep interviewees on track with the subject area, I printed a document which outlined leading as well as probing questions. By paying close attention to these questions, I prompted interviewees to move towards relevant responses.

In many cases I began with gathering a personal life history as a means of elucidating polyvocality, but also for understanding interviewee perspectives on musical practices in Irish society during the 1940s, 1950s and 1960s. This enabled me to steer the interviews towards identifying the first time that they met Seán Ó Riada and to maintain a chronological theme during discussion. In general, I utilised this part of the interview as a means to focus on interviewee experiences with Seán Ó Riada. This interview style enabled a smooth, natural progression between discussion topics.

#### **4.5.1 The interview process**

Data collection was carried out over eleven interviews. Each interview followed a semi-structured approach and lasted between one hour and four hours, between November 2015 and December 2017. I presented an ethics form to each participant either following the interview or a number of months afterwards. I briefed each interviewee on the nature of the study. When signing the form, some participants queried how I would use this interview material, and I ensured that they were fully aware of plans for publication.

I sought a number of individuals who had known had experience of working with Seán Ó Riada and whose family members collaborated with him, probing for knowledge about music related projects from the SÓRC. Questions were used to elicit contextual knowledge about the creation of these projects. Discussion aimed to indicate technical and socio-cultural conventions, peer group interactions and relationships between interviewees and Seán Ó Riada. I probed for insight with their relationship with the leaders and personnel involved with organisations and institutions during the creation of music related projects.

#### **4.5.2 Interview sites**

Interview respondents were chosen from a variety of backgrounds to gain a wide perspective on how Ó Riada's career developed. these interviewees were accomplished in their chosen field. I selected interviewees with diverse backgrounds in order to gather insight into the wide variety of musical practices that Seán Ó Riada had engaged with during his career. These included; composers, musicians, singers, broadcasters, students of Seán Ó Riada, academics and family connected to members of Ó Riada's musical ensemble. Interviewees provided insight into activity such as: composition and the arrangement of music, radio scripts, theatre productions, film, recording and concert performances.

| Number                    | Experiences                        | Age | Gender | Relevance  | Location                              |
|---------------------------|------------------------------------|-----|--------|--|---------------------------------------|
| 1) Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin | Academic / composer / performer    | 60+ | Male   | Academic / Former Student / Composer / Performer       | Interviewee's Home                    |
| 2) Mel Mercier            | Academic / composer / performer    | 50+ | Male   | Academic / Composer / Performer                        | University Office                     |
| 3) Eibhlín Gleeson        | Performer / former student         | 60+ | Female | Attended BMus course at UCC, 1966-1970.                | Hotel Foyer                           |
| 4) Peadar Ó Riada         | Composer / broadcaster / performer | 60+ | Male   | Family member / also attended BMus course at UCC, 1976 | Interviewee's Home                    |
| 5) Dave Flynn             | Composer / performer               | 30+ | Male   | Composer. Former PhD student of music.                 | Phone Interview                       |
| 6) Harry Bradshaw         | Former radio broadcaster, producer | 60+ | Male   | Former employee of Radio Éireann.                      | Phone Interview                       |
| 7) Louis Marcus           | Film collaborator                  | 80+ | Male   | Former film collaborator with Seán Ó Riada             | Irish Film Institute, Dublin, Ireland |
| 8) Seán Ó Sé              | Former collaborator                | 80+ | Male   | Former collaborator with Seán Ó Riada, Singer          | Interviewee's Home                    |
| 9) Brendan Hearty         | Sound engineer, event attendee     | 60+ | Male   | Performer, Sound Engineer                              | Interviewee's Home                    |
| 10) Harry White           | Composer, Professor                | 60+ | Male   | Academic, Music Educator, Performer                    | University Office                     |
| 11) Michael Tubridy       | Former collaborator                | 80+ | Male   | Performer, Dancer, Engineer                            | Interviewee's Home                    |

**Table 4.1.** Sites of fieldwork

## **4.6 Interviewee selection**

The following section demonstrates insights that were provided by various interview respondents. Each perspective elucidated interpretations about a range of aspects of musical practice that involved Seán Ó Riada. As can be seen from their relevant experiences in the 'Relevance' section of Table 4.1, interviewees were also in a position to reveal insight into a number of different musical practices.

### **4.6.1 Composers**

As a result of a large amount of manuscript scores appearing in my search of the SÓRC, I concentrated my initial interviews on selecting composers of classical music. Some of these participants held long established careers and had extensive experience with varied contexts of contemporary classical music but also with Irish traditional music in Ireland.

### **4.6.2 Performers**

In some cases, performers who were audience members at Ó Riada's concerts were available to describe the practicalities of performance for example during the performances of Ó Riada's ensemble, Ceoltóirí Cualann. In other cases, performers could relate specific knowledge about rehearsing and performing with Seán Ó Riada. This facilitated deeper discussion about the ways in which repertoire was selected and performed, and encouraged ideas about Seán Ó Riada's day to day activities with other performers.

### **4.6.3 Former radio broadcaster and producer**

One broadcaster and producer had begun his career with Radio Éireann in the mid-1950s, progressing to become a sound engineer and programme producer with the organisation. This interview facilitated a deep discussion regarding the technical and practical aspects of recording, organising and performing with a group of musicians. It also



revealed important information about the limitations and affordances of new technologies during the 1950s and 1960s.

#### **4.6.4 Film collaborator**

One of Seán Ó Riada's collaborators throughout the late 1950s and 1960s was also available to provide insight into various film projects and the history of film making in Ireland. This collaborator also had an extensive career in film since the mid-twentieth century, and continues to take an active part in filmmaking. Their knowledge of the changes and the practicalities of producing film during this period was invaluable. The interview reflected the relationships that evolved with organisation personnel and filmmakers during Seán Ó Riada's lifetime.

#### **4.6.5 Students of Seán Ó Riada**

During the interview process, two participants emerged as students who attended classes on Irish traditional music by Seán Ó Riada's. They provided insight into Seán Ó Riada's teaching style and the content that he used for his courses in music. There were also a number of accounts from former students who recalled their experiences at concerts that were staged for the commemoration of Seán Ó Riada's life.

#### **4.6.6 Family members**

I contacted two family members of Seán Ó Riada, one male and one female. One family member provided much background information and first-hand accounts of Seán Ó Riada's life as he was born in 1954. His experience of growing up in Ireland during the 1950s and 1960s became important for documenting understandings of how Seán Ó Riada's career progressed. This interview also provided valuable insight into family life in both Dublin and Cúil Aodha, County Cork.

#### 4.6.7 Multiple connections

Participants outlined above related their personal experience of musical practice which often overlapped with some of Seán Ó Riada's musical practices. For example, as can be seen in the interviewee distribution of Table 4.1, some participants were students of Seán Ó Riada whilst since having produced recordings of music, composing and performing in Ireland. The distribution of responses is shown in Table 4.2.

| Type of experience     | Informing  |
|------------------------|--|
| Performers, Composers  | Concert performances, Music making in general, crossover of medium / genres. |
| Radio Broadcaster      | Radio shows, LP production, radio audiences                                  |
| Film Collaborator      | Irish film industry, Seán Ó Riada's involvement, Gael-Linn projects          |
| Students               | Issues of authority, Academia in Ireland, Gender issues                      |
| Family                 | Issues of legacy, family life, living in Dublin / Cúil Aodha                 |
| Mixture of two or more | Conventions and constraints between genres                                   |

**Table 4.2.** Interviewee Distribution

#### 4.7 Interview responses

Interviewing began with a set of general questions regarding the life history of the participants. It then progressed towards discussion on music related projects which were held within the SÓRC. Each question then had a corresponding probing question which moved closer to the detail of how these projects were performed. In most interviews, I probed for detail on projects that involved one particular performance. I also focused on groups of projects that were performed over a number of occasions.

During these interviews, I recorded the conversations using a H4 Handy Recorder. This audio recorder proved to be unobtrusive. Each set of questions were checked off when sufficient exploration had taken place on the topic. I also wrote some notes for further probing questions as details began to emerge from discussions. I was aware in some cases that allowing each interviewee time to elaborate on the topic in question would generate important detail. I was also aware of constraints such as: the limitations of time for conducting the interviews, the large number of projects that needed to be explored and also the amount of transcription that would be required at a later date. Questions therefore tended to remain focused, with a limit set on the amount of time allowed for the discussions on each project.

Each interview provided valuable experience for preparing and conducting discussions with successive participants. I opted to focus on the full set of questions as a goal for covering topics that were deemed important. In some cases, participants spoke freely. However, for some responses, I had the thought that some more abstract ideas were being expressed that veered away from the topic. In one case a respondent began explaining his viewpoint of Seán Ó Riada's character as a teacher, which indicated that I needed to move the discussion towards the interviewee's practical experiences. This allowed me to move the focus of the discussion away from Seán Ó Riada's character but towards elucidations about how he acted.

#### **4.7.1 Transcription**

In order to share understandings of interview content with my supervisors, I decided that with each interview I would provide tags that referenced unique sections of the discussion. Tags were listed in the software programme Microsoft Excel. These tags proved

helpful in pinpointing important information. Despite the usefulness of this method in revealing key information for sharing with my supervisors, I found that by revisiting the audio material, a number of important ideas had been omitted by using this tagging system. I also found that in some cases, participants emphasised important information with a stronger tone, a unique aspect of audio material that was important to revisit. In order to facilitate a deeper engagement with the audio material, I used the tagging system specifically for an overview of each interview. Later, as I began to transcribe and thematically code the data from interviews, the tagged files were used only as a general guide for each topic within discussions with interviewees.

#### **4.7.2 Data analysis**

Practice theory provided a suitable theoretical framework for analysis of documents from the Seán Ó Riada Collection. Coding interview data also involved a mixture of approaches, whereby both practice theory and grounded theory were employed. Practice theory revealed practical and situation-specific accounts of the creation and performance of the music related projects from the Collection. I used grounded theory and content analysis to identify themes as they emerged through the coding of interviewees.

An inductive approach to grounded theory allowed me to approach the transcripts line by line within a paragraph. Labels were added to interview quotes, then each quote was placed in a relevant group of quotes. Labels were then reviewed in groups of quotes, and a more abstract category was attributed to those groups. As a result of this specific process of data collection and analysis, the emerging theory was “grounded”.

#### 4.7.3 Coding interview excerpts

Interview excerpts were coded following practices outlined by Miles and Huberman, who outline a method for creating codes for interview transcripts. This includes the use of a provisional shortlist created prior to conducting fieldwork (58). As a way of getting started, Strauss recommends coding for “conditions”, “interactions among actors” and “consequences”. As practice theory provides a basis for understanding the significance of Ó Riada’s music related projects, I began with setting some variables. These variables included: social structures, continuities, conventions and constraints. During the coding process, more categories emerged such as: “events”, “relationships”, “context” and “social constructs”. In order to engage on a deeper level with data coding, I physically printed all transcriptions. These printed sheets were then split up by cutting each paragraph with a scissors, maintaining the paragraph, the connected project(s) and their associated codes.

By retaining quotations and codes together in their physical form, I maintained the context of each quotation. I also maintained a close familiarity with the audio files of each interview as the process of audio coding and the grouping of quotations occurred in succession. In addition to this, I retained field notes about the perspectives of each interviewee. I reviewed these notes before each replaying of interview audio material. As explained by Charmaz, “Sensitizing concepts offer ways of seeing, organizing, and understanding experience; they are embedded in our disciplinary emphases and perspectival proclivities (259). By utilising sensitizing concepts, I continually refreshed my awareness of the perceptions of interviewees.

Each code was then re-read and new codes were added as they emerged from coding. Codes that emerged as similar in theme were then grouped in the same theme. For

example, in groups of codes that focused on constraints within music related projects, quotations that indicated financial issues were identified as similar in theme and subsequently moved into the same area.

Over time, a small list of themes began to emerge from sub-themes that held groups of quotations. These themes then became solidified, as logical associations with interview questions and the literature review became more apparent. During this late stage of the coding process, themes moved from low levels of abstraction to become wider, overarching themes which represented each of the codes that were located in each group.

The last phase in coding involved an analysis of each group of coded excerpts in order to develop them into core categories. These categories were achieved by studying the themes that had been abstracted and relating these themes to other themes. For example, where codes such as 'self-image' and 'control' emerged from the initial code, a sense of 'leadership' emerged as the overarching theme for that particular group. From this phase of coding the final categories of Seán Ó Riada's experiences emerged.

The process reached its endpoint when "theoretical saturation" had occurred. I was unable to reveal any new ideas from the data about the developing theoretical insights already generated, and some of the instances of codes appeared repeatedly (Glaser, 62). This denoted the end of the coding process.

## **4.8 Conclusion**

In this chapter, I outlined each stage of the interview process through preparation, engagement and reflection. I stated my initial theoretical and epistemological positioning and discussed my self-reflexive approach to the interview process. By engaging with

grounded theory and extracting themes based on analysis of printed versions of interview quotations, I ensured a solid grounding was achieved in order for key themes to emerge.

I have been mindful of the value of conducting ethnographic fieldwork through the lens of grounded theory and practice theory. Humanistic enquiry demonstrates the important role that qualitative insight can play in contributing to research. The approach of practice theory is suited to analysing particular performances and events and the attitudes of interviewees towards social formations at specific points in time. During the process of creating a digital visualisation framework, it became clear that practice theory was well suited to timeline representations of Seán Ó Riada's career experiences. Rigorous methodological and theoretical positioning from an ethnomusicological standpoint was demonstrated throughout this chapter, producing a solid foundation that supports the discussion of findings in Chapter 6.

## Chapter 5

### Analysis of interview data

#### 5.1 Introduction

As outlined in previous chapters, data collection for this study was conducted using a two-pronged approach: 1) gathering, structuring and representing data which represented all of Seán Ó Riada's music-related projects that could be discovered, and in parallel 2) conducting a series of semi-structured interviews<sup>60</sup>. The projects were categorised according to the type of project or technological medium in which they were produced. The categories used were: compositions / arrangements, plays, LPs (LP records), radio broadcasts, writings and film (film work). The Projects Dataset and digital visualisation prototype served as indicators of both emerging performances and important events during Seán Ó Riada's career. The research was delimited by this metadata collection and the digital visualisation prototype, and also by the extent of the literature review. Interviewee responses aided the collection of metadata and interview questions were also prompted by discussions with interviewees about this metadata. Both digital exploration and interview responses formed a reference point for the presentation of qualitative results in this chapter.

Digital exploration enabled deeper insight into Seán Ó Riada's activities and informed the development of themes in some measure during content analysis. The aim of the analysis of music-related documents from the SÓRC was to evaluate Seán Ó Riada's projects as they were performed. Analysing the performance of these documents facilitated the contextualisation of the ways through which key agents (people) and agencies

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<sup>60</sup> See file "The Ó Riada Scores" in Appendix A for a full list of projects obtained before fieldwork interviews.



(organisations) were involved in these events. As a result, their motives and actions are brought into focus. Interviews focused on social structures, organisational policies, and emerging political issues in order to inform the discourse surrounding these music events. I interviewed several of Seán Ó Riada's contemporaries, his collaborators, former students and immediate family members. In order to understand these events within the cultural and historical context of the period in question, I also interviewed cultural historians and scholars.

Research findings are presented in three sections. In Section 5.3, I draw upon the personal experiences of regular musicians in order to reveal insight into their experiences as they grew up and lived in the Republic of Ireland at the same time as Seán Ó Riada. Their personal experiences are introduced by the concept of polyvocality. Polyvocal narratives are used in order to highlight their lives as musicians, and to move the focus from Seán Ó Riada as exemplary of the overall experiences of musicians during this time in Irish history. Multiple voices enable the research to probe beneath dominant narratives and open up a more nuanced perspective of musical practice. As Clifford and Marcus suggest, through dialogism and polyvocality the ethnographer's "monophonic authority [is] questioned" and their interpretations begin to reveal the "negotiated realities as multi-subjective, power-laden, and incongruent" (15). Four participant interviews reveal these social complexities, revealing some unique aspects of their own education and performances.

In section 5.4, I consider interview participants' experiences with accounts of their performances and collaborations with Seán Ó Riada. These experiences represent a means of understanding both cultural conventions and processes of change within musical practices through their direct involvement with his projects. The four themes that emerged

from the analysis of interview data are: Project Restrictions or Autonomy, Ó Riada's Leadership 1954-1971, Negotiating Change, Networks of Collaboration. Section 5.3 highlights narratives concerning a performance and LP record known as *Ó Riada Sa Gaiety*. I conclude this chapter with a consideration of interview data surrounding Seán Ó Riada's legacy.

## 5.2 Interview Process Overview

A number of distinct features were discerned between the attitudes and experiences of interviewees in the accounts of their musical activities. The interview data revealed a large range of experiences in music education. For example, three respondents shared negative feelings towards their experiences of interacting with formal music education. In contrast to this, other interviewees who were trained in composition did not reveal positive or negative experiences during their musical lives within formal education.

As a result of the experiences and attitudes of interviewees, a pattern emerged in the way that responses were delivered. For example, in a number of cases, interview participants whose musical education involved formal training and sight reading were generally inclined to address Seán Ó Riada's career experiences in classical music. These respondents tended to move towards themes relating to the composition and the performance of his musical compositions within this genre. On the other hand, where respondents had engaged mostly with informal music training in their personal musical journeys, they were inclined to talk about the performance aspects of Irish traditional music.

Age also became a strong factor in the types of responses that were received. For example, among those interviewed about music related projects, Sean Ó Riada's peers generally emphasised important aspects of socio-cultural constraints during the 1950s and 1960s. On the other hand, younger participants treated Sean Ó Riada's legacy as their primary connection with the performance of his music as expected, and they tended to speak often about audio recordings.<sup>61</sup>

### **5.3 Cultural worlds - personal experiences of interview participants**

In this section, the research focuses on the experiences of a number of performers who developed careers in music, and who later interacted with Seán Ó Riada. As highlighted by Nettl, in music history, each performer's experience is unique, and this may be highlighted by contrasting practices that occurred within the musical lives of the people (Nettl 183). By utilising polyvocality, the four narratives in this section represent distinct experiences of Irish performers during the 1950s and 1960s. Their dialogues enrich our understanding of the complexities within musical life. Their accounts demonstrate formal and informal practices of music training and performance in Ireland during the mid-twentieth century through multifaceted, complex, and contradictory musical experiences (Harrison, Mackinlay and Pettan 24). Evidence from my interviews supports the idea that a complex array of issues complicated and influenced the progress of performers within society.

The literature review indicated that formal practices of music-making grew within organisations in Ireland during the twentieth century. The review indicated that formal

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<sup>61</sup> In the following passages, text marked in bold within interview excerpts denotes the author's voice. All other text in excerpts are from interviewee responses, except where noted.

practices acted as barriers between formal and informal practices and in some cases these barriers arose within music education. The following narratives bring these barriers to the fore through biographical accounts and revealing the important decisions that musicians made and attempted to make during their careers. In some cases, these decisions had far reaching consequences for their overall careers. The results of these decisions and the individuals' attempts at negotiation highlight social distortions that existed within musical education and practices during this time. The experiences of these four interviewees served to provide insight into the lives of regular musicians prior to their interactions with Seán Ó Riada in Section 5.2 (Bowen 14).

By probing how interviewees developed their musical worldviews and their perspectives about Seán Ó Riada's activity, I describe their unique experiences within the socio-cultural and socio-political context of this period of Irish history. These descriptions serve to provide a backdrop to an account of Seán Ó Riada's early experiences in musical education and practice. They highlight the nuances of his experiences as he navigated social structures under similar conditions.

### **5.3.1 Four narratives**

Brendan Hearty is a musician and singer who grew up in the small town of Dundalk, county Louth, Ireland in the 1960s. His career in music is typical of many young musicians of the 1960s who became interested in the crossovers between Irish traditional music and American ballad music. He also attended the concert in Dublin which would later be released on an LP record entitled *Ó Riada Sa Gaiety*. I include Brendan here as his story related the negotiations that were encountered when musicians identified themselves inside or outside the emerging institutions of Irish traditional music performance during the

1960s. Brendan is included first, as his story also related the fluidity of interaction that was occurring between practitioners and audience members during the late 1960s.

Seán Ó Sé is a retired school teacher but still active in his singing career. He is a fluent Irish speaker and well known for his involvement and his success as a recording artist with Gael-Linn and Seán Ó Riada. He has considerable experience as a singer with *The Blarney Céilí Band* and through his sixty years of performing he cites his father as the source of many of his songs. He also cites song origins from some well-known singers where he grew up in a rural community in west Cork. Seán's narrative is important here because he provides an insightful experience into the ways in which he navigated the different social structures in musical practice during the 1950s.

Eibhlín Gleeson is a music teacher of both classical and traditional music. She was a student of Seán Ó Riada from 1966 and also a fluent Irish language speaker. Eibhlín related incidents which highlighted the changes that occurred to her as she engaged with music education both at home and at third level institutions. Her story related wider social differences within music training, but also a change in attitude that she encountered at important turning points throughout her career in music.

Michael Tubridy is a former member of the band The Chieftains. He is a retired engineer who continues to play Irish traditional music and also performs dance. Like Seán Ó Sé and Seán Ó Riada, Michael grew up in the 1940s in rural Ireland and also sought to engage with formal establishments of musical education at key moments in his career as a musician. His story related the highly informal form of music education that he received and how he was influenced as a performer and also as an attendee at a concert involving Seán Ó Riada, *Ó Riada Sa Gaiety*.

### **5.3.1.1 Brendan Hearty, musician and sound engineer**

Brendan grew up in a small town in Ireland during the 1960s. Early in Brendan's interview, he related his musical experiences and his early interactions with live performances. He related how tenor singers caught his imagination and the advent of record players, the music of which he associated with jive dancing. Although he became interested in Irish traditional music later in the 1960s, he also cited American culture as a strong influence in his youth.

