

## PhD Vlog Week 4: Abigail Robertson Transcript

TIME	SPEAKER	AUDIO
00:00:04	Abigail Robertson	Okay good morning, it's about 05:30 and I'm about to head out for the conference. I have about an hour and a half drive ahead of me and then I'll get to the conference, get myself setup and give my paper first thing at 08:30. I will try to check-in with you at the conference but if not, I'll definitely check in with you after. It's the second day of the conference and I've just left
00:00:34		for the day, it's kind of early but all the medieval panels were over and I actually need to get back home and to do some work. So the conference went really well today. I'm looking forward to hearing some more feedback out of a couple of people who wanted to email me and ask some questions because some of the panels ran over today. But I'm going to get in my car and head home. What I want to do is talk about my conference experience this week – so how did I prepare for it, how did it end up going, what are my thoughts afterwards. So preparing for a conference. If you're a grad
00:01:04		student or you're applying to grad school, you know for conferences, you send out an abstract about a paper that you've written, you get accepted and then you refine that paper typically to fit the conference and you go and present the paper. So this was a paper I'd submitted back in March – it was on some riddles of the Exeter Book. The Exeter Book is basically a manuscript that has a bunch of stuff in it. It was found in Exeter – thus we call it the Exeter Book. In particular I'm writing about two riddles of the
00:01:34		Exeter Book. I'm writing about a riddle on a sword and one about a shield and I'm talking about the way that those two items are given voices (they're written in the first person) how those voices act as voices of Thane's and going along with this theme of Comitatus that we have in medieval studies, as well as how they talk about the idea of the exile so there's some language that overlaps that I'm really interested

		in. So if you know that the conference is going to be a considerable cost for you, looking into travel grants early is great because the
00:02:04		opportunities are there. Since that wasn't something I had to worry about, all I really had to do was make sure I had all the stuff I needed on the day of the conference and that my paper was prepared. I thought instead of just rattling off a list of things that I found helpful for me at the conference, I would go through the bag that I brought with me and show you things that I got at the conference and what I found helpful, what I typically take with me. So I always bring at least one copy of the paper that I'm giving. So this was the paper.
00:02:34		I do it double-spaced in case I get feedback from people in the Q & A so I can make notes in the margins. It's also just easier, and as I'm sure you know, it's easier to read double-spaced. I also tend to do different sections in different colours. So I know when I get to the red section that I've been reading for five minutes. I know when I get to the blue section I've been reading for ten minutes. It also helps me stay on-track if someone is showing cards – so maybe the chair is showing cards with how much time I have left. I know what pace I'm on to finish so if
00:03:04		I need to cut out something in order to get to my conclusion on time, I can do that. So I always bring at least two sources for my paper. I have one physical copy that looks like this. I also have a copy either on my computer or on a flash drive – sometimes both if I remember to do both – so if I end up losing my paper copy, I can pop my flash drive into a printer at the hotel and print it or I can always read from my laptop if I have my laptop with me. I tend to not want to read from my laptop just because it's a visual block
00:03:34		between you and your audience but it's always nice to have a sort of a last-ditch resort. I also bring a notebook with me. This one is specifically for conferences. I've been using it since my Master's and it's just nice to have everything in one place. I make notes on other

		people's presentations. I make notes on feedback that I have received from particular people and it's just nice to have everything that I use at conferences in one place and I can tap my paper into that as well. A lot of times when you're running to and from panels, you have 15 minutes in between
00:04:04		you don't have time to pick up anything substantial and maybe a cup of coffee so I like to have something with me that if I need to eat and I don't have time, I at least have something small that I can snack on. I also have any papers that I received at the conference in my bag and I file these when I get home. So basically I have a folder where I put hand-outs. So these are hand-outs from a presentation on Granule's Mother that I went to today and these already have the presenter's name and email address at the top but if they didn't, I will add those
00:04:34		to them so that way if I ever come across this research in the future or I'm writing something similar, I have information on the presentation and also their contact information which has come in handy a lot. I also have the agenda for the conference so this one looks something like this. Rocky Mountain Modern Language Association Conference – and it has information about the panels, there might be a name somewhere that you recognise. This is the old English panel, it was mine. Not only is having the programme helpful
00:05:04		in terms of figuring out where you need at what particular time, but it's also helpful in referencing the speakers. If you need to ask them a question you can quickly look and say, "Okay, I remember this person, they gave a presentation on whatever." You can remember their names and go up and talk to them so I like to have this marked with the sessions that I attended – so I'll make little flags and stick them in the top – so that way I can remember quickly who I saw, what presentations I attended and if I need to contact those people, I have their information. No matter
00:05:34		what, get to your conference early – whether

