

PhD Vlog 6 Month's On Abigail Robertson

TIME	SPEAKER	DIALOGUE
0:00:00	On Screen Text	<p>Name: Abigail Robertson</p> <p>PhD: Medieval Studies</p> <p>Location: Albuquerque</p> <p>A snapshot of my PhD journey.</p>
0:00:12	Abigail Robertson	<p>One of my highlights of this semester, and something I've been looking forward to from the spring was getting to participate in the DiXiT MMSDA conference. So DiXiT is the Digital Scholarly Editions Initial Training Network and for the past six years, they've put on a programme called MMSDA which is Medieval and Modern Manuscript Studies in the Digital Age workshop and the idea of the workshop is that it's aimed at PhD and other graduate students and there's a chance for you to get some experience working with manuscripts and also thinking about how these things are converted into digital...</p>
0:00:42		<p>... projects and we can see digital projects. So we worked a little bit with TEI, got some understanding of XML and also did some manuscript studies. This was in the UK so it was a little bit of a hike for me in Mexico. I went to England the first day of May and I was in Cambridge for three days and then we were in London for three days. While at Cambridge we got to look at some manuscripts at University College Library. We also went to St John's College Library which was amazing! We were at Lambeth Palace once we got to London and got to...</p>
0:01:12		<p>... work with Jane Roberts which was a really phenomenal experience. And then we were also at King's College, London and The Warburg Institute. So MMSDA was organised</p>

		<p>by Peter Stokes and Elena Pierazzo and it was just a fantastic experience. They organised sessions, they led sessions on collation, they led sessions on TEI and other sort of programming languages and thinking about how we consider material objects and how we consider those kind of within our own context and our own understanding as people who work with manuscripts...</p>
0:01:42		<p>... and as people who are Medievalists or in some cases, Early Modernists. But it was... I have a lot to say on the topic and I'm hoping to write a blog post about it soon but it was just a really fantastic experience that sort of showed people maybe who are using manuscripts or who will be using manuscripts in the future what their options are in terms of organising data and putting things together in a way that not only makes sense for a research project, but makes sense for other people who are approaching these materials - maybe in the future! So how to kind of set these standards for cataloguing...</p>
0:02:12		<p>... or describing or actually sort of making a digital presence for a material object; how to do that in a way that's meaningful and reflects the object itself which was kind of the goal but obviously not the 100% sense. We got to actually look at some really cool manuscripts. The highlight for me was getting to see the [unclear 0:02:29] just because I read Ecclesiastic history and spent a lot of time with it since becoming a PhD student. The time in Lambeth Palace with Jane Roberts was phenomenal. They have an amazing collection of some really, really beautiful...</p>
0:02:42		<p>... laminations as well. But all in all, it was just a fantastic research script. So after I got back from England, I was in Ohio visiting family for a couple of days before I drove to</p>

		Michigan for the International Congress on Medieval Studies. This is the 51 st one and it's held every year at Western Michigan University. So here's what the programme looks like, and it's really one of the... if not <u>the</u> largest gathering of medievalists in the world! So it's a really large conference. There are a lot of panels going on at the same time and I presented a panel on Thursday morning which went really well.
0:03:12		It was on the paper that I've been revising for quite a while, so it was really exciting to finally have it done and be able to share it with the community and also a little nerve wracking. The panel I was on was the Exeter Book Panel and I was one of four papers, we each had about 15 minutes. The other scholars were excellent, there was really good communication and conversation that came as a result of it, and I really walked away feeling like I'd learned some things and also kind of got to put my ideas out there which is really the point of going to conferences! The rest of the time I was there, I was seeing other panels, I was browsing at the book fair which...
0:03:42		... if you go to a large conference in your field, it can be a lot of fun and also very expensive! But I managed to kind of maintain and have some sort of budget and ended up picking up Cynthia Hahn's Strange Beauty which is excellent, it's a book on some reliquaries and I also got a book on Latin palaeography. Something that can be a little bit frustrating when you're going to a large conference, especially one that's specifically in your field is trying to decide which panel to go to. For example, just taking a look at mine, there are about four pages with maybe five...
0:04:12		... panels on each one listed for different things in the field to go see it at just one