At a certain stage I grew out of that or beyond that point and it was the day I walked into Mark's bar in Dundalk is the day that I met Irish music I guess, my own culture. Because Mark's bar was the only bar in Dundalk which had Irish music, indeed they had folk music not just Irish music but ... it was like walking into Greenwich Village, by this stage I had heard of Greenwich Village through the likes of the early Bob Dylan music so I had an image of a kind of a more open spacious society beyond the confines of an urban small town consciousness.

Later, when Brendan began to interact with musicians in this setting, he highlighted how certain choices and decisions influenced his musical career. He described his thoughts on the ways that he chose to navigate the music scene.

Actually it was around that time that folk music began to be heard on the radio. I guess it was '67 '68 and Sweeney's Men were epitomising that blending of Irish music and American music cause they brought the strings, the mandolins and bouzoukis ... That you could hear a slip jig and then hear an American murder ballad

one after the other was ... **A fair mix?** Yeah it was and then that was further enhanced when they brought on Henry McCullough. I remember seeing him, drones and electric guitar ... he was really pushing it out there ... I think it was before the emergence of the folk-rock thing.

Brendan began to associate himself with this musical crossover. He saw that crossover was at odds with the activities of cultural organisations such as Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann (CCÉ). Although the Irish traditional music revival was an important aspect of Brendan's search for a musical identity, he related a number of reasons for not identifying with CCÉ.

The main influence of traditional music in Dundalk up until that point had been Comhaltas ... I was seldom at a Comhaltas session but I would meet Comhaltas players ... They had seemed to have so many regulations ... even then ... like guitars would certainly not be welcome ... They also had a strong conservative catholic blazer wearing kind of tie striped tie kind of image that kind of didn't appeal to me at all. You'd know by their whole ... it seemed they were using music as a cultural badge and identity to define a type of Ireland that I didn't want to be part of.

Brendan concluded this section of our interview by highlighting changes that were beginning to take effect in different genres of music production in the late 1960s. He described another important influence that was beginning to occur in the music scene.

I remember that time; it was before music had begun to separate into marketable, descriptive terms that were easy to catalogue. I think after that, record companies began to try to manipulate the products more and that helped to create a distance, separation between music and different forms of music.

Brendan's account highlights less rigid social structures in music were an attraction and the freedom of expression which he encountered as a teenager within the musical landscape during the late 1960s. Given that organisations such as Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann did not appeal to him, the decisions he made in his musical career were evidently channelled by new crossovers in musical genres, freer performance contexts and participation in music groups. As a result, his experiences were embedded in a number of aesthetic and conscious decisions that directed his musical life. As is demonstrated later in Chapter 5, Brendan's attendance and experience of a concert - *Ó Riada Sa Gaiety* - brought a number of these experiences to the fore.

#### **5.3.1.2 Seán Ó Sé (singer and retired secondary school principal)**

Seán Ó Sé was born in the rural village of Ballylickey in west Cork in 1935. In a similar manner to Brendan, his career choices involved conscious negotiation of formal and informal contexts during the 1950s and 1960s. Seán traces his first experiences of learning songs back to his childhood and the connection to radio.

Well I you see there was tremendous interest in music in our family and as long as I can remember we had a radio ... you were not allowed to listen to the radio at all to conserve the batteries ... and two things, football and hurling matches and Céilí House or its predecessor I think called Ballad Maker Saturday night was on. And I was listening to that I can't recall a time when I wasn't listening to it you know. And then my father had a huge store of songs ... he would teach us songs.



At the age of twenty, Seán's mother influenced him to pursue formal education in singing, and he did so in order to "placate" her. Seán reflected on his attempt to learn singing in a formal setting. He related how he possessed the ability to excel in this area.

I was walking up past the school of music one evening, I was about maybe 20 ... I went in and I was introduced to this man called John T Horn and he took me on for four years and he was a tremendous man ... He used to teach me songs like Lyndon Lee and things like that and I'd no interest in that ... Horn had to do no work on the breathing because he said it was there naturally so that was a big plus ... He said afterwards to somebody, that I had a very good voice and I'd have made a great opera singer or something like that, he couldn't understand why I was at that rubbish [traditional singing].

As a result of this involvement in singing in a formal setting, Seán would explain how this education gave him an advantage at a later point in his career.

I had one very important thing that after John T Horn had a very good range you know and they were confined to the keys of D and G. So I was able to sing songs with them like that another traditional singer wouldn't be. Like in my heyday now like I could go up to the Bb just under the top C and in certain vowels I could hit the top C.

Seán's story illustrated his movement between informal education in singing and then a crossover into formal training. This highlighted a distinct navigation between informal and formal education contexts and the way in which formal training became an important support to his career. He related how it enabled him to compete in singing competitions,

which in turn gave him widespread attention with Radio Éireann. This path eventually secured his position with a touring entertainment group, the Gael-Linn Cabaret.

So the Gael-Linn Cabaret ... they were short a tenor to go to the Great Southern Hotel in Parknasilla and he [fiddler Seán McGuire] said to the manager of the Cabaret that he heard this fella on Radio Éireann and that I was living in Cork and that I could be available you see ... They rang up RTÉ, got my address and phone number and they were on to me and they booked me for Parknasilla and so I headed off and that was my introduction to Gael-Linn you see.

Despite Seán's navigation towards singing within more formal settings, he continued to involve himself primarily in traditional singing throughout the 1960s.

#### **5.3.1.3 Eibhlín Gleeson (musician and music teacher)**

Eibhlín was born in Cork city in 1949. Her journey through music education highlights the experiences that she witnessed within formal contexts of musical practice. She traced her early musical education back to dance schools in the town of Cobh where she learned tin whistle and Irish dancing. However, prior to her university studies, she was influenced by her mother to learn classical music.<sup>62</sup>

*Now, nuair a thánadar thar n-ais go Corcaigh ansan agus bhí mo mháthair ansan age baile bhí ana-shuim ag mo mháthair i gceol agus is dócha bhíodh sí ag amhrán mar tá cúpla leabhar agam léi de *Handel's Messiah* ..., mar is cuimhin liom í a rá go mbíodh*

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<sup>62</sup> Within section 5.3.1.3, Irish language quotations and translation were edited with the support of copy editors Máire Ní Dhálaigh and Alicia McAuley.

na *exercises, you know, like* [sings] *meow ... so* chuas, b'fhéidir go rabhas sé mbliana nó seacht, chuas go dtí an scoil ceoil ...<sup>63</sup>

Despite being supported in studies of classical music, she related how it was not until later in her teenage years that she found a respect for Irish traditional music through formal music education at university with Seán Ó Riada.

Nuair a chuas 'on ollscoil don chéad bhliain, sin é an uair a thuigeas go raibh meas ag daoine ar cheol Gaelach, an dtuigeann tú, agus thosnaíos ag dul go dtí seisiúin san Arbutus agus *d'you know* thuigeas go raibh meas ag daoine ar cheol Gaelach cé ná raibh sé agamsa agus saghas chuireas meas saghas ansan ... thosnaíos ag foghlaim an... **Cén fáth go raibh meas ann?** Bhuel, d'fhoghlaimíos é sin ó Sheán, bhí Réamoinn Ó Sé ann, ní raibh éinne ag seimint píopaí an uair sin ... agus bhí ana-mheas ag Seán ar na píopaí uilleann chomh maith, *you know?* So thosnaíos ansan saghas ag cur meas ar cheol Gaelach don chéad uair *you know ...* mé ag foghlaim le Brigid Doolan, bheadh eagla ort ceol Gaelach a lua ar shlí, *d'you know?*<sup>64</sup>

Eibhlín progressed through university and built upon this by taking a diploma in teaching a number of years later. She described the attitudes towards Irish traditional music within institutions of formal music education.

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<sup>63</sup> Translation: Now when I came back to Cork and my mother was at home she had a lot of interest in music and I suppose she would be singing because she brought me a couple of books of Handel's *Messiah ...*, because I remember saying that the exercises would be [sings] *meow ...* so I went, maybe at six or seven years old, I went to the school of music ...

<sup>64</sup> Translation: When I went to the university for the first year, that was when I understood that people had respect for Irish music and we started to go to sessions at the Arbutus and *d'you know* I learnt that people had a respect for Irish music though I didn't have it ... **Why was there a respect?** Well, I learned that from Seán, Réamoinn Ó Sé was there, no one was playing the pipes then ... and Seán had a lot of respect for the uilleann pipes too, *you know?* So that was when I started respecting Irish music in a way for the first time, *you know ...* I was learning with Brigid, you'd be afraid to mention Irish music, in a way, *d'you know?*

Ní raibh an traidisiún againn ag baile, ní raibh sé ag mo mháthair ... agus, ag an am sin bhí saghas, *em, you know*, bhí saghas seana-bhlas ar an gceol Gaelach, *do you know*, agus is cuimhin liomsa nuair a bhíos ag múineadh sa scoil ceoil theastaigh uaimse go mbeadh *you know* go mbeadh na daltaí a bhí agam, go mbeidís ábalta ceol a sheimint *kind of by ear, d’you know?* ... agus dhéanfainn saghas *baa black sheep, you know*, role mar sin agus do bhíodh saghas eagla orm go dtiocfadh Bernard Curtis isteach, *you know*, bhí saghas *like you know?* Ní raibh an dearcadh, saghas dearcadh ann ar shlí.<sup>65</sup>

As shown from the commentary above, Eibhlín described her willingness to teach by oral transmission after her education with Seán Ó Riada. She related the prevailing negative attitudes towards not only the oral transmission of music in educational environments, but also behaviour within certain performance environments. She recounted attending a memorial concert for Seán Ó Riada in 1972.

Cuid againn, chuamar go Bleá Cliath, go dtí an Gaiety ... is cuimhin liom nuair a bhíomar ann mar daltaí ... bhíomar go léir mar sin – [sings] *ooh de doo de* – agus na daoine in aice linn: “Shh! Shh!” ... beagnach a rá *like*, “*He’s died, like, you don’t realise he’s died, we have to beat ...*” *you know*, is cuimhin liom é sin *all right, you know, like*, sin seachtó a dó. Ní raghadh éinne ag ceol traidisiúnta anois gan a bheith ag bualadh mar sin, *you know*, ach an uair sin bhíodar, “Shh, shh, shh, shh!” .....<sup>66</sup>

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<sup>65</sup> Translation: We didn’t have the tradition at home, my mother didn’t have it ... and, at that time there was kind of, em, you know, there was a kind of blind eye on Irish music, you know, and I remember when I was teaching in the music school I wanted there to be, you know, that the students I had, that they would be able to play music kind of by ear, you know ... and I was kind of afraid that Bernard Curtis would come in, you know, it was kind of, you know? That consideration, that kind of consideration wasn’t there in a way.

<sup>66</sup> Translation: A few of us, we went to Dublin, to the Gaiety ... I remember when we were there as students ... we were all like this – [sings] *ooh de doo de* – and the people beside us: “Shh! Shh!”, almost saying like, “He’s

Eibhlín's account personifies her attempts to involve her formal and informal experiences through her musical life during the 1960s. Like Seán Ó Sé, she was influenced by her family to pursue more structured, formal practices in music making. Despite this, it was not until later in university education with Seán Ó Riada that she experienced a changing awareness of attitudes towards Irish traditional music.

#### **5.3.1.4 Michael Tubridy (musician, dancer and retired engineer)**

Michael recalled his early experiences growing up in west Clare, Ireland during the 1930s. He related the performance of music as a function for dancing, rather than a performance in its own right.

I had an uncle he lived nearby he played the fiddle ... in those days all you needed to know was enough to play for a set, half a dozen reels ... jigs, hornpipe or two.

Like Seán, he described a strong connection to listening to the radio (in his case as part of his education in music), which was brought to his home when he was fifteen or sixteen.

When questioned on his involvement with organised or formal musical events, he related the lack of interaction that he had with more formal settings of music making.

**Would you go out to variety nights or shows in the hall?** I hardly ever went to any.

There was an operatic society in Kilrush. And they would be practicing. A lot of the ones taking part would be practicing in the school so we'd hear that going on all the time. Maybe some people we knew would be in the chorus. We'd go to some of those because they'd be very local ... In the town you had very little traditional music

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died, like, you don't realise he's died, we have to beat ..." you know, I remember that all right, you know, like, that's '72. No one would go to traditional music now without beating like that you know but at that time it was "Shh, shh, shh, shh!" ...

... So with the result that I used to spend most of my time out the country rather than the town.

Michael shared stories about his interest in traditional music and organising events such as *Céilís* and celebrating festivals such as the Day of the Wren. Throughout his youth he continued to develop his musical abilities. Despite this, however, his interaction with organisations of musical practice did not resurface until he lived in Dublin.

**Were Comhaltas on the scene at all or Gael-Linn or any of those in the late '50s? No**  
we wouldn't I suppose. We would be kinda getting involved in Comhaltas at that time as well. It was just another thing to do you know. It was great to see Comhaltas like they were I suppose organising different things.

Michael also related an incident off-the-record whereby he had been living in Dublin in the 1950s and had decided to pursue one aspect of formal education by seeking out teachers of music theory. He experienced some negativity towards Irish traditional music and as a result he did not attempt further involvement in this area.<sup>67</sup>

Michael's account related the ways in which he encountered and interacted with various contexts of musical practice. Unlike Seán Ó Sé's experience within formal

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<sup>67</sup> Following the interview with Michael, he related his experience with formal education in music. He made an attempt in the 1950s when he was in Dublin to learn something about the theory of music. He went to the School of Music in Chatham Row, and had been affected by the attitude of one of the tutors. Michael wanted to learn something about theory of music instead of playing a different genre of music. The tutor told him he would have to learn to play the piano. The tutor asked Michael did he play anything, he replied that he played some traditional music on the flute. The tutor's attitude was if Michael wanted to learn serious music he would have to "get all of that out of your mind, you'll have to stop playing that and just forget about it". In the end Michael did not go back there again. This experience was also related in an interview with Philip Coulter from the Canadian Broadcasting Company CBC during his trip to Ireland in 1994.

environments, however, Michael did not pursue training on such a deep level of engagement.

The four narratives above offer insights into some social engagements of music training and performance in Ireland between 1950 and 1972. As Table 5.1 demonstrates below, the themes outlined either refute or corroborate accounts by scholars about musical experiences during this period in Irish history that surfaced in the literature review.

An important aspect of Section 5.1 was how the encounters of practitioners with various musical contexts occurred through polyvocality. In these accounts, their interactions or lack of engagement with formal environments of music-making demonstrates complex layers of experiences. In some cases, musical careers are seen to shift away from emerging practices and towards crossovers in musical expression. In others, their careers move away from influences of their parents. Whilst there are overlaps of experiences between research participants, these decisions are shown to be based on a number of factors including but not limited to; parental guidance, musical ability, freedom of expression or agency.

#### **5.3.1.5 Seán Ó Riada (composer, arranger, band leader, musician, broadcaster, filmmaker, writer)**

Seán Ó Riada was born in Cork city 1931. His journey through music education highlights the significant amount of movement between formal and informal contexts of music education and practice. A student of Seán Ó Riada's, Tomás Ó Canainn, wrote two accounts of his life and work, both outlined in the literature review. Ó Canainn's account reflects how Seán Ó Riada's career trajectory was similar in some ways to the narratives outlined above, but it also reflects alternative routes that Ó Riada had taken with the aid of

parental guidance, his education and his ability within the environment of education (3).

Consequently, Ó Riada positioned himself within various important roles as director, composer, bandleader and raconteur.

Ó Canainn traced Seán Ó Riada's early musical education back to Adare, county Limerick where he learned violin and piano from an early age (4). Like Seán Ó Sé and Eibhlín Gleeson, Seán Ó Riada was influenced by his family, and by his mother in particular, to undertake professional training in music. Like Michael, formal musical training was not available close by whilst he lived in this rural setting, but he cycled nine miles every week to Limerick in order to pursue professional training in music.

He attended school at St. Munchin's, Limerick, Farranferris, Cork City and continued to develop his skills in Greek, Irish and Latin as well as piano, violin and organ (8). In 1952 he graduated with an undergraduate degree in Music and Arts from University College Cork. Seán also took part in various *Feis* competitions playing piano, and like Seán Ó Sé, this exposure also aided him in being appointed as Assistant Director of Music at Radio Éireann in 1953. Similar to Brendan's choice of social interaction, as a jazz musician, he made the decision to perform with a number of American-styled bands in his late teens in Cork and later in Dublin where he began his working life (15). The individual differences highlighted by polyvocality are outlined in Table 5.1.



| Participant | Literature Review   | Theme   | Finding   |
|-------------|---|---|---|
| Brendan     | <p>Musicians “perform themselves into” (or out of) various collectives over time, often contradicting public extremes of discourse associated with these communities. (Stoebel 2015)</p> <p>Musical practices and their transmission are viewed in the context of a 'complex web of inter-weaving narratives' (Kearney 1988).</p> | <p>Experience of formal and informal contexts of musical expression</p> <p>Music genre crossover experience</p> | <p>Participation with revival-led organisations depended upon aesthetic choice.</p>   |
| Seán        | <p>Motivation to pursue music through continued learning results from the influence of multiple cultures to which the individual belongs (McCarthy 1999)</p> <p>Oral musical practice was either excluded or was adapted to concur with the values and practices of the classical tradition (McCarthy 1999)</p>                   | <p>Influence of organisations on career</p> <p>Parental attitudes towards music making</p>                      | <p>Structures of formal education facilitated performer to succeed in singing contexts</p> <p>Family influence on performer towards formal music training, but the performer later turns towards informal practices</p> |

|         |   |   |   |
|---------|---|---|---|
| Eibhlín | <p>Learning by ear was not supported in conservatory culture (Bolliger and Reed 2008; Sloboda 2005)</p> <p>Oral musical practice was either excluded or was adapted to concur with the values and practices of the classical tradition.</p> | <p>Status of traditional music in formal education</p> <p>Parental attitudes towards music making</p> | <p>Unorthodox practices in formal environments were seen as detrimental to progress</p> <p>Family influence on performer towards formal music training, but the performer was later becoming interested in informal practices</p> |
| Michael | <p>Practical barriers existed within music education, lack of facility for a range of genres (Pine 2002)</p>  | <p>Interaction with Comhaltas Ceoltóirí Éireann, Irish traditional music scene in Dublin</p>          | <p>Lack of engagement with formal music education and music making in rural environments</p> <p>The musician's attempt to engage with formal education was complicated</p>  |

**Table 5.1.** Summary of findings in Section 5.1 through polyvocality

The concept of polyvocality applied in this chapter serves to reflect the career paths that were formed by ordinary performers in Irish society during the 1950s. Polyvocality demonstrates how much alike or different individual career paths and experiences were for these performers compared with Seán Ó Riada. Understanding how Seán Ó Riada negotiated continuity and change is linked to polyvocal narratives, as it highlights the decisions that were made by a number of important individuals who interacted with ordinary musicians.

## 5.4 Interacting with Seán Ó Riada

The coming narrative demonstrates the ways by which Seán Ó Riada and ordinary musicians enacted their own unique roles in the music scene. It probes underneath the experiences that interviewees encountered within their collaborations with Seán Ó Riada. Insights from other interviewees revealed aspects of continuity and change during this era. These accounts are particularly helpful to later discussions. Section 5.4 is divided into the following themes that were derived from content analysis: *Continuity and Change, Seán Ó Riada's Leadership 1954-1971, Negotiating Change* and *Networks of Collaboration*.

### 5.4.1 Continuity and change

Themes emerged from the literature review that indicated a distinct lack of guided cultural policy together with the polemical structures that existed between “high” art and traditional art forms in Ireland between 1950 and 1973. The interview findings suggest that a continuity of policy and practice also existed within dominant media organisations, particularly those who were involved with the broadcasting and performance of music.

#### 5.4.1.1 Continuity and expectations within organisations

Harry Bradshaw recalled three distinct types of media which were highly influential in Irish culture at this time, and suggests a level of influence that radio had upon the public perception of Irish music in general.

It was a different world. I was brought up in the 50s and radio dominated lives, in that you had the sponsored programmes, you had the Radio Éireann programmes in the evening or whatever, and drama, the plays were huge events but the radio in the '50s was four or five times bigger than the television is today and the fact that you

only had one station. Most radio sets never moved off Radio Éireann, only occasionally would they go to the BBC. Then the youngsters later on discovered Radio Luxembourg. But the ordinary Irish person their contact with Irish music was via Radio Éireann.

Film and cinema were also cited by respondents as dominating media during the 1950s. In the literature review chapter, it was also noted that the significance of the involvement of Gael-Linn within Irish communities was seen as a key part of their business interests. As an organisation growing within radio, theatre and film, Gael-Linn's activity was positioned both within dominant media and minority Irish language groups within Irish society. Harry Bradshaw attended the screening for their film *Mise Éire* for which Seán Ó Riada composed the soundtrack. He emphasised the importance of film and cinema during this period in time.

Cinema was huge, this was pre-television days and the Irish were a huge cinema-attending body of people. It was the big mass entertainment. O'Connell Street for instance was lined with six or ten cinemas, and some of them vast like the Savoy. And the Royal was different but the Adelphi and the Savoy I think they held two thousand five hundred people, upwards of that number so they were vast, vast big cinemas. And they would change their films every week or every fortnight. Normally there was new films every week or so, of different styles. The Carlton ... dealt lower quality films, the kind of B films you know and horror films and whatever. So ... whatever your tastes were there were different cinemas. So the tickets would go on sale about middle of the end of the week but you had to buy your ticket for Sunday

night or you couldn't get in - it was that popular. They would be full to the rafters with people. [That] gives you an idea of the size of the industry at the time.