		<p>you're presenting in the morning or in the afternoon – just make sure you have some buffer time. So when I got there, I had time to get myself a cup of tea, to go through the registration manual – this thing, the conference programme- and figure out where I needed, where the other sessions were, I did a quick walk-around all of the rooms to make sure I knew where I was headed in between sessions. It also just gave me some time to decompress and run through my presentation once in my head and just sort of relax.</p>
00:06:04		<p>I was also able to poke my head in the room where I was presenting so I knew the setup of the room, where I was going to stand, where the audience was going to be – it just made me feel a little bit more comfortable. The presentation itself went really well. I was really happy with how the panel was. It was pretty small. Just because I'm a medievalist, typically other medievalists come to your stuff. It's less of a sort of pop-draw from a general crowd but there are a lot of really interesting people there, a lot of voices that I hadn't heard before, people</p>
00:06:34		<p>I hadn't met before and I have received some really awesome feedback in terms of where to take my paper moving forward. So the ideas that I'm working with on this paper on these two riddles, I'm going to continue looking at these riddles and write a new paper really specifically looking down some of these theoretical ideas that I have had and present this paper at another conference this coming May. So I'm really happy with the feedback I received, some people pointed me in the direction of some articles and books I hadn't taken a look at yet and I think that's really the point</p>
00:07:04		<p>of conferences is not only to go there and to hold your paper up and read from it quickly and be done but actually to get that feedback at the end – to find out what worked, to find out what was confusing or what questions people have. It helps you make sure your writing is clear and make sure that your theoretical basis makes sense and it gives you a chance to hear from</p>

		people who might have read something that you hadn't that would be really helpful to your work. It feels kind of fitting that the conference was in week four of the Vlog because
00:07:34		now that the conference is over, also the PHD Vlog is coming to a close. I had a really awesome time connecting with people on social media, getting to talk about the projects that I've worked on and just generally talking about my PHD experience which I've really loved so far. Doing this Vlog has really helped me remember why I did this in the first place. Last week when I was going through, "These are the schools I applied to, this is how I organised all of my stuff," it reminded me of how excited I was during that time,
00:08:04		how pumped I was to be going to school to do what I loved and it kind of invigorated me this week in going to the conference. I was like, "Oh yeah, this is awesome!" Sometimes when you're doing a lot of reading and writing, it can feel heavy, it can feel like, "Okay, I've just got to get through this stuff," but it really reminded me how much I love what I do! It sounds kind of cheesy but it was great! Going this Vlog also made me realise how much I like to talk about grad school and medieval stuff. I haven't got to talk
00:08:34		about a lot of medieval stuff but I think having a Vlog where I can talk about different medieval objects and different periods that I'm studying would be a lot of fun but this Vlog has been a really great opportunity to reflect upon the PHD process, to really think through, "What am I doing? Okay, is that a really efficient use of my time? Is this what I would be telling other people to do if they were in my position?" So it's really made me introspective in that way. All in all, I'm just really happy with the experience. I love what I do. I love talking about what I'm going
00:09:04		and I hope if some of you were considering graduate school I haven't scared you away and you will be going through this someday like I am – preparing for comps, going to conferences,

		doing all the fun that is going to grad school. If you ever have any questions you can contact me on Twitter. I think that's the easiest way and that's @AGRobertson or find my new YouTube Channel which is Positively Medieval Vlog. Thanks so much and I hope the rest of you have a great school year. If you're applying to grad school
00:09:34		good luck!

**END OF TRANSCRIPT**