		<p>particular time slot, so it was kind of hard to decide what I wanted to see and who I wanted to hear from. So what I ended up doing was in the back on a blank page – and I'd kind of gone through a couple of times to refine this list – I wrote down everything that I was interested in seeing, I wrote on the page number for where it was and what time slot it was occurring in. if you're going to a large conference, it's easy to kind of try to lock yourself into seeing specific things, and sometimes that's really great. I had three or four panels and...</p>
0:04:42		<p>... I knew that no matter what, I was going to go to those, but I also had some time slots where I was interested in things or wanted to try something new. So having my programme with me and having kind of a general sense for what I wanted to see but not necessarily something nailed down specifically was really helpful. Something that tends to be more an issue for PhD students who are doing courses in America or who are doing PhDs that have a coursework component is trying to balance your own research and what's required for your coursework. So I'm just about ready to finish up my coursework here in the next eight months...</p>
0:05:12		<p>... or so. I'm taking one summer class which is on Latin Palaeography and [unclear 0:05:15] and I'm taking one required course in the fall which is my CHASA requirement. Beyond that, I'm done. So the first two... about two and a half years of my degree was coursework which is awesome because you get to learn a lot of new things, you get to sort of refine your knowledge of something you maybe learned a lot as an Undergraduate or as a Master's student but also it can be complicated as you're still trying to develop your own research interests and you're</p>

		having to figure out what dissertation direction you might want to take and...
0:05:42		... that can be especially complicated when you're doing conferences. So for example I was in England for a week. I came back to Ohio to visit some family before I headed to Kalamazoo which is this International Congress. A large degree of the faculty and students who are into medieval studies attend every year. So I essentially had two weeks or maybe a little bit less than that where I was doing nothing that was related to my research specifically or my coursework, so I was having to do those things in the evening and trying to keep track of them then. So it really kind of...
0:06:12		... challenged me to plan this semester when I knew I was going to have these things. It challenged me to plan in advance, to know, "Okay, I'm going to be gone the last two weeks. I need to get everything done in anticipation of that absence. I need to make sure I'm staying on top of my coursework." The way that I tend to look at juggling these things is this is what you have to do in an academic career. You have your teaching, you have your own research, you have some service components. This year I also became involved with the Graduate Student Government and I had a position there. I was an Officer which was a really unique experience and gave me an opportunity to kind of understand...
0:06:42		... the workings of graduate programmes across the University – not just English or History or whatever I might be particularly involved in, so that was nice. But I'm kind of using this time to prepare myself for what academic life is like after the PhD. So getting involved with service projects, refining my own research and also working that research

		into some of my courses. So this past spring, I taught a writing course which is sort of our introductory writing courses or one of those sequence classes. I also took one where I got to talk about a topic that I was...
0:07:12		... interested in and how my students sort of explore that through writing. We looked at balance in politics and we sort of looked at it across history starting with the Crusades and working up through about 9/11 – so that was a lot fun and really kind of challenged me to stay on top of my teaching but also incorporate things from my own coursework and my own research into what I was having my students do. Thanks so much for hanging out with me for this update. In the future you'll be hearing about my exams, probably my dissertation prospectus defence which will be coming...
0:07:42		... up sometime late fall, and I'll be talking about my exam process, how it went and sort of giving you some tips as to what worked really well for me and what I found less helpful. Thanks so much and I'll see you next time.
0:07:54	On Screen Text	<p>Jobs.ac.uk</p> <p>Great jobs for bright people</p> <p>Find your ideal PhD at www.jobs.ac.uk/PhD</p> <p>Subscribe to our youtube channel to follow our PhD vloggers</p> <p>Watch, learn, share</p>

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