Another aspect of the performance of music on radio was emphasised by Professor Harry White. He saw the 1950s as a period where orchestral music on radio played a key role in influencing public perception.

Radio and later television stations had a huge impact on the dissemination of music and particularly on the growth of orchestras ... I also think ... that the Symphony Orchestra, the Light Orchestra as it was then and the Singers, definitely helped to, as it were, concentrate the public mind on the availability of this music.

Even though in the 1950s Irish traditional music enjoyed a presence on radio, Peadar Ó Riada explains the aesthetic within which its performance and perception were presented.

Irish [traditional] music that time was very different to today, Irish music that time was very civilized in a Western way in other words if you listen to any of the piano arrangements or anything like that they were played completely different it was kind of drawing room style in the same way mirrored by the show bands that were coming out of the *Céilí* bands for example ... all that stuff it was all looking kind of towards America more than anywhere else ... the country was looking outwards for emigration constantly so it was a very different world it was hard.

Harry Bradshaw echoed Peadar's perspective concerning the musical landscape and recounted barriers that existed towards musical expression within the traditional and folk genres.

This was a kind of an underground scene if you like ... musicians would come together for a night and they would play and sing and whatever because it's hard for people today to understand ... in Ireland at that time you couldn't play traditional music in a pub or if somebody started to sing a traditional song or a ballad they'd be asked to leave, [saying], "None of that here kind of thing".

Peadar Ó Riada emphasised particular traits within the public perception towards traditional Irish singing later in the 1960s. He explains that in 1968, performance spaces for singing in public spaces were regulated differently in comparison to the present day.

In '68 we started going to the *Oireachtas*, and I remember going into Donoghue's [O'Donoghue's] with the gang in the choir and there was no singing allowed in Donoghue's except on Thursday night in the back of Donoghue's where the Dubliners were allowed to sing ... so my father died in '71 and all changed.

The interview responses above suggest that traditional singing was not seen to be acceptable in some public spaces. Despite this, singing did feature within the dominant media such as radio. A number of participants expressed the ways in which singing of Irish songs was presented.

Most houses had a radio, so radio formed the tastes and the perception of what music was. Now you heard very little popular music on it as well, it was a strictly controlled medium. But it was felt that classical music is good for Irish people this will uplift their minds, so you get loads of symphony concerts and recitals and the Radio Éireann Singers which were kind of an octet of eight unaccompanied voices and they used to hammer out these arrangements of including most kinds of stuff

including Irish traditional and *sean nós* songs and it was the most boring stuff that you ever heard in your life, interesting from a technical and performance point of view but from the listeners point of view you'd run a mile away from most of it. To a lot of people that's what the song tradition was, was these harmonised voices singing this stuff but it was dreadful stuff a lot of it you know. (Harry Bradshaw)

The narratives above suggest that dominant media forms such as radio, film and theatre played a key role with influencing cultural aesthetics in Irish society during the 1950s and into the 1960s. The data also suggests an important convention of this period in Irish history - that constraints were placed upon the performance and broadcasting of traditional song.

How then was Seán Ó Riada's work emerging from within the social structures of this period? In the literature review it was shown that as a period of great change occurred in the 1960s that had a significant socio-economic impact within Irish society. Interview responses indicated how change occurred within radio broadcasting as Seán Ó Riada worked with Radió Éireann. When discussing Seán Ó Riada's seminal radio show "Our Musical Heritage", first broadcast in 1962, Harry Bradshaw emphasised that shifting perceptions were beginning to occur towards traditional Irish culture in Irish society. Seán Ó Riada's role within this change is seen as unique amongst other important figures. Harry saw the international revival of folk music at this time as a renaissance.

The timing of Seán's arrival was not by accident, there was a perceptible, there was a worldwide revival of folk music and there was an Irish version of that happening as I say, Comhaltas and the Fleadh, the Clancy Brothers and the arrival of Ciarán Mac Mathúna in broadcasting. So Seán was another element of that, he went in a different way and he wouldn't have been too enamoured with what the Clancys

were doing. He was fairly scathing about the wide net that Comhaltas were throwing out there ... He was part of that national renaissance in the early to mid-50s, he was slap bang in the middle of it, so I think he has to be put into that context.

Harry also emphasises the important role played by Seán Ó Riada in this renaissance.

He was seen as this central figure to the Irish music renaissance, he then turned his back on it ... It all comes down to the kind of person he was and why did he do these things these various personas.

Change within societal perceptions towards traditional music was also echoed in other interviews. Film-maker Louis Marcus (b. 1936), who worked with Seán Ó Riada on a number of film productions, described the atmosphere during the mid to late 1950s prior to the release of the film *Mise Éire*.

From late secondary school, I got involved in the Cork branch of the Irish Film Society which was run by what was effectively the Cork intelligentsia which was kind of an underground community because the atmosphere of the country of the time was not conducive to free thinking and free ideas, exploring the art and literature of the world you know.

When working with Seán Ó Riada two years later in 1960, Louis referred to Ó Riada's confidence and the psychological barriers that were reflected in society at the time.

He wrote this play for the Dublin Theatre Festival which was based on one of the flamboyant 18<sup>th</sup> century poets, Eoghan Rua I think, and I remember saying to him, I said, "I didn't know you were interested in the drama?" (Louis), he said, "if I put my mind to it I could take the place of Shakespeare" (Seán Ó Riada). In those days, no



one expected you could be world famous and Irish at the same time. It was unknown at that time.

Louis described the changes that had occurred in cultural conditions in Ireland after the release of the film *Mise Éire* in 1959 and 1960. Like Harry Bradshaw, Louis equated economic prosperity following events such as the release of *Mise Éire* as part of a period of cultural renaissance. Interestingly however, he also views this change as short-lived.

You see, the sixties were when Ireland got affluent, which was a marvellous thing because the country had been stagnant, impoverished and all of a sudden people had money and so forth. That was good, and Seán was part of it, and initially it involved almost a tremendous renaissance in native culture. *Mise Éire*, *Saoirse?*, and Seán's success were all part of that, but eventually I think the consumer society sort of took over.

In consideration of the interview findings above, a number of points arise in relation to Irish society of the 1950s and 1960s. These include:

1. The dominant media genres of radio, film and theatre are described as important contributors in influencing public perception.
2. The culture of radio broadcasting presented an aesthetic which combined Irish traditional art forms with classical music. This aesthetic persisted within a culture where in some cases the public performance of traditional song and music was not widely supported.

3. The performers who became well known in the revival of folk music or what interviewees have called a “renaissance”, emerged in Irish society with different and distinct perspectives towards aesthetics of musical practice.
4. Fourthly, the late 1950s and early 1960s became a turning point in public perception towards traditional Irish art forms.

#### **5.4.1.2 Project restrictions and autonomy**

There was a common response amongst interviewees that artists struggled within the socio-cultural context of Ireland in the 1950s. A number of interviewees related Seán Ó Riada’s early activity in his role as within Radio Éireann and his predicament as a composer within Irish society. Peadar Ó Riada referred to a rediscovered archive recording from 1954 which was produced by French radio, where Seán Ó Riada performed some sonatines.

He was playing at night in jazz clubs ... Paris thing, he was trying to get work ... eventually he got commissioned to write for Radio Diffusion Paris and he wrote the sonatines. All the stuff was really not believed until several years ago.

Composer Dave Flynn also related how one of Seán Ó Riada’s compositions from the late 1950s displayed promising ideas but may have not been widely celebrated. This perspective indicates that perhaps the merits of Ó Riada’s compositions at this time had been demonstrated, but that these merits had not been matched with an equal level of recognition.

If you look at *Seoladh na Gamhna* and ... There is interesting stuff in those pieces that I think given the right time, that showed potential for something. There's a bit in the *Banks of the Sullane* which sounds a bit like Steve Reich to me, just kind of a

minimalistic thing. If he had have been around a bit longer than that he would have heard that music and he might have got a bit liberated.

Professor Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin detected the radical nature of Seán Ó Riada's creative process in *Nomos No. 1 (Hercules Dux Ferrariae)*, a composition that was written between the years 1956 and 1957.

It could have been his way of finding a connection between the serial music he was writing and traditional music ... there's a certain radicalism in the idea. He's trying to join the two music's up not through sound but through architecture through the form and musical architecture of the pieces themselves ... Maybe it was an indication that he wanted to search for a further kind of cohesion between what are apparently two entirely different systems of sound construction.

It is apparent through scholarly accounts of Seán Ó Riada's career that a search for an art form or language was sought by him. Filmmaker Louis Marcus also identifies this struggle and situates it in terms of the musical language that Seán Ó Riada sought to find.

His main wish I think would have been to be a successful composer of serious music for the concert hall, but as I say in my article the language had collapsed. There was no language anymore. He tried everything under the sun, but could not hit, could not find a voice. (Louis)

Louis continued to describe how this predicament developed and demonstrated the problematic nature of how he involved his artistic experiences within different performance settings and media.

Everything he tried in Irish music he did superbly, but there was nowhere to go!

What he wanted to be was a concert hall composer in a modern idiom. He could pastiche all the romantic and classical composers which was ideal for film scores, but not for concert hall. You couldn't produce a new Mozart symphony. And that's where he got stuck.

Interviews also suggested that publishing factors also influenced the performance of film projects. Louis Marcus related how the restrictions involved with copyright also impeded the use of the score for one project after 1965.

Do you have the score for Kennedy's Ireland? **No.** You know it became embroiled in legal conflicts, so it was never shown and nobody knows who owns it? Wonderful score - it's a pity that it can't be touched now because of the legal complications.

(Louis)

Legal complications were not the only obstacles to creativity. Louis related the lack of infrastructure for making film and attitudes that prevailed towards Irish artists during the early nineteen sixties.

There was little or no Irish filmmaking. Gael-Linn had a weekly newsreel, *Mise Éire* had just come out, and that was more or less it. Attention was centred around Ardmore studios and foreign film companies and film stars and all that. There were no jobs for Irish people, and that because the English unions controlled it. It was felt that film was so sophisticated that no Irish man could know about it.

A number of respondents intimated that within certain projects with Gael-Linn, a level of creative freedom existed for artists, but that this depended heavily upon the reactions of

audiences. For Louis Marcus, organisations such as Gael-Linn were seen to give autonomy to him in film projects.

After my football and hurling films, it was up to me to come along and choose a subject on so and so, because you see they felt I could read audiences and satisfy them.

Even though a level of freedom existed for Louis during this period, he also highlighted other project ideas which depended on the judgement of the organisation, Gael-Linn.

Seán had an idea. He used to read *Béaloides*, the journal of folklore, where he found the tale, *Caisleán an Mhuraigh*. We were absolutely thrilled with this idea of making it as a short film. We had cast it in our minds and everything, and we discussed the shooting and the whole bloody thing. We were invited to lunch - that was a bad sign - by Bob Mac Góráin and Dónall Ó Móráin of Gael-Linn. But they wouldn't give the money for it.

Louis also related time constraints that occurred for the completion of some projects. When working as director for Gael-Linn on the film *Rhapsody of a River*, he also relayed the significant time delay that personnel had experienced between project conception and delivery due to sponsoring constraints.

I conceived this idea. I wanted to make a film about Cork using Seán's music, and when I got to know him he was delighted with the idea, and we worked on it and everything was great, and Gael Linn almost persuaded the flour millers with the big silos in Cork to sponsor it. But they opted out. A few years went by, and eventually Mac Goráin succeeded in getting a group of departments centralised under the

Department of Foreign Affairs to sponsor it. The idea was there in '63 and it didn't come off. (Louis)

The limitations placed upon some of the projects above highlight the ways in which the performance of projects rested upon decisions made by staff at Gael-Linn. Despite these constraints, Louis also described the artistic freedom enjoyed by Seán Ó Riada. In *Rhapsody of a River*, when plans for the project were changed by Gael-Linn, Seán Ó Riada altered his own ideas regarding the soundtrack.

Instead of Liam Devalley, he at that stage had discovered Seán Ó Sé, so he got Seán to sing The Banks [The Banks of My Own Lovely Lee], you see.

We used a lot of the music that he had composed for the opening of the Radio Éireann station in Cork, and it was based on that city, you see. But in one sequence, there was nothing in the original radio score - and that was the heavy industry one, the shipyards and the steelworks and everything. So Seán composed a fugue. He said, "this industry is mainly financed from Germany so it's going to sound German" (Seán) [laughs] (Louis).

This level of artistic freedom allowed Seán Ó Riada to utilise local songs and to provide music in a creative manner. Similarly, as pointed out by Seán Ó Sé, a number of EP singles were produced by Gael-Linn in the early 1960s. Some of these singles became extremely popular and their success facilitated Seán Ó Riada in composing contemporary songs in the Irish language.

Actually *An Poc Ar Buile* you see was a huge hit and the follow up was a thing called *Neillí* which he [Seán Ó Riada] had composed .... and then there was another one for

the next follow up was a thing called *Tá Mo Mhadra* and he composed that, the words of it the air is *Me and My Aran Geansaí* I think. (Seán Ó Sé)

Despite this success, Seán Ó Sé was also quick to point out that in some cases the copyright of these melodies were not claimed by Seán Ó Riada.

Well like, *An Poc Ar Buile* is a marketable song ... **[shows EP records]** *Neillí* is ... I

notice that he is not claiming the air, is it a polka or something? It is yeah. And so ah,

**And so this was actually written by him? Neillí? Yeah?** (Seán Ó Sé)

Seán described the way in which Seán Ó Riada composed these songs, and the subsequent reception that they received.

On the way to Dublin he put it together in the car. And then the next one he put

together on the way to Dublin in the car was an equal flop it was a thing called

[sings] “*Tá mo mhadra, níl mo mhadra*” ... **That was a flop as well?** Oh it was yeah.

**Were they too kind of funny or something were they?** I think you see, the *Poc Ar*

*Buile* was a once off you know? Yeah, so that was a hit in ‘62 was it? ‘62 I think yeah,

eh and I think ah, maybe the mistake if you can call it that *Neillí* and *Tá Mo Mhadra*

were a kind of half clones of *An Poc Ar Buile* he thought but like you know the

magician never repeats his tricks so he should have gone for something totally

different like. For instance like the most requested songs to this present day are the

*Poc Ar Buile* and *Do Bhí Bean Uasal* you know, *Carrickfergus* and they are on a

different spectrum altogether. (Seán)

Speaking about compositions that were created later in the 1960s, Peadar Ó Riada highlights some constraints that existed for artists working within the genre of Irish traditional music, particularly with the practice of composers claiming compositions.

So you've got his version of *Carrickfergus* and so on, and *Mná na hÉireann* and all these things, there's lots of them there, *Playboy of the Western World* but he'd never tell anyone that he did it because that time it was completely frowned upon if it wasn't old, wasn't part of the tradition, even though tunes were obviously made but there was no recognition of composers that time.

This sentiment was also echoed by Michael Tubridy.

He'd do things like that and he wouldn't record them or wouldn't make any claim to them you know. I wonder about the *Ríl Mhór* as well did he compose that himself? ... He did spend some time in Dingle didn't he? He might have picked it up, there mightn't have been a name on it.

The interview data above suggests that Seán Ó Riada's projects involving Radio Éireann or Gael-Linn were more restricted in financially and creatively during the 1950s, but artistic freedom began to improve during the 1960s. The statements also suggest that within a constrained environment, even though Seán Ó Riada was seen as central to the folk revival, he made some key decisions during the production of these projects which ensured a distinct level of sensitivity towards conservative perceptions within Irish traditional music.

#### **5.4.1.3 Finances in projects**

How did respondents describe the financial aspects of these projects? A number of interviewees emphasised a lack of finance for composition and royalties in music. There was



a sense that the music industry was in its infancy in Ireland between the late 1950s and 1971. Respondents also stressed the economic poverty within Irish music as evidence of this low level of support for artists. A large number of arrangements of Irish airs for singers with accompaniment were located within the Seán Ó Riada Collection. Peadar Ó Riada emphasised Seán's work at this time, referring to him as a "jobbing composer". On a number of occasions he stressed that the financial arrangements for freelance works were poor.

You could earn money for doing arrangements for Radio Éireann ... Like that's very small money ... Like he was a jobbing composer and there was no work for him so here he was in the Abbey Theatre working in a pit orchestra which was only four, five, six or seven depending on the thing. (Peadar)

In some arrangements that were completed for Radio Éireann, Peadar described the specific payments given to a freelancing composer for each one at that time.

You'd get 10 shillings for doing an arrangement for RTÉ that time by doing those regularly.

The lack of contracts and indeterminant role of freelancing is echoed in recollections of Seán Ó Sé's experiences with organisations. In the early 1960s, Seán Ó Sé indicated that the extremely popular EP single *An Poc Ar Buile*, produced by Gael-Linn, did not result in substantial royalty payments.

We never or they never got funded ... the thing was ... for recording *An Poc Ar Buile*, I got actually it was £25 ... now that would have been about probably not far from a week's wages at the time you know. And we didn't question it, no royalties, nothing.

For Seán, Gael-Linn's activities are reconciled through their other actions and their mission.

Being a part-time performer at the time, Seán Ó Sé stressed that Gael-Linn's facility for recording Seán and his colleagues was important to him.

Some of those people think you should be sour over it but I'm not in the slightest like. Nobody else would give us the chance. (Seán)

Peadar also recalled the lack of financial support for his father and summarised this time period of his father's life.

He didn't have a wife out working that time ... so he had the lectureship in UCC afterwards, and then he supplemented those with adjudicating the *Feis*, or doing these bits and pieces for which there was a set fee, like a half a crown or ten bob or whatever it was playing with Seán McGuire and Barney McKenna and Kathleen Watkins, whatever. He didn't do that for very long.

Peadar described how his father altered his practices later in the 1960s and emphasised how it was uncommon to perform as a professional musician in order to gain financial remuneration.

Towards the end of his life he did a series of gigs - because he was famous, people would ask him. But you see that time, there wasn't gigs that time either. It wasn't a done thing. He did one in Trinity... organised one couple himself ... In 1971 Irish music suddenly became popular. They didn't make a livelihood out of it either. It was a lot more difficult that time.

Interviewee descriptions of the lack of defined financial organisation between artists and institutions, in particular where musicians were employed in a semi-professional capacity,

were numerous. Seán Ó Sé recalled the culture that existed in Radio Éireann which involved him in the radio programme *Fleadh Cheoil an Radio*.

**And were you getting paid yourself on Radio?** I was yeah. Now in the beginning, Seán Ó Riada was getting paid for all of us and he would pay me and sometimes like you know it would go in to fairly significant arrears but I would have to say for him, eventually every ... penny would come and like then after a while, it was easier really, I got a direct contract from Radio Éireann for it you know and ... **Near the latter end of all the shows or?** I'd say about half and half or something like that you know like you see it wasn't fair on Ó Riada to expect him to dole out the money for everyone. And I think that it was maybe he who looked for the change, he was not good at commerce, you know.

Budgets set by organisations involved with film production were also portrayed as highly differentiated. Louis Marcus described how the change in medium reflected the change in financial assistance.

Television on the other hand was different, because the budgets are miniscule, certainly from RTÉ as compared to Gael-Linn. I was allowed to spend a year making a short film for Gael-Linn. But with RTÉ, you were given 5 days shooting, so you were essentially working on verbal interviews. Then you'd shoot whatever illustrative material you could. I was essentially making essays really instead of films.

Seán Ó Riada's financial situation in the early to late 1960s is highlighted by Seán Ó Sé, who recalled the importance of payments from Gael-Linn for the artist.

**Were there any big projects like that that you knew of with Ó Riada that you and him were going to do together that didn't go out or anything?** No, no. I suppose you know like Charles Acton found fault with him for not having more innovative projects and he passed the remark. Like I mean Ó Riada was in very poor circumstances ... He left the Abbey Theatre and he went down to Dingle and he had nothing. Seán de hÓra gave him the house and then he lived in a place belonging to the North Monastery, belonging to Farranferris, they've a summer house they lived there and you know Charles Acton found fault with him for churning out Ceoltóirí Chualann music without any great change or anything like that and then he said ... I suppose he said, "he has found a way to keep the wolf from the door" or something he said, "and when the wolf is half inside the door make sure you keep him out", and there's truth in that.

On the evidence of these interview statements, it emerges that budgets and payment for projects were quite small. In some cases, remuneration through small payments portrays an unfavourable work environment. Despite the low payments received by semi-professional artists, financial support was not described as an important factor in their relationship with these organisations. To conclude, the answers related by interviewees portray organisational approaches to music related projects as ad-hoc in nature, involving disorganised financial arrangements.

#### **5.4.2 Seán Ó Riada's leadership (1954-1971)**

The theme of leadership emerged from code analysis. The findings suggest that leadership roles were significant in Seán Ó Riada's career trajectory. In a great number of

interview responses about rehearsal and performance, incidents were controlled by Seán Ó Riada, whilst in others he was strongly influential.

#### **5.4.2.1 Leadership and project setup**

A range of accounts from interviewees gave unique insight into Seán Ó Riada's leadership through the way that projects were rehearsed and performed. Project setup became an important theme in the interview findings. It related practical and logistical aspects of preparation and performance.

##### **5.4.2.1.1 Rehearsal**

Louis Marcus recalled attending a play at the Abbey Theatre in Dublin in his twenties.

Marcus reflected upon Seán Ó Riada's directorship of a small pit orchestra, whilst he was seated at the piano.

**Do you remember him playing music or was it mostly just the conducting?** Oh he would play the piano, you see the orchestra was so small ... the piano would always carry a lot of the burden providing some of the rhythm maybe and the harmony... the background and even helping with the clarity of the melody ... like he would, if you were doing *the Marriage of Figaro*, the piano would be going [ilts didil iddil idil didil dum] you wouldn't be relying just on the one violin to do it, so, ah no he was playing along with them and he'd be conducting with his head you see.

In many other situations of group playing, Seán Ó Riada would also play the role as director, organiser and arranger. Michael Tubridy recounted his experiences with Seán Ó Riada in charge of the group Ceoltóirí Chualann during rehearsals for recordings and performances. Michael described the level of responsibility that Seán Ó Riada assumed.

We wouldn't have that much contact with Gael-Linn or speaking for myself anyway.

We would just go along Seán Ó Riada would organise as far as we were concerned he told us where there would be a recording on and you ah know that we'd be there a certain time and he looked after all the arranging whatever music had to be done and ... he'd just present it to us, and we'd rehearse it and then play.

The multiplicity of roles assumed by Seán Ó Riada added to the complexity of his interaction with other performers. As a result, arranging and selecting repertoire contributed towards solidifying Seán Ó Riada's role as leader. Seán Ó Sé described the setup for *Fleadh Cheoil an Radio*, a popular radio programme which would last throughout the 1960s:

I would come back then and a week later then I would go out and he would listen to how I far I had progressed with the songs, he would make directions as they were required.

Seán Ó Riada's influence in rehearsal, organisation and the selection of repertoire continued to be strong with the ensemble group Ceoltóirí Chualann even when he lived far from where the group were based, in the city of Dublin. From 1962 onwards, Michael Tubridy recounts how it was important to rehearse in his absence during preparations for the radio series *Fleadh Cheoil an Radio*.

He'd send the programme the list of the tunes up to us and we'd have to organise our own rehearsal to go through them and be prepared because the way he used to do that then he'd come up one weekend a month and we'd do two programmes on Saturday we'd rehearse them in the morning and record them in the afternoon and the same thing on Sunday. So we'd do 4 programmes.

The continuance of rehearsals in Seán Ó Riada's absence indicates the respect that existed between members of Ceoltóirí Chualann. The content itself was described as both serious and light hearted. Michael related the type of perceptions that emerged in Ceoltóirí Chualann through their participation in concerts and other recordings of radio shows. Even though the *Fleadh Cheoil an Radio* programme overlapped in some way with the radio series *Reacaireacht an Riadaigh*, the perception of the way content was delivered on both radio shows was quite different.

I suppose *Fleadh Cheoil an Radio* was supposed to be a little bit light-hearted, you know, compared with the other things like the Gaiety now would have been a fairly serious event. **Was it?** It was ya like it was em and *Reacaireacht an Riadaigh* would have been. I suppose they were kind of in two sides, you know, the light hearted and the serious ye know and I think that was more or less his idea in *Reacaireacht an Riadaigh* there'd be a lot of kind of fairly difficult poetry or readings in Irish where we done nothing like that now in *Fleadh Cheoil an Radio*, and I suppose that's when Kelly came in, more light hearted more down to earth kind of stuff.

Even though members of the ensemble's perception of *Fleadh Cheoil an Radio* was more light-hearted, the performer Seán Ó Sé also points out the intensity of rehearsing and performing, and demonstrated how these shows supported his own singing career afterwards.

I think the most we ever did was, maybe we did thirty in a year, but usually around em I suppose six months thirty-six weeks. It was hugely popular you know? **It's like daily radio having it there all the time ...** I suppose more than anything else like it

gave me the profile that was necessary to gig around the country I was gigging away all the time myself like.

Seán Ó Sé's response indicates that the radio programme *Fleadh Cheoil an Radio*, though light-hearted and also intense, was an important show that benefitted performers within the group.

#### **5.4.2.1.2 Performance**

The solidifying of Seán Ó Riada's leadership was also demonstrated in interview responses regarding Ceoltóirí Chualann performances, in particular through his method for presenting shows. Seán Ó Sé demonstrated Seán Ó Riada's approach to language.

Bilingual? He would and this kind of bilingualism a little bit like Mícheál Ó Muirheartaigh he never said, "tá mé sásta bheith sa Gaiety Theatre agus tá an-áthas orainn bheith anseo", "we're here in the Gaiety Theatre". It was like you know "táimid anseo sa Gaiety Theatre anois agus tá an-áthas orainn an clár seo a chur i bhur láthair and our first item is" ... He would never translate you know just a running stream like you know in both languages in and out yeah.

Seán Ó Riada's methods for ensuring that performances were a success are retold through by Seán Ó Sé.

**OK so you were a lot freer to do what you wanted to do after the harpsichord came in? Yeah. And why, before that would you not just sing acapella without the band? I hated it. On your own? Yeah. I hated it. Why was that? Well I had this idea, well two things. I felt that the backing would keep you in tune ... the second thing**



was it covered up other glitches as well you know. But, and I never sang acapella until ... 12 years ago.

This evidence reveals the skills that Seán Ó Riada acquired as leader whilst performing. A number of other incidents were related by Seán Ó Sé which reveals the nature of recording with the organisation Gael-Linn. As highlighted by Louis Marcus above, facilities for production media were limited and under-resourced. This is reflected through the lack of marketing and temporary arrangements that were organised for recording LP records.

**When something like this was released, Neillí was released and the other one, how would Gael-Linn go about releasing it - was it just out in the record shops or?** There was no marketing at all. **Never?** No. Just appeared and that was it. (Seán Ó Sé)

**Was the Milltown hall like, these halls were used for recording and they would just go in, set up the gear and?** They would, I think it was like a community centre. **And how did you end up in there?** Gael-Linn rented it. There is a picture somewhere, on the cover of some of the albums on the kind of a setup. I would go into the middle. And there'd be a mic and then they'd be all around me, and there'd be lads pushing back their chairs an inch and forward their chairs an inch until they had balance. (Seán Ó Sé)

The narratives above illuminate two aspects of Seán Ó Riada's activity within musical practice in the setup of projects. Firstly, they demonstrate how he assumed a number of roles in a variety of rehearsal and performance contexts. As director, conductor, arranger, organiser and consultant, he assumed responsibility for many important activities within musical groups for theatre, radio and concerts. Secondly, the narratives illuminate how

these leadership roles emerged alongside performance. They demonstrate the lack of developed infrastructure and limitations that this placed upon concert performances, the marketing of music and semi-professional context within which these projects emerged. The improvisatory nature of rehearsal, recording and performance contexts indicate the ways that performers attempted to circumvent these limitations.

#### **5.4.2.2 Influence on peers and collaborators**

How did peers and collaborators experience Seán Ó Riada's authority? The influence on his peers and collaborators throughout music related projects were seen by interviewees as overriding aspects of his character. Several interviewees related stories about this influence, which supports reasons why he was afforded the freedom to alter the situations in which he found himself, but also his reputation amongst his peers. Seán Ó Sé described how Seán Ó Riada conducted concerts with the ensemble group, Ceoltóirí Chualann.

Even when he was sitting with the bodhrán he would still try to deliver the concert.

**Would anyone else try to do any introduction?** The only person who would interrupt, in a very humorous way would be Ronnie McShane.

A number of interviewees related events involving Seán Ó Riada as an authoritative figure, particularly when projects involved decision-making.

But I remember he wanted us to wear you know dickie bows and we were very opposed to that kind of idea you know and we used to have a big debate about this up in, we used to have the rehearsals up in Radio Éireann, 'tis out the back of the GPO that time and I remember him, was it with the musical director I think he was a German at the time ya and ah he came in to one of the rehearsals anyway and ah

God Ó Riada started talking to him in German ye know [laughs] I couldn't believe it ya, he was so, I don't know how good he was you know but obviously you know he was able to say some things to him anyway. And how talented he was really things that you wouldn't know anything at all about. Anyway he got his way and we wore the dickie bows. (Michael Tubridy)

In positions of influence, Seán Ó Riada's authority was matched with his ability to convince not only his peers but also his elders. Michael Tubridy recalled:

**So he was sort of organiser and arranger and performer too?** He was ya, ya, ya.

**That was a lot of work in a way isn't it?** He was ya, ya, he was great, I mean he was amazing now, really. The way he was able to deal with everybody and, I think there were some kind of awkward situations I suppose and he was able to handle them, yeah you know no problem. I mean we thought a lot of him we'd do whatever he wanted because it was all that kind of arranging music was very strange very new to us at the time, well we were fairly young I suppose and but I thought now the likes of John Kelly and Sonny Brogan that they wouldn't go along with that at all but *they did*.

The narratives above indicate that Seán Ó Riada was a decision maker, arranger, and spokesperson within the context of rehearsal and performance of his band Ceoltóirí Chualann. His ability to convince performers about his own decisions is highlighted through the influence that he had when members of his group were reluctant to make some changes.

#### **5.4.2.3 Reputation control**

A number of interviewees indicated that as a performing artist, Seán Ó Riada's reputation was created by the organisations with whom he collaborated. He was very much in control of his own reputation ... An example of his control is shown in his reluctance to tour his group, Ceoltóirí Chualann.

**So, I come back to that question again. I've got all of these records here and I'm wondering at any stage, did any of these get toured at all? Oh no no no no. Never got toured?** Ó Riada didn't like touring at all ... I think the principal motivation in the forming ... of the Chieftains was, Ó Riada used to refer to them as "the touring band" ... because they saw that there was money to be made. And of course they were totally successful ... Now there were exceptions. I'd say in the seven years I was with Ó Riada we wouldn't have done twenty concerts. We did one in Cork, we did one in Kenmare, Millstreet that kind of thing, but he just didn't like touring. (Seán Ó Sé)

The lack of touring is confirmed by musician Michael Tubridy who explains that this was a personal preference and selection process conducted by Seán Ó Riada rather than a decision that was made between band members.

He didn't seem to be interested in doing concerts at all. He seemed to want, like if he organised it himself he'd do it like it would be something that he'd be interested in but I mean if somebody rang him from Letterkenny there and wanted to put us on, he'd leave it he wouldn't go for that at all.

Despite playing a number of roles with the group Ceoltóirí Chualann, Seán Ó Sé recounted an instance where their repertoire was restricted during preparations for a performance in Belfast in the late 1960s.

Now but anyway, talking about political. In concerts we were doing the *Valley of Knockanure*, *the Boys of Kilmichael*, *the First West Cork Brigade*, *Barry's Column* and all these you know. And before we went north, we got a list of songs from RTÉ this was they were doing it that we weren't to sing. And all those were in it. You know – *Boolavogue*, *Boys of Kilmichael*, the total list like you know. And I suppose it was understandable in the context of the time ... Just before the troubles erupted it would be '67 or '68, I might have the year wrong there.<sup>68</sup>

RTÉ were influential during this period as major socio-political changes were occurring in the mid to late 1960s. It is not clear if restrictions were placed on material during preparations for other performances.

Some interviewees related how the involvement with some organisations had elevated Ó Riada's status. In particular, by 1970 Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin described how he had become aware of Seán Ó Riada's image and reputation.

A public figure, he was very much in the papers, in the newspapers. Of course, *Mise Éire* in 1957 so that was 13 years earlier ... the theme music had actually got into the charts in Ireland. So he had been in a sense crowned as the nationalist composer, photographs of him with De Valera and all that stuff you know ... he was a media figure and everything. (Mícheál)

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<sup>68</sup> Even though these songs were censored, Seán Ó Sé also related how the band altered the lyrics of one song *Táimse Im Chodladh* during this tour. This is confirmed with item 664 in the SÓRC finding aid.

Peadar Ó Riada suggested that during the late 1960s, Seán Ó Riada's image and reputation aided him in becoming an advisor to a number of organisations who operated beyond music environments.

He was on a board, he was artistic, creative, cultural director of the board of óstán whatever it was and he would be asked on to various commissions, Commisiún Athbheochán na Gael-Linn ... to advise and things. Like he was well known in all circles.

The narratives above indicate how a number of changes occurred for Seán Ó Riada in the mid-1960s. They also demonstrate that aspects of his reputation were controlled both by him and the organisations with whom he collaborated. The restrictions placed on repertoire and his performance preferences were conflicts that were negotiated by him in order to solidify his reputation and public image.

#### **5.4.3 Negotiating change**

Another significant theme that emerged from interview findings was Seán Ó Riada's methods of breaking with conventional practices in society. His son Peadar related the essence of this habit.

He didn't stick to the rules, not even his own rules.

Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin described the significance of projects involving traditional musicians as the place where Seán Ó Riada broke conventions in order to explore possibilities in music.

I am of the belief that Ó Riada was post-modern. Now don't think he was post-modern in his classical music writing I think he was modern in that. But I think he

was post-modern in his work with traditional musicians ... he broke through the notions of musical literacy as being essential and necessary to the creation of certain styles of music and what he would have called art music, what he was talking about there were extended forms of music making ... but he instinctively realised ...

Mícheál also related the breaking of convention as part of a wider global movement that was occurring at the time:

And this was a whole 1960s thing as well in the Western world, the searching for roots, and the work of Lomax, and Charles Seeger, and the increased interest in folk music, people were turning back to that. So it was something that was 1960s in the air.

As a broadcaster, Harry Bradshaw also highlights the unique ways through which Seán Ó Riada's actions were at odds with the musical aesthetic created in Radio Éireann.

This is what good music is and we're going to uplift the mind of Irish people by making sure they have a good healthy diet of good kind of clean classical music kind of thing ... The interesting thing is that Ó Riada had a leaning towards jazz as well. He had an interest in it ... but the classical music was his grounding ... Kevin Roche ... became head of light music and again the terminology tells you everything. In Radio Éireann there was the music department and the light music department. So music was the genuine thing, but the use of the adjective light was a demeaning way of describing popular music, dance band, jazz and god forbid, pop.

Harry described a story he heard from his colleague Kevin Roche of how Seán Ó Riada played piano to his audience, breaking a social convention in musicianship.

And what he did was he got a few classics that he knew, Mozart pieces or Beethoven or whatever but he just moved them into a strict tempo rhythm. So instead of playing the hits of the day, Seán would play Mozart or Beethoven or whatever, and all the kids would be jiving to it, he just played it in four / four time or whatever ...

John Reidy was just playing the classics, but dressing them up as dance band music.

Through performance and broadcasting, Seán Ó Riada broke convention. Seán Ó Sé also recalled his first hearing of Ceoltóirí Chualann on LP record, and how at the time, in comparison to other forms of music making, it was new and unconventional. This particular sound stood out in his memory.

See that one, *Spailpín A Rúin*. I remember coming home and sitting down and playing it. And Paddy Maloney plays the melody and at a certain point I think it is at the first turn of the verse, Éamonn de Buitléar comes in with a bass note and that bloody note blew my mind. And I don't know, like I can't, there's no logical explanation. It was like opening up a whole new whole bloody world of music that you know like was miles away. Now I would never fault the Blarney Céilí Band like. They were a very good céilí band in that they were all traditional musicians of course they were influenced by Jimmy Shand but they were playing double reels and things like that which very few Céilí bands were doing at the time. But that was the record that made me very conscious of Ó Riada.

If Seán Ó Sé was heavily influenced by Seán Ó Riada's unconventional approach to traditional music, Louis Marcus also found that Seán Ó Riada was covering ground in many different fields simultaneously.



I always felt he was doing everything simultaneously. Heavily involved in the choir, religious music, at the same time he was composing stuff for film, several films, not just mine, including Kennedy's Ireland ... at the same time he was trying to do his concert hall music, the Nomos... Everything he tried, the settings of the songs for voice and piano, Ceoltóirí Chualann and so forth he brought to a magnificent pitch. But having done that, he had done that and went on to the next.

The above accounts highlight a number of ways through which Seán Ó Riada made an impression upon his peers and collaborators. It suggests that Seán Ó Riada's modus operandi was to be innovative in how music was being performed, to sometimes break rules that were set, and to influence a number of colleagues in different fields of musical practice.

#### **5.4.3.1 Authority to change**

A number of accounts within the literature review indicated that Seán Ó Riada changed the course of music in Ireland. In this section, I introduce reasons for how change was brought about by him.

#### **5.4.3.2 Negotiating and effecting change**

The negotiation of change was described by Harry Bradshaw, and this negotiation involved the way that Seán presented concerts. Harry demonstrated the ways that change happened.

He won over a whole swathe of the middle Ireland, these were middle class people who go to symphony concerts and events like that ... who would have looked down their noses at the reels and jigs ... traditional music they would have seen as a quaint pursuit of the kind of leprechaun element. But Ó Riada could stand at the harpsichord and introduce a Carolan piece or whatever and he could win over a

middle class well educated audience, and open their minds to "listen this is our music, this is the music that you should be all proud of, this is the music that comes from our heritage" ... Ó Riada single-handedly through his force and his character and his character and his ability, was able to introduce a piece that the Ceoltóirí were going to play and win over that audience and to have them stomping their feet and cheering and clapping at the end.

Harry emphasised that ability, force and character were qualities used by Seán Ó Riada to wield influence. A number of qualities that aided his ability to be influential are also outlined in the literature. Recalling an incident that involved Professor Aloys Fleischmann's project to index Irish traditional music, Peadar Ó Riada recalled how Seán Ó Riada convinced his colleague, Aloys Fleischmann to change strategy on another project:

So Seán looked at this and said it was a disaster so they had to start from scratch and Seán designed this new method ... because Seán said Irish music didn't fit into the European idiom where you couldn't analyse it in the same way ... So "By, you can't do that" says Fleischmann, but then he saw the logic so they did, so they went starting all over again.

Professor Fleischmann was also Seán Ó Riada's lifelong colleague and friend. In addition to the evidence above, a number of interview responses outlined earlier in this chapter indicated that Seán Ó Riada developed strong ties with a number of important figures in Irish society. A sense pervades that authority was solidified through these types of relationships between Seán Ó Riada and his peers.

#### **5.4.4 Networks of collaboration**

During the gathering of data for the Projects Dataset, a number of names of collaborators emerged repeatedly. This indicated that networks of collaboration were small. In some cases, Seán Ó Riada was involved with the same collaborators on a continual basis.

#### **5.4.4.1 Groups, networks and friends**

For many interview respondents, there was a pervading sense that a small core group of networks of collaborators existed for Seán Ó Riada, and that these groups included close friends and politicians in particular.

#### **5.4.4.2 Social connections between networks of collaborators**

One interview response that described friend recommendations was from Louis Marcus. This particular section of the interview became poignant, as Louis emphasised the statement quite strongly.

But it's interesting the way connections work. I mean, how did Seán come to be chosen to do the music for the new Cork radio station, whose head was Seán Mac Réamoinn? Seán Mac Réamoinn was one of the trustees of Gael Linn, and therefore very close to Bob Mac Góráin. Bob McGóráin had been at college with, and a good friend of Seán, (then John Reidy) and obviously had recommended this man to Seán MacRéamoinn. It happened in the same way, I'm virtually certain, when they were looking for an assistant for George Morrison on *Mise Éire*.

This response emphasises that overlapping social connections existed between college graduates and hiring processes for important organisations in Ireland during this time. Robert McGóráin, Seán Ó Riada and Louis Marcus all attended third level education at University College Cork and all worked together on projects in Gael-Linn. Louis continued

the discussion to outline how this worked in his own favour, and the cultural milieu that Seán Mac Réamoinn drew upon when hiring Louis.

I'd already been on the committee of the Cork film society. And I'd founded and edited its quarterly magazine, *Guth na Scannáin* (Voice of Film), for two years if not three. (It was then taken over in Dublin). One of the people who first wrote to buy a subscription was Bob Mac Góráin, keeping his eye on film developments and already doing the *Amharc Éireann* weekly newsreel. So when it came to look for an assistant for George Morrison, Bob would have thought of this young fellow in Cork who was doing this magazine, and knowing that Seán Mac Réamoinn knew all of cultural Cork, he would have asked Seán "is he any good"? Seán would have given me a great write up.

The social connections between the hiring of artists and university networks were further reinforced by Harry Bradshaw who described a conversation that he had had with Bob McGóráin. Harry notes how a certain degree of familiarity would have played a part in the hiring process.

I knew Bob McGóráin in Gael Linn I had done various recording jobs myself as a sound man for Gael Linn and Bob ran the music department ... he told me the story of making the film [*Mise Éire*] and his links with Ceoltóirí Chualann ... as far as I remember they both went to UCC they were contemporaries. So he knew him from student days and saw him emerging then in the Dublin of the fifties on the musical scene. As far as I remember they both went to UCC they were contemporaries. So he knew him from student days and saw him emerging then in the Dublin of the '50s on the musical scene. So he took a huge gamble to offer him the job of scoring the films

because he was an untried person in that kind of line of work at the time and it could have fallen flat on its face and killed the film dead you know so it was risky.

Other interviewees expressed the opinion that cultural ties also influenced the selection of one auditionee over another. Seán Ó Sé recalled how connections were supported in other ways:

I suppose what I was doing that evening really was an audition for Ó Riada. But pretty quickly I learned that I had passed the audition and I'm always firmly convinced that one of the things was that I was a Cork man because he said to me going in in the car.

A personal preference became apparent as an important factor in the choice of repertoire for certain projects. Peadar Ó Riada emphasises the importance placed upon material relating to Cork in particular, and makes this clear when he states the approach that Seán Ó Riada took to these projects.

The thing that I, one of the things that never seems to be mentioned which I think is very indicative is how he went completely over the top and really swanned and enjoyed writing the music for Cork for *The Banks of My Own Lovely Lee*, you can hear in that the emotion with the concept, as every good Cork person has for their own county.

Acquaintances were made with musicians outside of the practice of auditioning as emphasised by Harry Bradshaw.

It was Éamonn who introduced him and as I say the best thing to do is to listen to that radio programme, I recorded Éamonn and he tells that whole story how that

came about. And that led to the introduction of these musicians whom Éamonn knew to Seán, so when the need came then for his job as musical director in the Abbey to provide music for that play the play of the Anvil, he needed musicians. And he fell back on the people that he had been introduced to.

A number of other interviewees also commented on the significance of these small networks of collaborators and the geographical influences upon repertoire and performance. Noting the names of these collaborators in the Projects Dataset also reinforced the idea that a constant return to these networks was a feature of Seán Ó Riada's journey through many organisations during his career.

The responses above highlight recurring teams of collaboration, the hiring of familiar acquaintances and friends, the connections between individuals both within university education and important organisations. This indicates that collaborations were carried out between small groups of interconnected individuals. The following Table 5.2 summarises evidence from the previous section, where the majority of interviewees related accounts of first-hand interaction with Seán Ó Riada.

| <u>Project restrictions or autonomy</u>         | <u>Leadership</u>  |
|---|--|
| Radio agenda at odds with artistic development  | Control of group playing in a number of contexts (Abbey Theatre, Ceoltóirí Chualann) |
| Constraints in composition of Western art music | Responsibilities and reputation control through Ceoltóirí Chualann                   |
| Copyright restrictions in film production       | Breaking conventional performance aesthetic  |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>Lack of infrastructure for filmmaking</p> <p>Success was dependent on market forces</p> <p>Film production depended on financial assistance</p> <p>Freedoms in writing film music in some cases</p> <p>Restrictions on composition within Irish traditional music genre</p> <p>Low payments for performers and artists mirroring a lack of professional structures in musical practice</p> <p>Censorship of musical repertoire</p> | <p>Directing, organising, arranging and composing on many levels</p> <p>Strong presence in rehearsals and performance</p> <p>Facilitating and directing with harpsichord</p> <p>Control of Ceoltóirí Chualann performances</p>  |
| <p><u>Negotiating Change</u></p> <p>Post-modern in working with traditional musicians, new forms of musical practice</p> <p>Unconventional aesthetic of performance</p> <p>Doing everything simultaneously</p> <p>Varied repertoire in radio shows<br/>(<i>Reacaireacht an Riadaigh vs Fleadh Cheoil an Radio</i>)</p> <p>Authority to make changes - force, character and ability</p>  | <p><u>Networks of Collaboration</u></p> <p>Repertoire selection and performance centred on the geographical region of Munster, in particular West Cork and Limerick</p> <p>A number of projects involving prior acquaintances</p> <p>Collaborations with Cork performers</p> <p>Use of connections from UCC alumni</p> <p>Fell back on acquaintance to form group</p> |

|           |  |
|-----------|--|
| Knowledge |  |
|-----------|--|

**Table 5.2.** Summary of thematic findings

In section 5.2.1 above, a broad overview of continuity and change was presented. Table 5.2 revealed in-depth accounts of Seán Ó Riada's collaborations. In the next section, I examine the perspective of interviewees who provided second-hand accounts pertaining to Seán Ó Riada's legacy.

## 5.5 Legacy

A large number of younger interview participants described the impact of Seán Ó Riada's legacy on their lives and on Irish society in general. In particular, the recording *Ó Riada sa Gaiety* became a talking point for much conversation. I have included this event not only because of its well documented status as a seminal moment of Seán Ó Riada's life from scholarly accounts, but also because it revealed insight into a number of important perspectives about his legacy.

### 5.5.1 Legacy - Ó Riada Sa Gaiety

As noted earlier, Brendan Hearty attended a concert organised by Gael-Linn on 30th March 1969 originally entitled *Comóradh an Fhile Peadar Ó Doirnín - Ceolchoirm Sa Gaiety Theatre*. As a concert goer, this concert made a lasting impression on him.

It was completely revolutionary. It was new like Sweeney's Men were new. But this was new on a kind of more serious side of traditional music was suddenly being



presented in a kind of a, outside of its normal context. There was something happening there. Some kind of magic juggling.

Even though this concert represented a new departure point for Brendan's musical journey, he described how the setting became both unsettling in some ways and liberating in others.

It was, almost intimidating. It was like suddenly we were in a higher cultural plain like recognised by the mainstream. We'd been in Mark's bar where it was illegal almost [to perform Irish traditional music], outside being used to be on the outside. So this, being in ... coming into this in a direct line from the rebel Mark's Bar to this kind of plush and ceremonious place yeah it was big ... Yeah we felt we were in a way out of our depth but also not really ... 'cause we were there, we were there for the music and we knew why we were there ... I felt like I was an imposter in a way you know being there.

The concert evidently made a lasting impression on Brendan's musical journey, but the experience was also significant in breaking class differences. He recalled a situation that occurred following the event.

I remember now where I was. I had a job operating a car wash machine ... in Dundalk ... about five days after this concert, this really posh woman was having her car washed and ... she must have seen me or recognised me at this concert because she was at it too ... You see now ... I'm from a working-class background and she was definitely not. That's the kind of, suddenly me and her were on the same level, we were at the same show. That was unusual, a rocky rolly kind of guy like me to be

meeting the likes of her and in a way that epitomises what music can do, music can bring all the classes together.

The event was also discussed at length by interviewee Professor Harry White. Unlike Brendan, however, he perceived Seán Ó Riada's presentation of Irish traditional music in a different way.

That he was representing traditional music as something that was not simply you know a cultural marker of authenticity or nationalism or some sort of ethnic bona fide but saying, well wait a second we've moved beyond that I am here and I am reimagining this in an ensemble I have a harpsichord going you know I am as close to the eighteenth century it makes no difference in the instrumentaria I've got lined up here and I would like to show you and let you hear how this music is our classical music this is what we should be doing and this is how we do it ... by performing this music we were doing something that had far more historical heft than simply covering symphonias or gavottes or suites by the Earl of such and such or by Sir John Stevenson or whoever it happened to be.

In contrast to both Brendan and Harry's accounts and their insight into the significance of this event, as flute player performing in the group Ceoltóirí Chualann on the night, Michael Tubridy saw the performance as just another concert.

When all that was going on eh we'd have never have thought that it would be such an event or to look back on as kind of the start of anything. It's only in later years after all the when other people started taking an interest in talking about it but at the time it was just one of the things everybody was doing.

As described earlier, Michael arrived on the music scene in Dublin in the 1950s, and he also described how his broader engagement with Irish traditional music saw him becoming involved with a number of groups within the city. Michael saw the concert as part of a wider culture of music performance. Professor Mel Mercier described the way in which the resultant recording of *Ó Riada Sa Gaiety* on LP record demonstrated his impression of the event in terms of Seán Ó Riada's overall career achievement.

I think for me the material that's the most potent without question is the music on *Ó Riada Sa Gaiety*. That's certainly the sound and the energy that most moves me. If I had to name one thing which was the most significant musical achievement it would be that ... I suppose emotionally and in terms of originality and innovation I think the work with Ceoltóirí Chualann which I think culminated and was captured in that moment is the most significant the most potent expression of his contribution.

Even though the event itself was not originally aimed at being a recording that made a statement about Seán Ó Riada's importance within the Irish traditional musical landscape, Mel saw this as significant in terms of an artistic, Irish based musical crossover.

Ó Riada had kind of lit a torch ... Ó Riada himself was at the centre or certainly a key personality amongst a group of artists from all sorts of disciplines, so poets, film-makers ... Young people like Donal Lunny for example, Christy Moore and many others who were feeling this who were also Irish, clearly interested in music so this energy began to emerge ... You had that meeting of traditional musicians and those interested in folk music or popular music.

In comparing the *Ó Riada Sa Gaiety* event with Irish cultural expression in recent years, Brendan Hearty also described Seán Ó Riada's experimentation as unique.

**In a way it seems to be a complete world away from Ó Riada's experiment and what he was doing?** Some people might think *Riverdance* had something to do with Ó Riada for its grandiosity or something but it is the opposite. Maybe that first creation they did for the ... Eurovision had some value. But everything after became dollar driven. But it gave people careers. It gave people money to buy houses. I know people who have.

The legacy of *Ó Riada Sa Gaiety* as being synonymous with Seán Ó Riada highlights the attachment which is made between the artist and the event itself. In Table 5.3 I have highlighted a number of factors which have been attached to this concert and continue to live through Seán Ó Riada's legacy.

| Ó Riada Sa Gaiety   |
|---|
| Originally planned as a bi-centenary celebration of Gaelic poet Peadar Ó Doirnín, organised by Gael-Linn. However, the recording later became known as <i>Ó Riada Sa Gaiety</i> |
| Taking traditional music outside of normal context  |
| Mixing audience of different classes  |
| Ceoltóirí Chualann performer recognised the event as "just another" performance   |

|  |
|--|
| Recording demonstrates an originality and innovation as part of Seán Ó Riada's legacy  |
| Motivation for the event seen as contrary to the commercial objectives of later events |

**Table 5.3.** The *Ó Riada Sa Gaiety* concert legacy findings

The event and subsequent release of the LP record contributed to Seán Ó Riada's legacy in a number of ways. The presence of an Irish traditional music group at the Gaiety Theatre clearly made an impact on working class audience members such as Brendan as it changed his attitude towards the musical landscape. The event was seen by Brendan and Mel as a meeting of cultural worlds.

## 5.6 Concluding thoughts

This chapter began by revealing the multifaceted perspectives from the experiences of regular performers who interacted with Irish institutions of musical practice and Seán Ó Riada during the 1950s and 1960s. It then uncovered historical accounts of activities concerning Seán Ó Riada's music related projects. In particular it focused on ways through which rehearsal and performance occurred during his lifetime. Evidence suggests that Seán Ó Riada's negotiation of continuity and change progressed during a changing society of the 1950s and 1960s. Key themes that emerged in this negotiation were: leadership roles, reputation control, networking with collaborators and his legacy.

Throughout this chapter, the use of themes from the literature review and a list of all Seán Ó Riada's discovered music related projects served to inform the interviewee responses. Interviews were used in order to probe socio-cultural aspects of the period of time in question. Emerging themes from the analysis of interview responses allowed the

real-life experiences of interviewees to be heard. This chapter then served to highlight that insight from fieldwork in ethnomusicology is an important part of the research process when developing contextual insight alongside digital research with the evidence of historical data. Chapter 6 seeks to utilise findings by analysing them alongside emerging data from digital prototypes. As shall be seen in the next chapter, the findings that emerged from fieldwork interviews serve to inform our understanding about the ways by which digital humanities data is assessed.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Appraisal**

#### **6.1 Introduction**

This study has engaged foundational principles of research in ethnomusicology with digital humanities based theory, tools and practices. The research in the ethnomusicological investigation involved a historical literature review and fieldwork, whilst the research into digital humanities focused on data gathering, structuring and visualisation. In this chapter,

the results of these research techniques are combined and compared through the presentation of data and findings. This approach utilises and adds to criteria from Hebert and McCollum's book *Theory and Method in Historical Ethnomusicology*. The objective of this chapter is to emphasise that although these texts demonstrate how certain digital theory and methods are useful for research in historical ethnomusicology, more in-depth or self-reflexive engagements with digital practices can be fruitful activities for research that deserve to be explored. In addition to arguing for more awareness of digital practices and in-depth engagement, I suggest that the use of digital data in research should also involve deeper critical attention and reflection.

In addition to highlighting the need for more engagement and critical awareness, this chapter also demonstrates the ways through which digital patterns are examined from the perspective of a digital humanist. During this discussion, McCollum and Hebert's criteria in *Theory and Method in Historical Ethnomusicology* from 2014 are brought to the fore. Their work demonstrates how primary documents serve as important contributors to historical perspectives.

Historical data (such as primary documents) may be accessed, and ... their interpretation is essential toward understanding the past, for such data may either corroborate or refute aspects of the "remembered past" encountered via ethnographic observations and oral accounts. It is in this regard that careful analysis of pre-existing recordings of performances and interviews, notation manuscripts, newspaper articles, letters, and other primary resources held in archives enable the expansion of knowledge. (McCollum and Hebert 2014)

The work of some digital humanists is reflected in the advocations outlined by McCollum and Hebert - that when developing new ways to evaluate material evidence, both the evidence and the methods must be carefully examined. Digital humanists use primary sources as an integral part of the research process. However, they also pay critical attention to the media through which evidence is represented, with an important focus on digital technologies. McCollum and Hebert suggest that the researcher be grounded in ethnographic practice as a way to support rigorous enquiry with other sources of evidence (70). I add two caveats to this a) that suitable theoretical approaches for research in ethnomusicology may be identified early on in the research process by visualising data, and b) that data as well as the research tool must be explicitly critiqued during the process of building digital structures and analysing data.

This chapter begins with a review of the methodology used in this thesis. It proceeds with an outline of phase two of digital exploration which evolved from data gathered in Chapter 3. The research demonstrates novel ways of engaging findings that emerged from previous chapters (in particular the evidence revealed in Chapters 3 and Chapter 5). The argument for deeper engagement with tools and practices and critical reflection is presented through an examination of digital research data in a self-reflexive manner, drawing attention to the method by which data was collected and represented.

### **6.1.1 Practice Theory**

Practice theory was found to be a suitable theory for combining event specific research with representations of time-based evidence. In particular, the timeline prototype lends itself to analysis from a practice theory perspective, as this method has facilitated the



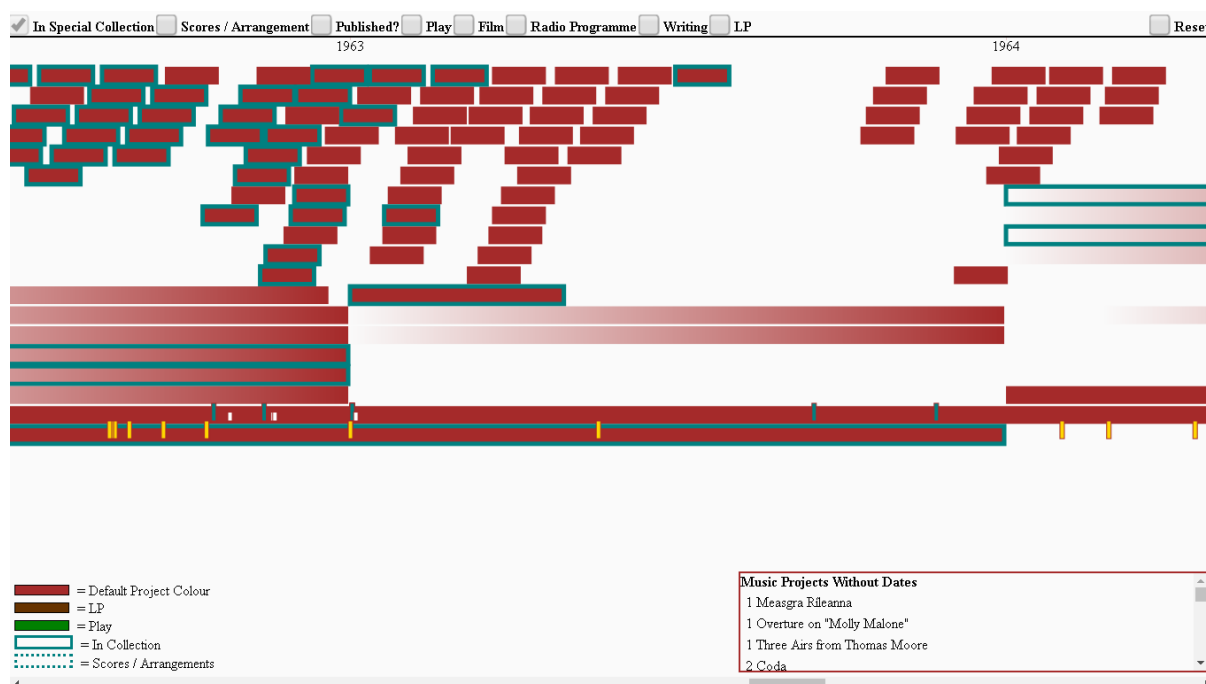
accurate representation of the creation of music and related performances at specific dates in the past.

As outlined in previous chapters, the use of practice theory was an important part of the research process. It emerged as a suitable way to approach the documents within the SÓRC after the discovery of the range of Seán Ó Riada's music related projects through the visualisation of data. This process served to indicate the nature and extent of music related material that was located within SÓRC as compared to collection data in other archives. As a result, digital practices became an integral part of the research process.

The core principles of practice theory in its current form are used by researchers to engage with practical approaches to understand historical events. As outlined in the introduction to this thesis, the blend of practice theory utilised in this study focuses on combining evidence on individuals, background knowledge and material artefacts. This evidence is highlighted where it intersects in musical performances in order to understand dynamism and agency as part of the processes of continuity and change. These principles were applied to the ethnographic approach outlined in chapters 4 and 5, resurfacing in this chapter as a means to approach research evidence generated during this project.

## **6.2 Data visualisation – phase two**

Chapter 3 of this thesis ended with a focus on the visualisation of projects from the SÓRC over time. Music related projects were visualised in a way that allowed the research to highlight patterns of activities that were formed from the Projects Dataset, the events dataset and the letters dataset. Fig. 6.1 demonstrates the results of the first development of the digital visualisation framework.



**Fig. 6.1.** Timeline visualisation at the end of phase 1

The representation of projects in the above timeline enabled a number of possible research directions that were worthy of further exploration. As practice theory became the chosen perspective with which to contextualise the music related projects, it was clear that the next step for developing the timeline visualisation was to create a more complete picture of Seán Ó Riada's music related activities. During the data gathering process, a number of blank areas appeared on the timeline. An investigation of evidence in other archives, both physical and virtual, enabled more comprehensive listings of these activities throughout various periods of his career. In keeping with this project's aims, finding every project which involved Seán Ó Riada became more important in order to understand events which occurred at various moments during his career. Due to the evidence in the literature in this area and the relative availability of the SORC, this visualisation is a crucial starting point for further investigation into this area of Irish historical ethnomusicology.

The process of gathering material began with a number of visits to archives located around Ireland in May 2016. Over the course of six months, these visits culminated in the gathering of data from other archives, as outlined in Chapter 3.<sup>69</sup> A number of important contributions were added to the timeline as a result of these investigations. For example, at the Abbey Theatre Archive in NUIG, a more extensive set of plays involving Seán Ó Riada at the Abbey Theatre was discovered that far exceeded evidence available from other sources. Earlier searches of the Abbey Theatre Archive website had produced only a fraction of these listings. A manual search through the Radio Éireann roll books of 1953-1959 also revealed a large number of radio shows that had not been found within prior searches conducted on digitised newspapers. Research at the IFI also uncovered data concerning film projects involving Seán Ó Riada which were not in the SÓRC.

During this phase of data gathering, additional avenues of research were explored. Digitised newspaper records were available through the *ProQuest* database on the website of the library at UCC. This data was collected with a series of searches over a period of two years. The searches resulted in data discovered within the following newspapers:

- *The Irish Times and The Weekly Irish Times*
- *The Irish Press*
- *The Irish Independent*

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<sup>69</sup> These archives included:

The National Folklore Collection (NFC), University College Dublin

The Irish Film Institute (IFI), Dublin

The Irish Traditional Music Archive (ITMA), Dublin

The Abbey Theatre Archive, National University of Ireland, Galway (NUIG)

The Radio Teilifís Éireann (RTÉ) Archives, Dublin

The Contemporary Music Centre (CMC), Dublin

Other resources in this database also included Irish national, regional and historical newspapers. This data was added to the Projects Dataset. From this evidence, a number of new insights emerged in relation to Seán Ó Riada's career. The data obtained from these additional sources informed previously unrepresented areas of Seán Ó Riada's music projects and performance activity. Consequently, this data was also an important addition to the Projects Dataset and Events Dataset. In some cases, such as in new sets of radio shows that were added, these searches substantially altered my perspective about Seán Ó Riada's activities as new evidence populated areas of the timeline. Certain media, organisations and collaborations then became far more significant.

In early 2018, the activity of adding project and performance data on Seán Ó Riada's career had been finalised - the search ended. No further searches produced evidence of his activities or music related projects. Analysis and assessment was then carried out of the most up to date version of each dataset. This allowed issues and concerns regarding the data that was discovered to be addressed. This case study argues that data assessment is as important as data gathering.

### **6.2.1 Projects Dataset - issues of concern and generating new evidence**

A number of design decisions and changes emerged during the process of data capture and visualisation. Altering the design of the visualisation through continual prototyping allowed me to produce more complex representations of data and the projects that were discovered. Important developments occurred during this process. The engagement with more complex methods of representing data allowed a more accurate portrayal of projects, but also generated uncertainty. This uncertainty is highlighted in the difficulty of representing project creation, performances, categorisation and colour. Despite

these difficulties, by engaging with data on a deeper level further discoveries were generated as data was re-gathered and re-visualised.

#### **6.2.1.1 Undated material**

An important issue that occurred whilst representing projects on a timeline was that some primary source materials from the SÓRC had no recorded dates. In general, such material included musical parts for Abbey Theatre plays and score cards for Ceoltóirí Chualann concerts. Subsequently, this material did not feature in the digital visualisation framework and was hidden from visualisation. I attempted to account for this by listing these materials in a separate section below the timeline. In all, dates for a large number of parts for manuscript scores could not be determined. As a result, they remained within this listing. Despite being able to recognise their presence, their position at the bottom of the page below the timeline gives them far less prominence than the dated material.

Even though a number of music related projects from the SÓRC were undated, evidence from the digital collection (finding aid) did allow a date range to be estimated. This occurred in cases where the collection archivist had described the approximate date of creation or performance in the digital collection's metadata, for example the year of a project's creation (for a description of the process used to estimate date ranges, see Table 3.1 in Chapter 3). Estimates about the year of creation became an issue of concern, as in some project representations the time period between creation and the performance of the project was greater than expected.

It is worth acknowledging that these dates could have been found with further research by close reading in order to comprehensively consider each project. The purpose of

this case study, however, is not to provide an in-depth account of each project. Having made substantial inroads into the process of data gathering, it is important to note the extent of the challenge presented. This has significant ramifications for the way in which visualisation is approached and perceived. Discussing the design of the datasets and their subsequent visualisation can only ameliorate this absence to some extent.

#### **6.2.1.2 Gradients**

The use of gradients on the timeline enabled the representation of incomplete information such as unknown date reference points. For example, in cases where performance dates for projects were known, this information was represented as a project end date. Still, in many cases it was difficult to determine the project start date. It was decided that if the performance date could be ascertained, then the process of composition would be represented by a gradient fading into view by way of a linear box that became progressively opaque from left to right (see Fig. 6.1 for an example of this method in use). In many cases, where the year of production or performance was the only known time interval, then the 1<sup>st</sup> of January was used as the start date and the 31<sup>st</sup> of December was used as the end date, with a transparent to opaque gradient displaying unknown beginnings and moving towards an end date that was more opaque as the year progressed.

Overall, the method of using gradients proved effective for describing intervals of time where end dates had been determined accurately. The approach of data driven design outlined in Chapter 3 demonstrates the ability of humanistic data to be more accurately represented within a digital timeline. Despite this, the timeline also fails to highlight unknown end dates in other cases. Design and representation issues such as these conceal flaws in the visualisation.

### 6.2.1.3 Categories

Another representation of data which delivered uncertainty occurred as a result of attempts to categorise Seán Ó Riada's music-related projects. In order to understand the diversity of music within the collection, a method was devised for separating each project as it was visualised. Within the Projects Dataset, each document was assigned to a category based on the medium or context where it was recorded, broadcast, or performed. During a redesign of the data visualisation framework, a number of HTML checkboxes were placed above the timeline. The following list was created:

- In Special Collection
- Score / Arrangement
- Play
- Film
- Radio programme
- Writing
- LP

The use of categories as HTML checkboxes became an important aspect of the digital visualisation. It facilitated a way to visually highlight and separate projects. For the purposes of this project and research, the category 'In Special Collection' is the most important, as it highlights both projects that are inside the SÓRC and projects that were discovered elsewhere. As Seán Ó Riada engaged with a range of media, sometimes these engagements occurred simultaneously. The categories also enabled each type of project to be highlighted individually. In particular, arrangements were separated from original compositions in order

to differentiate between composed works and arranged works. Categorisation therefore became a method for discovering patterns within each medium.

#### **6.2.1.4 Colour and text coding of projects**

Categorising with checkboxes proved to be a fruitful design decision. In the first iteration of this design, each category was assigned with a specific colour. Kräutli has shown how colour coding can aid the way that visualisation is understood (178). Despite its advantages, once the representations of these categories became more complicated the use of colour gradually became more difficult to retain as a valid method to display the required information. Instead, the text of each category was placed within each project interval. This method then became problematic during attempts to fit the full text of radio shows within single day intervals.

A new method was then devised to circumvent the issue of representing categories in a neat fashion. Capitalised letters were placed within each project interval that was one day in length, and full names were used for project intervals that lasted at least a number of weeks. This proved a useful shorthand for representing shorter intervals (for example daily broadcasts of radio programmes), and employing the full-length title was equally successful for longer periods (usually film work which stretched to a time period of over a year).

Labelling the various media became a useful method for distinguishing between different sources of Seán Ó Riada's works. For instance, the significant number of radio programmes was easy to manage when tagging them as the letter "R". Furthermore, in some projects where Seán Ó Riada was both writer and composer (for example see *Caisleán a Mhúraigh*), it was necessary to add two tags – "Film" for Film and "W" for Writing. In



order to account for projects that included a number of checkboxes (for example, a composition located in the SÓRC) a border was added to the outside of the project interval.

These methods indicate the complex nature of the projects undertaken and the design accommodations that were required to visualise them. Such issues are commonplace in digital humanities research, as shown by Kräutli (33). Research and interpretation, along with the prevalence of errors are commonly used in a positive way by digital humanists.

#### **6.2.1.5 Issues with timeline intervals**

In a number of instances, representing and visualising arrangements created by Seán Ó Riada were possible with specific dates that allow the period of their composition to be charted. Due to accurate dates being present on manuscript scores, the interval values were represented with more precision. As stated earlier, during data gathering for the Projects Dataset, most arrangements that were connected with Radio Éireann during the period of 1955 and up to 1959 were signed and dated by Seán Ó Riada. Despite this, a large number of later arrangements and compositions did not include these details. It was therefore necessary to rely on information from material such as Radio Éireann (RÉ) and RTÉ licencing or copyright stamps.<sup>70</sup>

By using copyright information from stamps by RÉ and RTÉ, evidence from the dates of administrative activity within these organisations could more readily be identified.

Despite this, in some cases this data also raised some issues when visualised. Instead of the

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<sup>70</sup> Licencing or copyright stamps were added to manuscript scores by RTÉ. The dates of these stamps were consistent with the estimated dates of composition. For example, a large number of arrangements that were signed and dated for RÉ in 1955 carried a RÉ stamp that was usually added a number of weeks later. In a follow up email to RTÉ Music Library, I was advised that this was generally the case with scores during that era. (see Appendix B email to Lindsay Dowling).

project interval becoming a period of composition set by the composer, the interval then became representative of the approximate date when that project was broadcast or performed by the company. In this case, there may have been many broadcast dates that remain undiscovered. In lieu of accurate dates and the licensing and clearance data being the only evidence used to visualise these projects, exact information about project intervals was difficult to verify. A sense pervaded that Seán Ó Riada was not meticulous about administrative work as his career progressed.

#### **6.2.1.6 Abbey Theatre play repeats**

Evidence about Seán Ó Riada's career at the Abbey Theatre was obtained at the Abbey Theatre Archive based at NUI Galway. Dates for a substantial number of plays and their premiere performances were ascertained from metadata stored within the Abbey Theatre Archive. Despite the great range of data gathered from this archive visit, a number of issues arose that prompted reconsideration regarding its limitations.

Determining the nature of the performance of plays became an issue when adding play data to the Projects Dataset. In a number of cases, the date of first production or play premiere was the only information available. Two considerations must be made about the nature of this data. Firstly, that play performances were often carried out over a period of a number of weeks. Secondly, the first production of a play indicates only one instance of a number of repeat performances that sometimes occurred in the following years.

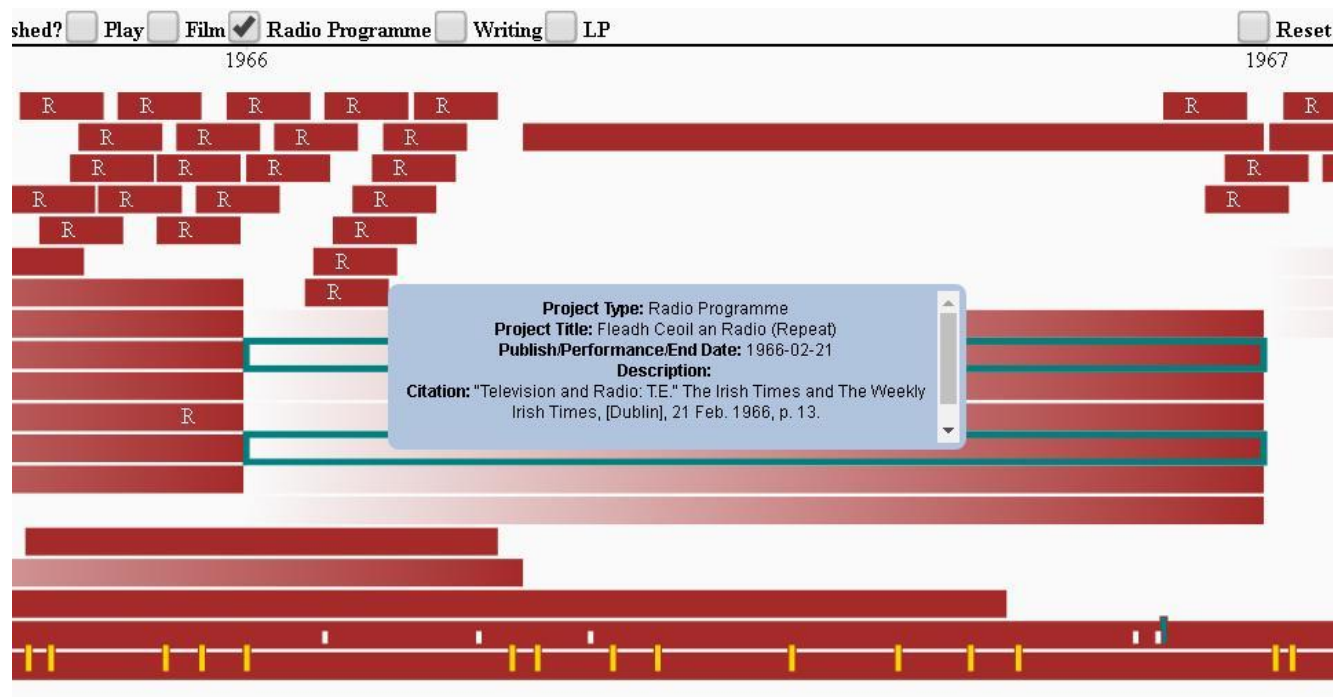
The lack of data for the performance of plays is acknowledged as a shortcoming for adequate documentation of the Projects Dataset. Notwithstanding this, the examination of this data led to better, more informed questions about the nature of the data being

explored. This activity, rather than demonstrating flaws in the comprehensive documentation of performance activity, served to make me more critical about tools and all aspects of the Projects Dataset.

#### **6.2.1.7 Emphasis in interval widths**

During the redesign of the data visualisation framework, for some data instances it was necessary to widen the associated data intervals in order to allow text to neatly fit within each interval. This design change therefore placed a biased emphasis on one day events in the visualisation. Each interval of one day then effectively stretched over a number of weeks and belied the short nature of their production. This forced the observable patterns to be misrepresented through the necessity of design requirements.

Despite the bias introduced by interval widths regarding radio shows, an advantage of this design change is that it was easier to observe patterns in that category. For example, the stepwise movement of the radio series, *Fleadh Cheoil an Radio* in 1966 (Fig. 6.2) became more pronounced as interval widths took on a step-like appearance instead of a thinner data point.



**Fig. 6.2.** Radio shows from the year 1966 showing step-like appearance due to the widening of data intervals.

### 6.2.1.8 Variable nature of music group activity

The representation of music groups such as Ceoltóirí Chualann and Cór Cúil Aodha on the timeline also became problematic. At various times during the research process, evidence arose which confirmed activities relating to these groups and Seán Ó Riada's continued involvement with them as a band leader. Despite the presence of this evidence, the authorship, individual and group work became difficult to determine as the results of rehearsal and performance practices were evidenced only in other media such as on radio programmes or LP records. For example, a significant amount of activity relating to the band Ceoltóirí Chualann may be ascertained through the production of LP records, but a significant amount of recordings had been created on radio shows with Radio Éireann. It was, therefore, problematic to attribute a continuous project interval for this activity as the

nature of this activity also involved a series of other performance practices over a number of years.

In a similar manner to Ceoltóirí Chualann's group activity, the use of a continuous interval between 1963 and 1969 for Seán Ó Riada's choir group Cór Cúil Aodha became difficult to represent. On the timeline, it is cited that the choir was formed in the year 1963 (Ó Canainn 69). Despite the existence of the group during the early 1960s, the material evidence of activity with Cór Cúil Aodha did not emerge in the data visualisation framework until evidence of an LP record emerged in 1968. As a result of this lack of evidence, it was not possible to accurately document Seán Ó Riada's activities with this group.

As the narratives above suggest, indications about the absence of material evidence and dates became more pronounced as the Projects Dataset grew. As the timeline became more fully populated, complexities served to prompt new ideas about material to be discovered and indicated new avenues for the discovery of project data. The lack of physical evidence from group projects reflects the inability of this research project to define activity within these projects. Despite the lack of evidence relating to group activity, the digital visualisation framework prompts reconsideration of what other types of material might not have been evidenced in a material form.

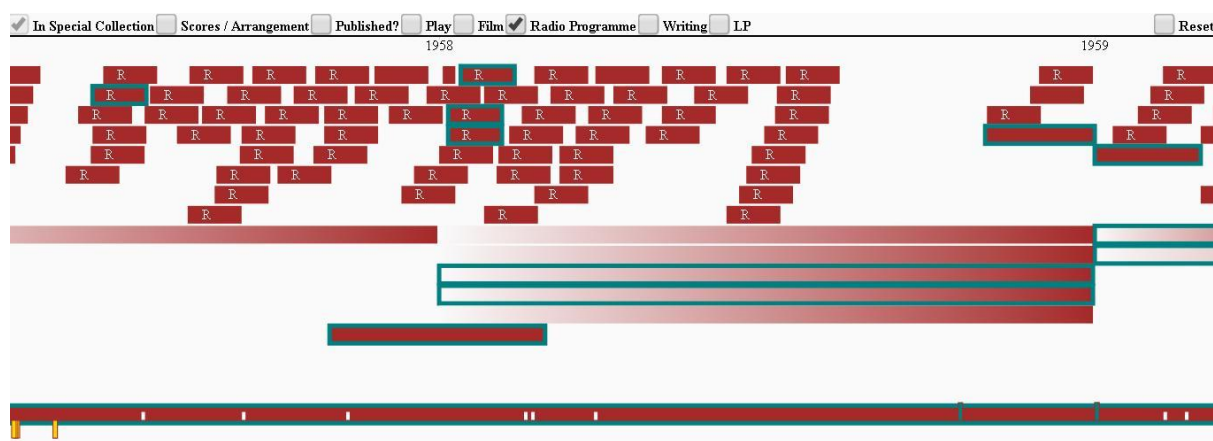
One defining limitation of this study shows that by investigating a collection of documents relating to performance, important considerations should also be made for activity that does not result in the production of material or physical evidence. This includes material that was composed within an oral tradition. As documentary evidence of Seán Ó Riada's working life, the Projects Dataset might underestimate the true extent of these

group activities and the oral tradition, but recordings such as LP records also serve to indicate where and when these activities might have taken place.

### **6.2.2 Events Dataset**

As data regarding projects began to populate the digital visualisation framework, another dataset relating to events was also added as a separate layer on the timeline. Data points were placed along the bottom of the timeline in a horizontal manner. Initially, important life events were added and represented by teal coloured rectangles (Fig. 6.3).

The use of the Events Dataset as a layer on top of the Projects Dataset was further enriched by scholarly documentation of the performances by RÉ or RTÉ orchestras during seasonal festivals (Fig. 6.3). This data was represented by a white coloured fill with red coloured border. Concert performance data became useful as it introduced new patterns and a comprehensive listing of repeat performances that occurred for each of Seán Ó Riada's compositions. Data in this dataset revealed where Seán Ó Riada's compositions had been performed by RÉ and RTÉ orchestras during and after their premiere. This evidence also revealed the specific places where the orchestras performed these compositions, indicating the geographical focus of orchestral activity in Ireland in the 1950s and 1960s.



**Fig. 6.3.** Events Dataset data revealing both life events and orchestral concert performances (white and teal rectangles on the bottom of the digital visualisation framework).

Some issues arose in this design when attempting to decide where performances were best represented. For instance, play premieres could have been listed within the Events Dataset, just as radio shows could also have been listed as events in the same dataset. This contributed to a sense that in some cases, events and project performances were the same.

Another problem concerning events arose when attempting to populate the Events Dataset. This included adding public functions that were attended by and contained a performance by Seán Ó Riada. It emerged from letter evidence within the SÓRC, that in the late 1960s Seán Ó Riada was invited to become a member of a number of organisations. He was also invited to officiate at a number of functions in different jurisdictions throughout Ireland. Documenting the full range of these events was beyond the scope of this thesis. Despite the fact that these activities played a significant role in Seán Ó Riada's public life, the documentation of the Events Dataset was confined to music related activities, and non-music related functions were excluded.

Whilst documenting life events became an important part of the development of the digital visualisation framework, fully accommodating them in an intuitive manner became problematic. A number of factors were placed under consideration when attempting to make the prototype clear and intuitive.

### 6.2.3 Letters Dataset

Over the course of this study, it became clear that the layering of events and performances on the projects timeline could also be conjoined with a representation of letters from the Letters Dataset. By mapping the letters onto the digital visualisation framework, another visualisation was subsequently created, which contained a cross-section of the many letters received by Seán Ó Riada during his career. A problem immediately surfaced with this approach. Unlike data points from the Events Dataset that focused on one particular date, some evidence from the Letters Dataset contained date intervals rather than data points as outlined in Table 3.1 in Chapter 3.

The following SQL statement was used to select letters that have been dated within the time period of Seán Ó Riada's career:

```
SELECT ItemNumber, DateStart, DateFinish, Description, Address from letters WHERE  
DateFinish IS NOT NULL AND DateFinish != '0000-00-00' AND DateFinish < '1972-12-  
31' AND DateFinish > '1945-01-01' ORDER BY DateFinish DESC
```

Unfortunately, even though the layering of this dataset provided insightful ways to understand the quantity of letters received by Seán Ó Riada over time, the linear representation resulted in some letters being discounted. The absence of intervals (see Fig.



6.4) and a number of other anomalies produced a false representation of the full set of letters from the SÓRC.

## BL/PP/OR

499 1957 - 1994

File of mainly items relating to 'Hercules Dux Ferrariae'. This file includes the score for 'Hercules Dux Ferrariae', opus 17 (complete set of proofs for orchestral parts), a handwritten score with pencil annotations, a letter from Ruth Gregory, B.B.C., Northern Ireland seeking information about 'Hercules Dux Ferrariae', typescript sleeve notes for 'Hercules Dux Ferrariae', press notices about the piece as well as various other items. This file also contains the original printers mock up for 'Hercules Dux Ferrariae'.

39 items

**Fig. 6.4.** Example description of letter item concerning music related subject and dated using an interval that spanned a number of years well beyond Seán Ó Riada's career in the SÓRC finding aid.

Despite these issues, the inclusion of the Letters Dataset imparts a useful understanding of Seán Ó Riada's correspondence over the course of his lifetime. A random browse along this layer reveals many interesting communications that were received by Seán Ó Riada at specific points during his working life. There is also the possibility, with further work that the Letters Dataset could be represented in much the same manner as the Projects Dataset. The subject of future work is covered in the conclusion of this thesis.

## 6.3 Emerging patterns

Some patterns emerged from the recombination of data and datasets in the visualisation framework and a number of insights were gathered from the shapes of data intervals that were revealed. Radio shows entered the timeline as staggered data intervals

that were clustered together in a number of areas. These patterns indicated a consistent set of radio shows that emerged through Seán Ó Riada's engagements with Radio Éireann. In some cases, the patterns of consistency were broken, as data points were sometimes missing. Broken patterns of data points or intervals then emerged which revealed indications that there was an absence of data for other clusters of radio shows. A number of other points can be gleaned from the results of patterns in the digital visualisation framework.

- Radio shows sometimes occurred concurrently. For example, the repeat broadcasting of the 1962 radio programme, *Our Musical Heritage*, coincided with a continued broadcast of the programme *Fleadh Cheoil an Radio*.
- Repeats began to appear for Seán Ó Riada's radio shows in the early 1960s. The radio programme, *Fleadh Cheoil an Radio*, was repeated on the 21<sup>st</sup> of February 1962. The programme, *Our Musical Heritage*, was repeated in 1963.
- The radio series *Fleadh Cheoil an Radio*, also emerged as a series of noticeable clusters of data intervals between 25<sup>th</sup> December 1962 and the 22<sup>nd</sup> of September 1970. These clusters appeared between the closing weeks of some years and the beginning weeks of the next.

These indications served to contextualise some understandings of music related activities, particularly the increased presence of repeated radio shows occurring from the late 1950s onwards. It demonstrates that Seán Ó Riada would have been heard with great regularity on RÉ throughout these years.

These discoveries demonstrate the ways in which a more comprehensive account of Seán Ó Riada's activities was obtained. The iterative process of this discovery involved the

building of datasets in parallel with visualisation and re-visualisation. Datasets were continually reconfigured during the process of making the digital visualisation framework. My focus on these patterns emerging on the timeline also led to continued gathering of data and further searches of digitised newspaper archives. One important result of this activity was the discovery of a number of radio shows that had hitherto been undocumented in the literature. Examples of these include *Makers of Music* (1958), *Ag Déanamh Cheoil* (1959), *Ár gCeol Féinig* (1960) and a *Thomas Davis Lecture* (1961).

## 6.4 Reflection

In this chapter, the examples of design and data-led exploration addressed the complexities encountered when developing a digital visualisation framework. Through the continual interpretation of data and digital visualisation, new discoveries emerged. These new discoveries changed both the way that data was represented and also the way that data was searched. The examples above illustrate the value of adding approximations and in some cases speculative data, especially during the process of dataset development. The critique of the digital exploration highlights a number of issues that have emerged during the development of datasets and their representation. By examining data more closely, my understanding of the process informed deeper, more meaningful understandings of the significance of data points and intervals. Whilst taking these issues and concerns into account, there were a number of personal interpretations which corroborated or contradicted interview findings. In the next section, I will present some of these interpretations.

In the process of interpreting results from the data visualisation framework, I look at

- 1) the development of comprehensive bibliographical and discographic reference works
- 2)

how the use of primary documents may corroborate or contradict what traditional ethnography determines about the musical past from oral accounts and 3) how an array of data, including pre-existing recordings of performances and interviews, notation manuscripts, newspaper articles, letters, and other primary sources held in archives enable the expansion of knowledge when robust analytical strategies are used.

#### **6.4.1 Comprehensive discography and biographical references**

The resulting data gathering process provides a comprehensive discography of Seán Ó Riada's music related activity. The following details are presented from an investigation of the Projects Dataset within the MySQL database.

- A total of 694 instances of projects were captured in the Projects Dataset with 508 entries having dates included.
- Material that was discovered within the SÓRC represented 295 of the total amount of instances that were documented.

A number of issues arose when attempts were made to contextualise the data discovered. For example, out of all projects listed, 396 project instances were not found within the SÓRC but were derivative works of those projects. Another issue emerged when repeat radio programmes were represented within the Projects Dataset. Radio programmes that were broadcast in a series were sometimes documented as separate, individual projects. Thirdly, Seán Ó Riada played a number of roles during the creation of projects. The Projects Dataset was limited in that only one role could be specified for each project. These one-off issues and complexities proved problematic for the process of categorisation (Table 6.1) and informed the interpretation of the relationships between projects.

| Medium                    | Derivative                 | Repeat               | Role            | Notes  |
|---------------------------|----------------------------|----------------------|-----------------|--|
| Radio                     |                            | Our Musical Heritage |                 | A total of 14 broadcasts were repeated by RTÉ in 1963. This complicates work being categorised as different output.  |
| Plays                     |                            |                      | Spailpín A Rúin | Seán Ó Riada was both playwright and provided music for a number of plays. This complicates the role he played in project creation.  |
| Film music                | Mise Éire                  |                      |                 | LP and EP releases of film music constitute derivative works of original film soundtrack. This adds to the complexities of related projects that contain many of the same musical arrangements.                  |
| LP                        | Vertical Man               |                      |                 | A number of tracks on LP records were already composed years beforehand, and therefore correspond to projects within “composition” or “arrangement” categories (examples include Nomos No. 1 and Sekundenzeiger) |
| Composition / Arrangement | Nomos No. 2 (L’homme Armé) |                      |                 | This composition was stated by Seán Ó Riada to be included within the later Nomos No. 2 composition.   |

**Table 6.1:** Complexities encountered when attempting to categorise projects

Despite of these complications, some significant factors can be taken into account when examining the numbers of instances of projects that were collected and represented within each individual genre. With the aid of visualisations, comparison was enabled for projects based on Seán Ó Riada’s role within each genre. During the creation of some projects, his role changed. In some cases it was possible to document this change (for example the project Spailpín A Rúin). When counting projects within the dataset certain types of

programmes stood out as more frequent than others and certain factors became more significant as I attempted to reveal these indications (Table 6.2).

| Medium                      | Significant Sub-groups / Roles                              |   |                              | Total |
|-----------------------------|---|---|------------------------------|-------|
| Radio                       | Fleadh Cheoil an Radio (123)                                | Our Musical Heritage (28)                                 | Reacaireacht an Riadaigh (5) | 310   |
| Compositions / Arrangements | Radio Éireann and Abbey Theatre                             |   |                              | 260   |
| Plays                       | Musical Director / Co-Director / Conductor / Performer (39) | Lyrics, Lyrics and Music (3)                              | Playwright (4)               | 39    |
| Film                        | Film production, Film Editing (14)                          | Film Music (27)   | TV programmes (13)           | 27    |
| LP                          | Gael-Linn (22)  | Claddagh Records (3)                                      | Other (2)                    | 27    |
| Writing                     | The Irish Times Newspaper (15)                              | Other (7)   |                              | 22    |
| Music Groups                | Ceoltóirí Chualann, Cór Cúil Aodha                          | Group leader, composer, arranger, director, performer (2) |                              |       |

**Table 6.2:** Instances of sub-categories within each medium and Seán Ó Riada's involvement with music related projects

The significant number of projects within each media and sub-media category shown above highlights the varied roles that Seán Ó Riada undertook within organisations (Table 6.2). This information supported and corroborated a number of responses that emerged from interviews in Chapter 5. For example, the themes of leadership and autonomy had indicated

that involvement in some projects gave Seán Ó Riada the flexibility to control his reputation and public image. It became possible at this stage to compare a large number of data points and intervals from the digital visualisation framework with interview findings that were closely related.

#### **6.4.2 Interview responses vis-à-vis digital data**

The comprehensive discography and biographical references represented in the digital prototype serve to corroborate interviewee responses. Evidence from thematic areas outlined in code analysis in Chapter 5 corresponded with data as it was represented on the timeline. Each theme is presented in chronological order.

**Seán Ó Riada's Leadership (1954-1971):** Samples of evidence from both the digital timeline and interview responses demonstrated the ways in which skills and experiences aided Seán Ó Riada as he progressed through different job roles.

On the digital visualisation framework for example, it was ascertained that between 1955 and 1960, most of Seán Ó Riada's involvement with plays was as director of music. After 1960, he became more involved with this genre and began to write plays, lyrics and music. By 1962, he had written scripts, lyrics and music for a number of plays including: *Spailpín a Rúin*, *An Sciath Draíochta*, *Diarmuid Agus Balor* and *An Claíomh Soluis*. Seán Ó Riada's experience of writing for theatre then corresponded with the first appearance on the timeline in November 1962 of a series of articles written for *The Irish Times* newspaper. This evidence suggested that Seán Ó Riada was using his skills within one medium to inform work in others. In a similar way, interviewee responses reflected the way in which different

types of radio shows aided in preparing Ceoltóirí Chualann for concert performances. As outlined in Chapter 5, Michael Tubridy explained:

I suppose *Fleadh Cheoil an Radio* was supposed to be a little bit light hearted you know compared with the other things like the Gaiety now would have been a fairly serious event. **Was it?** It was ya like it was em and *Reacaireacht an Riadaigh* would have been. I suppose they were kind of in two sides you know the light hearted and the serious ye know and I think that was more or less his idea in *Reacaireacht an Riadaigh* there'd be a lot of kind of fairly difficult poetry or readings in Irish where we done nothing like that now in *Fleadh Cheoil an Radio* and I suppose am that's when Kelly came in, more light hearted more down to earth kind of stuff.

The ability to prepare both “serious” and “light-hearted” show content enabled Seán Ó Riada to prepare different types of content, allowing a wider audience to be reached in his radio experiences. Both radio shows, *Reacaireacht an Riadaigh* and *Fleadh Cheoil an Radio* also included performers who played in the Peadar Ó Doirnín commemoration concert at the Gaiety Theatre in 1969. This performance would later become better known as an LP record named *Ó Riada Sa Gaiety*. This evidence demonstrates that Seán Ó Riada used his experience with radio shows as rehearsals for the production of a concert and an LP record. By rehearsing with performers for recording on radio over a number of years, Seán Ó Riada’s skills and experiences as leader and arranger with this group were gradually solidified.

**Negotiating Change:** Another finding that corroborated evidence between interview responses and digital data related many instances where work in one medium was carried out alongside work from other mediums. This is also evidenced in the previous example and



other interview responses in Chapter 5. Findings from Chapter 5 revealed the way in which projects were approached over time. For example, Louis Marcus related that Seán Ó Riada was attempting projects in a number of different fields at the same time, rather than in succession.

I always felt he was doing everything simultaneously. Heavily involved in the choir, religious music, at the same time he was composing stuff for film, several films, not just mine, including Kennedy's Ireland ... at the same time he was trying to do his concert hall music, the *Nomos* ... Everything he tried, the settings of the songs for voice and piano, Ceoltóirí Chualann and so forth he brought to a magnificent pitch.

This evidence is corroborated on the digital timeline. Between 1965 and 1967 a number of film projects were created with Seán Ó Riada, who took part in several aspects of film work at various levels, from soundtrack music to director. These projects included: *Young Cassidy*, *An Tine Bheo*, *Rhapsody of a River*, *Irish Rising 1916*, *Celtic Gold* and contracts for RTÉ's television programme *Aililiú*, *Songs and Stories*, *Music and Man*, *The Village* and *An Arrangement of the National Anthem for Television Use During Easter Week, 1916*. At the same time, other music related projects were also carried out. These included: radio programmes *Fleadh Cheoil an Radio*, LP records *Ceol na nUasal* and *Ding Dong*, compositions *Sekundenzeiger*, *Nomos No. 6*, *Mo Ghile Mear*, *Hill Field*, and contributions to an LP record *Irische Volkslieder*.

The digital evidence outlined in the previous example related only to the period between 1965 and 1968. There are a large number of occurrences throughout the timeline that corroborated Louis Marcus' view that Seán Ó Riada was working in a number of mediums

simultaneously. An in-depth analysis of all of these examples is beyond the scope of this thesis.

**Continuity and Change:** Evidence from the thematic area of continuity and change provided a wealth of evidence that was compared with the digital prototype. Peadar Ó Riada emphasised Seán's work at this time, referring to him as a "jobbing composer". On a number of occasions he stressed that the financial arrangements for freelance works were poor.

You could earn money for doing arrangements for Radio Éireann ... Like that's very small money ... like he was a jobbing composer and there was no work for him so here he was in the Abbey Theatre working in a pit orchestra which was only four, five, six or seven depending on the thing. (Peadar)

In some arrangements that were completed for Radio Éireann, Peadar described the specific payments given to a freelancing composer for each one at that time.

You'd get 10 shillings for doing an arrangement for RTÉ that time by doing those regularly.

On the digital timeline, a large number of arrangements appeared subsequent to Seán Ó Riada's return from Paris in 1955, which made a marked impression on the visualisation. These arrangements were predominantly situated on the timeline between March 1955 and February 1956, at the same time that Seán Ó Riada had officially begun working with the Abbey Theatre. While advancing in his new role at the Abbey, clearly Sean continued to compose arrangements for Radio Eireann for a period of time.

Harry Bradshaw recalled the 1950s as a time when both radio and drama were an important part of Irish life:

It was a different world. I was brought up in the 50s and radio dominated lives, in that you had the sponsored programmes, you had the Radio Éireann programmes in the evening, and drama, the plays were huge events.

Abbey Theatre plays feature prominently between the years 1955 and 1962 on the digital visualisation framework. This reflected Seán Ó Riada's position of employment with the company. Radio plays appear consistently between 1955 and 1959. However, during the 1960s instances of radio plays do not feature on the timeline. One instance of a radio play returns to the timeline in 1970, with the composition *The Táin*.

Harry Bradshaw emphasised that shifting perceptions were beginning to occur towards traditional Irish culture in Irish society in the early 1960s. Seán Ó Riada's role within this change is seen as comparative to other important figures. Harry saw the international revival of folk music at this time as a renaissance:

The timing of Seán's arrival was not by accident, there was a perceptible, there was a worldwide revival of folk music and there was an Irish version of that happening as I say, Comhaltas and the Fleadh - the Clancy Brothers and the arrival of Ciarán Mac Mathúna in broadcasting ... He was part of that worldwide renaissance, he was slap bang in the middle of it so I think that he has to be put into that context.

The digital prototype reflected this change from 1957 onwards, as radio shows began to feature Seán Ó Riada in relation to Irish traditional music and song. One show, broadcast by

Ciarán Mac Mathúna in 1958 was noted in Radio Éireann logbooks as involving the following content:

Heritage in Sound: A critical survey of traditional music. The Why and the Wherefore - a discussion between Mary MacGoris, Hamish Henderson and John Reidy - the second in a series of six programmes presented by Ciarán Mac Mathúna. (RÉ Log Books)

The radio programme *Heritage in Sound* was repeated in February 1959 and is an example of the varied types of radio show being broadcast on Radio Éireann around that time. In August 1959, Seán Ó Riada introduced a ten-part radio programme on the station in the Irish language entitled *Ag Déanamh Cheoil*, previously not documented, which introduced a series of sean nós (old style) singers and their songs. This was followed in 1960 by a lecture on the important historical figure, Thomas Davis and others such as *Ár gCeol Féinig*, *Cúrsaí Cheoil* and *Reacaireacht an Riadaigh*. The sizeable amount of undocumented radio shows sheds light on how Seán Ó Riada was continually present on RÉ during his career.

According to Seán Ó Sé, the continuation of some projects depended on the success of previous ventures. This is also highlighted in the literature review chapter. Seán recalled that:

I think you see, the *Poc Ar Buile* was a once off you know? Yeah, so that was a hit in '62 was it? '62 I think yeah, eh and I think ah, maybe the mistake if you can call it that *Neillí* and *Tá Mo Mhadra* were a kind of half clones of *An Poc Ar Buile* he thought but like you know the magician never repeats his tricks so he should have gone for something totally different like.

After the appearance of *An Poc Ar Buile* (GL2) and *Mo Chailín Bán / Tá Mo Mhadra* (GL5) on the timeline, the production of EP single records with Seán Ó Riada, Seán Ó Sé and Ceoltóirí Chualann is shown to have been largely discontinued by Gael-Linn. Between 1963 and 1971, EP singles of these artists were confined to by-products of film soundtracks such as *An Tine Bheo* and *Ceol na Laoi*.

Peadar Ó Riada described musical performances became more commonplace towards the late 1960s, and because of his presence in Irish life, a number of avenues had opened up his attendance at various events.

Towards the end of his life he did a series of gigs because he was famous people would ask him.

This stage of Seán Ó Riada's career is illuminated on the digital timeline by the presence of a large number of letters. Even though there were restrictions limiting the number of letters which could be displayed on the timeline, it is noticeable that a large number of the letters received by him only appear from 1965 onwards. Letters of invitation and requests for advice also appear more often after this year.

**Project Restrictions / Autonomy:** In addition to continuity and change within musical practice, a number of restrictions were noticeable with unpublished works. Louis Marcus highlighted other project ideas which did not come to fruition that were located on the digital timeline.

Seán had an idea. He used to read *Béaloides*, journal of folk tales, *Caisleán a Mhuraigh* ... We were absolutely thrilled with this idea of making a short film. We had cast it in our minds and everything and we discussed the shooting and the whole

bloody thing. We were invited to lunch - that was a bad sign - by Bob McGóráin and Ó Móráin. They wouldn't give the money for it.

Even though it was not possible to ascertain the exact date that the film was submitted to Gael-Linn for review, archival evidence from the Irish Film Institute revealed a letter that was sent by Seán Ó Riada to its director, Donal Ó Moráin on the 1st of June, 1960. Work on this idea appears to have started in the autumn of 1959, as at that stage Louis Marcus and Seán Ó Riada would both have completed commitments for the film *Mise Éire*. It is particularly insightful that the application for this film was turned down by Gael-Linn so soon after the release of the successful film *Mise Éire*, during the months following its initial premiere.

As shown above, an intentional and useful consequence of the data visualisation is that the tool supports data comparison. There were also other areas where contradictions and corroborations emerged in data and findings. One important theme that emerged from the ethnography was the role of leadership. Seán Ó Riada made decisions to control the amount of performances that Ceoltóirí Chualann would perform outside of radio appearances or LP recordings. Digitised newspaper searches for Ceoltóirí Chualann did corroborate a small number of those performances that were mentioned by interviewees. There is no definitive list of Ceoltóirí Chualann performances and as mentioned previously, identifying performances can be a challenge. The total of twenty performances indicated by one respondent therefore contradicted the small number of concert instances that were discovered in archive searches.

Although there are a number of reasons why research benefits from digital history, it is acknowledged by scholars such as Milligan that this method now requires critical

attention (540). This quantitative approach relies heavily on the quality of an underlying database structure and the search tools provided. Early on it became apparent that caution must be exercised when using such methods and that extra work must be carried out to ensure that data is searched and browsed sufficiently in order to account for these shortcomings.

## **6.5 Concluding thoughts**

The overall study reinforces the suggestion that deeper engagement with digital practices can be simultaneously beneficial and problematic for research in both digital humanities and ethnomusicology. Together, the resulting corroborations and contradictions provide important insights into how evidence may be combined using two research perspectives. The activity of combining evidence also demonstrates how categorisation must be approached with caution, as interpretation of humanities data and engaging with digital development requires a researcher with a particular skill set. This issue becomes pertinent when data used to produce the results emerges from these patterns but are individually unsupported and speculative. Despite the uneasiness associated with producing these patterns with digital practices, this chapter suggests that such evidence can play a more important role in research, enabling new discoveries when approached from a critical perspective.<sup>71</sup> For deeper engagement to occur between both disciplines, I suggest that it is necessary for a complementary methodology or theory to be chosen during research.

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<sup>71</sup> Drucker calls for data to be considered as “capta”, to rethink the traditional view of data as a given in order for it to serve more fruitfully in interpretation. See: DHQ: Digital Humanities Quarterly: Humanities Approaches to Graphical Display. <http://www.digitalhumanities.org/dhq/vol/5/1/000091/000091.html>. Accessed 11 May 2018.

An important finding that emerged and stood out in this thesis overall was Seán Ó Riada's continuous presence and voice on radio shows with RÉ. As described in interviewee findings, radio played an important part in Irish society during this era. Not only were a large number of radio shows discovered through data gathering and visualisation, but ethnography reinforced the perception that Seán Ó Riada was ever-present on radio, particularly in the 1960s. During the early 1960s, radio shows are also seen to be repeated, another factor which also suggests that radio helped to continue a consistent appearance for Seán Ó Riada in mainstream media. In light of the reasons contributed in the literature to his rise in status with the film *Mise Éire* and *Ó Riada Sa Gaiety*, this research has shown that other activities such as broadcasting played an important role in building his reputation throughout Ireland.

The creation of datasets from material discovered in a special collection with ethnography and visualisation allows researchers to reveal hidden complexity in archival items. Although the finding aid tool is limited in representing the connections between items or the true significance of collection material, its data is nonetheless invaluable in aiding scholarly exploration. This is demonstrated by the presence of fragmentary materials from all of Seán Ó Riada's music-related activity.

A key perspective in my approach to this project is that theory is re-formulated once an early exploration of digital data becomes realised within visualisation. I used the term data driven design to describe this process. In this chapter and Chapter 3, I argued for and outlined an approach to analysing findings from that perspective. The evidence from the SÓRC provided challenges for this research where a great number of ambiguities surfaced during data capturing. This chapter illustrates these issues, their usefulness, and in doing so



provides a fruitful demonstration of the challenges and advantages of engaging with digital practices.

## Chapter 7

### Conclusion

#### 7.1 Introduction

This study set out to explore an archival collection using the research question: *How did Seán Ó Riada rise to prominence during his career?* Musical practice was examined through the contextualisation of music related projects from the Seán Ó Riada Collection using digital practices and ethnography. Through this exploration, it sought to know how cultural data could be combined, represented and appraised, with each aim of the study originated with an investigation of materials from the Collection. This was then used as the basis of my argument for a model that informs research practice.

In recent years, ethnomusicologists have engaged on a deeper level with debates and practices that focus on the significance of researching in digital environments. More recently, these efforts have included digital ethnography, where scholars are recognising the importance of engaging critically with digital tools and have critiqued their use for activities such as fieldwork. In 2014, however, the use of digital tools for research with *historical* evidence was highlighted by McCollum and Hebert who claimed that technological developments “also transform the possibilities for research into the musical past” (23). Although scholars have addressed some possibilities for knowledge expansion such as the compilation of discographic and bibliographic works (as a result of the availability of historic materials), the role of digital practice with ethnography for knowledge production is not fully understood. This may be because digital tools and datasets are often utilised but not built by ethnomusicologists. Conversely, humanities data is often used but not always

critiqued alongside ethnography by digital humanists. In digital humanities, the development of suitable tools for making sense of humanities data is recognised by many scholars as in its nascent form (Drucker, Kräutli, Borgman). In my research I have sought to address these challenges by prioritising cultural data as a means to guide reflection on theory and practice. Consequently, I have engaged with theory from both disciplines, arguing for the nuanced ways in which interpretation and experimentation are jointly embedded within scholarship.

In this project, I introduced the concept of data driven design, a term often used in computer science and the IT industry to refer to practices with data as the most important part of decision-making process during the lifetime of a project. I have argued for the process of data gathering and structuring to become a more important part of the research process with historical documents. In Chapter 3 and Chapter 6, I have shown that the continual updating of datasets for digital visualisation is an important and effective way to approach research practice. The product of processing data and visualisation is then understood not merely a tool for the consumption of public history. I suggest that this process be viewed as an ecology or environment containing a defined set of activities that may be used for asking better questions about the subject of investigation.

Even though methods for representing the process of digital visualisation framework design might not be entirely reproducible, I have argued that the concept of making decisions early on as a result of digital intervention is seen as a crucial step in the research process. The use of data driven design also had such consequences for this research. In the initial stages of this research, contextualisation of historical documents could have been conducted with an emphasis on the use of the literature review as a precursor to selecting a

particular type of methodology. In fact, this is often standard process with research projects in ethnomusicology. When working with the SÓRC, however, it became possible to engage data gathering and digital visualisation as an important indicator for understanding the extent and type of material within the Collection at an early juncture in the research. In Chapter 1, I demonstrated how this activity led to the use of practice theory, which had consequences for the way in which research evidence emerged. This demonstrates that the theory that was selected was highly dependent on the materials found within the Collection.

In this thesis I have demonstrated that when ethnography and digital practice are combined, certain theories may be more suitable than others during the process of research. As outlined in the introduction to this thesis and the subsequent chapters, practice theory became a suitable theory to use in this case study. In this instance as I approached ethnography and visualisation, timeline visualisation facilitated specific events in history to be described in detail, and for the time-wise changes of events to be critiqued during the process of comparison with interview findings. For some theories of musical practice, this comparison might not be possible. The approach to an archive in this project has therefore allowed more reflective questions about theory to emerge.

Event-based research in Chapter 2 and Chapter 3 was brought to the fore near the end of this thesis in Chapter 6. This last section of the thesis demonstrated how long-form ethnography and digital data are examined together. Although in-depth ethnography allows the researcher to provide suitable interpretations or corroborations of cultural data, I argue that this process can contribute alternative, fruitful perspectives about the shortcomings of either ethnography or data driven visualisation. A number of examples in Chapter 6 demonstrated that provenance and performance of materials contribute to the complexities

of our knowledge about these projects and how they are represented, but the advantage of this critical reflection on failures is that it allows the researcher to ask more insights about the subject of research.

## **7.2 Research contributions**

This research contributes to digital humanities and ethnomusicology in a number of ways. The use of sufficient immersion in ethnography ensured that this project met sufficient standards of practice adopted in ethnomusicological research. Chapter 2 provided a historically based literature review of Seán Ó Riada's career in order to address the artist's music related activities in the Republic of Ireland during the 1950s and 1960s. The ethnographic approach carried out in the literature review revealed clues about music related events which guided questions for interviews, resulting in a distinct set of findings (Chapter 4, 5 and 6). Whilst the findings from this ethnographic investigation were not discussed in detail (as is the standard approach with this type of research in ethnomusicology), a number of important contributions were made to the literature for historical studies of Irish music. This evidence contributes valuable, supportable findings which resonate with the growing literature that concerns this era in Irish history.

Digital humanists are now advocating for the representation of data in more nuanced ways. As expressed by Johanna Drucker in 2016:

I am suggesting that we rethink the foundation of the way data are conceived as capta by shifting its terms from certainty to ambiguity and find graphical means of expressing interpretative complexity.

In Chapter 6 I provided a discussion of the representations of documents from the SÓRC through a comparison of visualised data with a sample of interview findings. Whilst documents within the collection are typical of the output of an artist's creativity from working within a number of mediums, arriving at definitive understandings of these documents is complex. This complexity is further enhanced by the addition of ethnographic findings. In tandem with Drucker's advocacy, this case study then contributes to the literature in digital humanities in that using more complex interpretations with visualised cultural data problematizes and poses new challenges the adequacy and validity of visualisation.

The digital side to this project was based on an iterative model that had not been fully completed at the time of this writing. Through the creation of a practical digital visualisation framework, I offered a model of research practice that combines the important research principles of both disciplines. In the final phase of the digital visualisation framework development, I will implement another iteration of this digital development as an expression of the next stage of the digital visualisation prototype.

### **7.2.1 Methodological Contribution**

The methodological contribution of this thesis is based on the approach that I have used within this project. I used a self-reflexive narrative of fieldwork activity with data gathering, structuring and representation to reveal the possibilities, issues and understandings that are discovered when attempting to contextualise material from a special collection. The narrative contained in this thesis contributes to the discussion about attempting to explore a special collection in a holistic way, whilst utilising theoretical approaches from ethnomusicology and digital humanities. In doing so, this thesis then adds

important contributions to the ways by which theory and method are engaged within research on archival collections.

As archival collections are now more commonplace, in recent years historical research has become the focus of attention in ethnomusicology. However, the combination of different disciplines for *historical* research is relatively rare in ethnomusicology. An example I am aware of is Bonny Wade's project *Imaging Sound*. Wade uses multidisciplinary methodologies and theories - combining art history and ethnomusicology with lore to demonstrate how political and cultural agendas intertwined with paintings to document court life in Moghul India. In most of the study, Wade uses material to inform *why* paintings were made of musicians, and only in her last chapter does she focus on *what* was contained within them. My research differs to Wade's in that it questions *how* material was used whilst also critiquing my own interpretation and representation of the material in question. This allowed the data to be used on its own terms and as a vehicle for knowledge discovery.

### **7.2.2 Practical contribution**

Making as a form of scholarship has been a topic of concern in the digital humanities for a number of years. Recent contributions to the literature in digital humanities have highlighted that scholarly making is an important part of the discipline but not a central activity. A number of these contributions stem from a criticism by Ramsay (2011) that in order to do digital humanities, the scholar needs to have programming skills. A number of pertinent social biases have been noted by leading scholars in the field, in particular with regard to race and gender.<sup>72</sup> However, during the research process, I found that the making

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<sup>72</sup> For discussion on race and gender in programming, see for example: Henwood et al. 2002, Bailey, 2011; Gottlieb 2012; Nowviskie 2012; O'Sullivan et al 2015; Earhart 2016; Gold and Klein 2016.

aspect of the digital visualisation framework was just one of a number of activities to consider in the research process when it is positioned at the centre of research. The construction of datasets involved a learning process for the researcher, both as an ethnomusicologist and a digital humanist. In most digital humanities studies involving making, datasets are already created, to be accessed and modified. I have shown that key decisions are made during the process of gathering data, not just through data structuring and representation. By ensuring decisions are made explicit during the process of making and by allowing the code for this digital visualisation framework to be made openly available, I contribute key understandings to the development of digital humanities and the key role that digital work can play for ethnomusicology.

### **7.2.3 Combining ethnography with digital visualisation**

A number of scholars in ethnomusicology have more explicitly stated their interactions with digital humanities within sub-sections of theses (Hsu 2012). The use of digital humanities practices in these studies and their sense of discovery through “playing” with data highlights the need for more *experimental* and nuanced engagements to be adapted from both fields. There have been a number of conference panels dedicated to the significance and subsequently the uses of digital practices during research. However, my work augments these approaches by utilising a more immersive investigation into the process of data gathering, structuring and restructuring. It is significant in demonstrating the development of datasets and digital visualisation frameworks as an experimental process alongside fieldwork practices. Working on the development of a digital tool has allowed me to address the unique challenges of representing archival collection data.



By focusing on one archive collection, the SÓRC, my research demonstrates the specific nature of archival processes, and also the nature of documents that are discovered within. The datasets and digital visualisation framework that I built enables researchers and archivists to see beyond thematic finding aids, and to challenge our perspectives of the significance of archival collections.

### **7.3 Limitations and future work**

Each step of this study was aimed at accounting for Seán Ó Riada's activity. As it focused on Seán Ó Riada's life, a number of events that followed his death have been omitted from the investigation. This is a recognised limitation that occurred due to the scope of the research. In a number of interviews, respondents revealed important insight into Seán Ó Riada's legacy that warrants further study. One such response from Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin demonstrated the cultural worlds that Seán Ó Riada had engaged with during his life.<sup>73</sup> The result of this is shown to Mícheál by the presence of a wide range of artists from a number of cultural and societal backgrounds at commemorative events since 1971. Mícheál hinted that this reveals insight into the cultural worlds that had existed and were emerging in Seán Ó Riada's life before he had passed away. A number of commemorative events have been held since Seán Ó Riada died, and the current study was therefore limited by being focused on the years that he was alive.

As the process of ethnographic research became an important part of this project, the time dedicated to coding and design of the digital visualisation framework was also limited. As a result of this limitation, a number of features that may have contributed to

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<sup>73</sup> For the full text of this interview excerpt, see Appendix A

pattern discovery in visualisation were not implemented in the current version of the prototype. For example, the Letters Dataset was only partially visualised, and with further time, it may have been completed, in much the same manner as the way in which the Projects Dataset was fully represented. As this project aimed to produce a balanced approach to the research of ethnography and digital visualisation, the final iteration of the digital visualisation framework was planned to be completed in the weeks following the writing of the thesis.

An aspect of this project that would have required more time and resources was the development of another layer of the visualisation that would relate the types of networks between collaborators with Seán Ó Riada's projects. As outlined by the emergent theme entitled *Networks of collaborators* in Chapter 5, an important aspect of Seán Ó Riada's career was the fact that a small people were involved with projects, in most cases they were men. The next iteration of the digital visualisation framework follows the completion of this thesis, which explores the cultural capital that had been acquired by Seán Ó Riada and his developing status within Irish society at this particular period of time. I am interested in linking the collaborators to shed light on the connections between projects and the people who made them. This would involve charting the involvement of individuals who worked together during this period in Irish history would make a valuable addition to the discussions of ethical and gender studies from this period in history. The Seán Ó Riada Collection contains a significant amount of material that relates to his wife Ruth. The letters that concerned her have been made available during this project and could contribute to discussion about women in Irish society during this period. I hope to explore this further in future work.

Another consideration for future work relates to the materials that have been digitised. A considerable amount of music related projects from the SÓRC have now been converted to digital form. There are many possibilities afforded by the digitisation of music related documents that would allow further exploration to take place with visualisation. Future work could also include a revisit to the MEI approach to this project. As of this time of writing (2018), a sizeable amount of manuscript scores from the Seán Ó Riada Collection had been digitised and is in the process of being made available to researchers for research without the need for visitation to special collections at the Boole library. With the appropriate tools and a focus on intersubjective research, MEI could be employed to conduct a comparative analysis of Seán Ó Riada's music.

#### **7.4 Concluding Remarks**

This project takes quantitative (digital humanities) and qualitative (ethnography) approaches to research and has highlighted the issues and possibilities surrounding digital practice and ethnomusicology when they are combined. By providing a practical, self-reflexive study, I hope that this thesis represents an important qualitative contribution to digital humanities and an equally important quantitative contribution to ethnomusicology. It is envisioned that it will offer a more nuanced perspective to debates on the way that data is gathered, used, interpreted and appraised by digital humanists and humanities scholars alike.

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## Appendix A

### Email Communications, Code, Search Terms

#### 1) Email Communications

##### a. Email response from Lindsay Dowling, RTÉ music librarian, 3 May 2018

*“Those stamps, I believe, correspond to the date that the score and parts would have been accessioned into the performance library, and so when they were processed would likely have been somewhat arbitrary. Perhaps it could be when they arrived in to the library for preparation (bowing, practice parts etc), or potentially even post-performance; if material arrived last minute for a performance, it's possible that the materials went straight out to musicians for performance and were only processed post-performance.*

*So, it's a reference to library processing, but I wouldn't necessarily correspond them to performance or broadcasts, although, in some cases it would likely be quite close.”*

##### b) Email to Frank Lynam, 9 April 2015

Hi Frank,

I got it working finally!

I was making a mistake of adding the Graph URI, so this was messing up results (I had thought this was the same as what we had done for DBpedia - more to learn about on Graph referencing). Also, I had to work on escaping the URL of each value in the Refine GREL.

When it did work, most of it is great, place names such as Indreabhán are being geocoded without any problems. My final query on fetch URL in Refine was

```
'http://data.logainm.ie/sparql?default-graph-  
uri=&query=select+%3FnameGA+%3FnameEN+%3Flat+%3Flong+where+%7B+%3Fo+foaf%3  
Aname+%22'+escape(value,  
'url')+ '%22+%40ga%2C+%3FnameEN%2C+%3FnameGA%3B+<http%3A%2F%2Fgeovocab.org  
%2Fgeometry%23geometry>+%3Fg.%3Fg+geo%3Alat+%3Flat+%3B+geo%3Along+%3Flong+.  
filter%28lang%28%3FnameEN%29+%3D+%27en%27+%26%26+lang%28%3FnameGA%29+%  
3D+%27ga%27%29.%7D&should-sponge=&format=application%2Fsparql-  
results%2Bjson&timeout=0&debug=on'
```

90% are coming in fine through Irish searching, and I am able to harness the English co-ordinates without using Google Maps API.

Though I do have one last question that you might be able to help me with. I have a value in

my address column that I know is in logainm.ie - that is the county Tír Eoghain (i'd originally thought it was leaving out county names because they are not points as much as villages and towns). But when I sent a SPARQL query to find Tyrone, I get an empty set and don't understand why this should be happening:

```
select ?nameGA ?nameEN ?lat ?long where { ?o foaf:name "Tír Eoghain" @ga, ?nameEN,
?nameGA;<http://geovocab.org/geometry#geometry> ?g.?g geo:lat ?lat ; geo:long ?long
.filter(lang(?nameEN) = 'en' && lang(?nameGA) = 'ga').}
```

Could it be that the dataset has errors here, or that my query doesn't find it? The Irish version of the place name is listed here, and the json link at the bottom points to data that seems to be exactly the same as Indreabhán. I'd like to understand how to look for this.

Also, I had been trying to leave out the @ga in a search so that I could combine searches - that it would search for Irish and English place names together in fetch url, but it hasn't bringing back any responses.

Anyway, thanks so much for helping, it was well worth the effort and should bring another dimension to my project.

Best,  
Patrick

#### **c) Email to Anthony Durity, 16 November 2015**

Hi Anthony,

I am stuck on an installation of an editor for MEI at the moment, and I am putting it out there to see if you could help or if you know someone who might.

The link to the webpage that I am working with is <http://labs.kb.dk/editor/INSTALL.html> and I am on section 4. part 1 from iii to vii.

The code I have is like this below, but I am on a Windows machine so I can't run it. I was hoping to find a way to either rewrite this or if there might be a manual way of achieving the same thing.

```
./load_exist.pl --user admin \
--password your_own_very_secret_password \
--host-port mei.example.org:80 \
--load . \
--context "/exist/rest/db" \
--suffix xq
```

To re-cap, i'm specifying AJP connector. This is also now set to 8009:

The Tomcat server configuration (server.xml) is set to:

```
<Connector port="8009" protocol="AJP/1.3"
  connectionTimeout="20000"
  redirectPort="8443"
  tomcatAuthentication="false"/>
```

Jetty.xml is set as follows:

```
<SystemProperty name="jetty.host"/></Set><Set name="port"><SystemProperty name="jetty.port"
default="8080"/>
```

And httpconf for Apache to access the forms is:

```
Alias "/editor" "home/xml-store/MerMEId/mermeid"
<Location "/editor">
Options None
Order allow,deny
Allow from all
</Location>

ProxyPass /storage "ajp://localhost:8009/exist/rest/db" retry=0
ProxyPass /orbeon "ajp://localhost:8009/orbeon" retry=0
ProxyPass /filter "ajp://localhost:8009/filter" retry=0
```

So what is going on here: The Apache server hosts the MerMEId files in the directory, "**home/xml-store/MerMEId/mermeid**" and then these files were used in the loading of xqueries.

Tomcat contains the webapps called exist, filter, editor and orbeon.

Exist DB is set to show up on port 8080 which is working <http://localhost:8080>

*What is happening right now?* localhost:8009 and localhost:8081 is saying "site cannot be reached."

<http://localhost/storage> redirects but says "

## HTTP Status 404 - /exist/rest/db

<http://localhost/orbeon> redrects to the correct orbeon folder (<http://localhost/orbeon/home/>)

<http://localhost/filter> goes through and shows the following, (but I think filter hasn't been setup properly yet)

← → ↻ ⓘ localhost:8080/filter

Apps cPanel - Main Laptops D3 Paddy Fahey tunes - Phi Brackets FTP - YouTube Carlin MEI

## HTTP Status 500 -

---

**type** Exception report

**message**

**description** The server encountered an internal error that prevented it from fulfilling this request.

**exception**

```
java.lang.NullPointerException
    dk.kb.mermeid.filter.FilterUtilityMethods.uriConstructor(FilterUtilityMethods.java:429)
    dk.kb.mermeid.filter.FilterUtilityMethods.receiveAndFilterData(FilterUtilityMethods.java:63)
    dk.kb.mermeid.filter.HttpFilter.doGet(HttpFilter.java:78)
    javax.servlet.http.HttpServlet.service(HttpServlet.java:624)
    javax.servlet.http.HttpServlet.service(HttpServlet.java:731)
    org.apache.tomcat.websocket.server.WsFilter.doFilter(WsFilter.java:52)
```

**note** The full stack trace of the root cause is available in the Apache Tomcat/7.0.72 logs.

---

Apache Tomcat/7.0.72

## 2 Code

**Title:** D3 Code for parsing dates

**Description:** Example of domain code used to parse dates.

get the extent of x2

```
x2 = d3.time.scale()
    .domain([
        parseDate("2014-08-11 05:30:00"),
        parseDate("2014-08-12 19:25:00")
    ])
    .nice(d3.time.minute)
    .range([0, width]);
```

**Title:** Merge Code for Combining Excel files

**Description:** A macro used in Microsoft Excel that combines files from one folder into one.

```
Sub simpleXlsMerger()
Dim bookList As Workbook
```

```
Dim mergerObj, dirObj As Object, filesObj As Object, everyObj As Object
Application.ScreenUpdating = False
Set mergerObj = CreateObject("Scripting.FileSystemObject")
```

```
'change folder path of excel files here
Set dirObj = mergerObj.Getfolder("C:\Sept2015")
```

```
Set filesObj = dirObj.Files
For Each everyObj In filesObj
Set bookList = Workbooks.Open(everyObj)
```

```
'change "A2" with cell ref of start point for every files here
```

```
Range("A1:IV" & Range("A65536").End(x1Up).Row).Copy
```

```
ThisWorkbook.Worksheets(1).Activate
```

```
Range("A65536").End(x1Up).Offset(1, 0).PasteSpecial
```

```
Application.CutCopyMode = False
bookList.Close
Next
End Sub
End Sub
```

### **3 Example permutations of search terms used in digitised newspaper searches**

Seán Ó Riada, Ó Riada, Riada, O Riada, John Reidy, John Reidy Radio Éireann  
Ceoltóirí Chualann, Ceoltóirí Cualann

## Appendix B

### *Files and Data Relating to this PhD*

**Title:** The Ó Riada Scores Dataset

**Description:** A listing of all music related projects that were discovered at the Boole Library in University College Cork between November 2014 and April 2015.

**Filename:** The ORiada Scores - Patrick Egan.xlsx

**Title:** The Projects Dataset

**Description:** A listing of all music related projects that were discovered at the Boole Library in University College Cork between November 2014 and April 2015, in addition to searches within literature and other archives.

**Filename:** projectsdataset.xlsx

**Title:** Books dataset

**Description:** A listing of all books previously belonging to Seán Ó Riada that were discovered at the Boole Library in University College Cork in April 2015.

**Filename:** booksdataset.xlsx

**Title:** Events Dataset

**Description:** A listing of events that were deemed relevant to Seán Ó Riada's life, in addition to performances by Radio Éireann orchestras between 1952 and 1972.

**Filename:** eventsdataset.xlsx

**Title:** Letters Dataset

**Description:** An extraction of letter items described within the Seán Ó Riada Collection finding aid.

**Filename:** lettersdataset.xlsx

**Title:** Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin Excerpt

**Description:** An excerpt from interview with Mícheál Ó Súilleabháin.

**Filename:** Mícheál.xlsx

**Title:** End User Response to user testing

**Filename:** Response.doc

## Appendix C

### *Information Sheet and Consent Form*

# INFORMATION SHEET AND CONSENT FORM FOR RESEARCH PARTICIPANTS

Social Research Ethics Committee (SREC)

## INFORMATION SHEET

**Purpose of the Study.** As part of the requirements for Digital Arts and Humanities and Music at UCC, I have to carry out a research study. The study is concerned with key developments in the life and works of Seán Ó Riada.

**What will the study involve?** The study will involve fieldwork interviewing to be conducted in the academic year 2015/16. The outcome of these interviews will inform knowledge pertaining to archival documents within the Seán Ó Riada Special Collection at the Boole library in University College Cork.

**Why have you been asked to take part?** You have been asked because your discussions will likely be most informative with regard to contextualising these documents.



**Do you have to take part?** Participation is voluntary. You will have the option of withdrawing any data recorded in this interview prior to the commencement of study, or discontinuing after data collection has started. Where data are identifiable, you may withdraw within two weeks of participation and ask to have your data deleted.

**Will your participation in the study be kept confidential?** All data will be identified unless stated. Any extracts from what you say that are quoted in the project will be referenced unless deemed confidential.

**What will happen to the information which you give?** Any information will be kept confidential from third parties unless requested for public use. In the case that this information might prove harmful, it will only be available to me and my supervisor, and will be deleted at the end of the project. The data will be securely stored on an external hard-drive, and on completion of the study, confidential data will be deleted.

**What will happen to the results?** The results will be presented in the thesis and digital project. They will be seen by my supervisor, a second marker and the external examiner. The thesis may be read by future students on the course. The study may be published in a research journal. Where the data is being used in a digital project, permission will be sought by the researcher to include your reference.

**What are the possible disadvantages of taking part?** I don't envisage any negative consequences for you in taking part. It is possible that talking about your experience in this way may cause some distress.

**Any further queries?** If you need any further information, you can contact me:

Patrick Egan 0857219072 or patrick.egan@student.ucc.ie

If you agree to take part in the study, please sign the consent form overleaf.

[Over...

## CONSENT FORM

*This consent form is designed with qualitative research in mind. Where quantitative methods are used, issues such as quotations and audio-recording do not arise.*

I.....agree to participate in [name]'s research study.

The purpose and nature of the study has been explained to me in writing.

I am participating voluntarily.

I give permission for my interview with [name] to be audio-recorded.

I understand that I can withdraw from the study, without repercussions, at any time, whether before it starts or while I am participating.

I understand that I can withdraw permission to use the data within two weeks of the interview, in which case the material will be deleted.

I understand that anonymity will be ensured in the write-up by disguising my identity.

I understand that disguised extracts from my interview may be quoted in the thesis and any subsequent publications if I give permission below:

(Please tick one box:)

I agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

I do not agree to quotation/publication of extracts from my interview

Signed: .....

Date:

.....

PRINT NAME: .....

## **Appendix D**

### *Application to Social Research Ethics Committee*

**Title:** Application Form For Ethics Approval

**Description:** An application form for SREC seeking approval to conduct fieldwork interviews.

**Filename:** SRECAplicationFormPatrickEgan.pdf

**Title:** Letter of Approval from SREC Committee

**Description:** A letter of approval for continuing to conduct fieldwork interviews under the same conditions as set out in original application to SREC.

**Filename:** 13.4.18 Patrick Egan Approval Letter.pdf