

Reflective Journal

Lecture One – 30th January 2018

The introductory lecture for the Roderic Bowen Centre: Archives and Research was focused on introducing us to all of the assessment elements of this module, which include the Student Biography Archive Project; the Book Biography Library Project; the Presentation and finally the Reflective Essay. In this specific lecture, the main focus was discussing the elements of the student project assignment. In this project, we were given a name of a soldier who served in the First World War and we were instructed to use both primary and secondary sources to obtain information surrounding his family life, college life and his war experience. Some of the sources which we could refer to when completing this assignment included the tutors register, examination books and ancestry.com. In this instance, the name of the soldier I was given was Lt Edmund Oswald Griffith Williams-Meyrick.

Alongside being introduced to the four assessment components, we were also given an introduction to archives, which focused on the special collection that the Roderic Bowen Archives and Library own. The special collection was noted to have originally been kept in the Founders Library, but were subsequently moved to the university archives for preservation purposes. Alongside this, there was a discussion about the care of the books kept in the archive, including using pillows when looking at books and only using pencils in the archive reading room.

For this lecture, the book 'A History of St. David's University College, Volume 2 (Price D.T.W 1990) provided a great amount of information that was relevant to the student book biography project. This particular book focuses on the history of the Lampeter campus of University of Wales Trinity Saint David, or as it was known in the 19th century St David's University College. Not only did this book provide information on how the university worked and also gave details of daily life, it was also a very interesting and engaging read. This book was a great help with completing the student book biography assignment

Overall, the first lecture of this course was informative and engaging by introducing us to the archives and special collections and also giving us the right tools we needed to complete all of our assignments.

Lecture Two – 6th February

Following on from the first lecture, this lecture gave a more in-depth look into the Roderic Bowen archives and we were able to conduct research into our student we were given that would contribute towards our Student Biography Project. To begin with, we were given a presentation by Prof Janet Burton on the introduction to archives. This presentation focused on the different types of archives, public records and ecclesiastical records for example, and also discussed how to access different types of archives. This presentation provided me with a great deal of background knowledge that I did not know before, and undoubtedly helped me when completing all of the assignments required for this module.

Alongside this, the lecture had an immense focus on conducting research for the Student Biography Project. I conducted research using primary sources and was able to find a great amount of detail about the life of Lt Edmund. I was able to use the Tutor's Register (UA/A/18) to find his student number and also the date he enrolled into the university. However, although I was able to find a great amount of detail in this lecture, I also came to realise that my student was not present in many of the primary sources. I was not able to find any evidence for him graduating or even attending the university more than once in his whole three years.

The background reading I conducted for this project came from '*From Memory to Written Record*' published by M.T Clanchy in 1979 (Clanchy 1979). Again, this book provided me with background reading about the use of literary sources in the Middle Ages, and I focused on chapter three and five. Chapter three focused on the different types of documents that were used in this period including charters, chirographs and writs, whilst chapter five discussed the preservation of documents with a large emphasis on monks (Clanchy 1979).

Overall, this lecture provided me with the majority of the information that I needed to complete my project, although I came into contact with many issues, this motivated me to conduct further, in-depth research outside of the lecture.

Lecture Three – 13th February

The third lecture which was part of this module was entirely focused on completing research for the student biography project. It was in this lecture that I completed all the research with the primary sources that were used to discuss the school life of the soldier I was assigned. As stated previously, I had a lot of issues in terms of finding information from the primary sources, and these issues were even more relevant in this lecture. I was not able to find any information or evidence for Lt Edmund graduating/completing his degree, so it was in my opinion that Edmund attended the university for one term and then left to join the army. Although I could not find much information in primary sources, secondary sources became my main points of information about this soldier, particularly Ancestry.com was the most useful source which helped greatly towards finishing this project. I was able to gain a vast amount of information not only focussed on his upbringing and his war life, but also the life of his immediate family members.

This lecture provided me the final tools to complete my student biography project fully. I found this project to be very engaging and interesting, and I was able to gain skills in research and analysis due to the fact that the information that was needed was not easy to obtain.

Lecture Four – 20th February

In this lecture, we were given a presentation on medieval illuminated manuscripts, which was given by Prof Janet Burton. In this presentation, we were introduced to the different types of manuscripts including both sacred and secular manuscripts. Alongside this, the functions of illuminated manuscripts were also explained to us. It was noted by Prof Janet Burton that the main purpose of these texts was to literally 'illuminate' the pages of the manuscripts. As well as learning about the functions and different types of manuscripts, we were also given many examples to look at. For example, the Luttrell Psalter manuscript and the Lindisfarne Gospel. Overall, this lecture was very useful and provided me with great background knowledge about medieval illuminated manuscripts as prior to this lecture I had little to no knowledge about illuminated manuscripts.

In terms of the additional reading that goes alongside illuminated manuscripts is '*A History of Illuminated Manuscripts*' (Christopher De Hamel 1986), which discusses the origins of printing and how this process had a large impact on written words (Christopher De Hamel 1986). When reading this particular book, I focused on both chapter 3 and 6 which were both useful to me in their own right. Firstly, chapter 3 discusses books and how certain books relate directly to monks, the author gives examples of how they would have folded and bound specific books (Christopher De Hamel 1986). This notion was particularly helpful when I started research for the Book Biography Project. Chapter 6 discusses the ideas of '*books for everyone*', and has a main focus on the books that the ordinary people of the

medieval period would have used in their everyday life. The specific element that I was focused on when reading this book was the book of hours, which would have been used by the 'ordinary' people in their day to day life. It discussed the things that the owner of the books do and was the basic book for all medieval households (Christopher De Hamel 1986).

When reflecting on this book, it was clear to me that this book was going to be of great help for me and the essays. Not only were there a large amount of illustrations that were shown in a clear and precise way, but the information was presented in a clear way that was easy to understand.

As well as looking at medieval illuminated manuscripts, we were also introduced to the presentation assignment which involves both medieval illuminated manuscripts and early printed book illustrations.

Lecture Five – 6th March

The lecture that took place after reading week was focused on literary manuscripts and we were given a lecture titled 'Manuscripts of Vernacular Literature', presented by Dr William Marx. In this presentation, we discussed a large range of literary examples, including Digby 86, which was noted by Dr William Marx as being functional, rather than being purely decorative. Another example of vernacular literature which was discussed was the Ellesmere Manuscript, noted by Marx as being of very high quality for a medieval manuscript.

The lecture given was very intriguing and allowed us to explore a large range of vernacular manuscripts. Personally, I found this subject fascinating as I was not educated about the subject of vernacular manuscripts before this module.

For this particular lecture, I focused on two books to look at and analyse. Firstly, 'An Introduction to Illuminated Manuscripts' (Harthen 1983), which defined what illumination manuscripts are; the history of these manuscripts and noted the type of books which can be considered 'illuminated' (Harthen 1983). I found this book to be very interesting and informative; as it broke down the history of illuminated manuscripts in a coherent way that made simple to obtain the relevant information that I wanted.

I found this lecture very interesting and combined with lecture four, they were a sound way of setting us up for the Book Biography Project, which would have commenced in the subsequent lecture.

Lecture Six – 13th March

The sixth lecture of the Roderic Bowen Centre: Archives and Research module was the starting point of the Book Biography Project. But first, we were given a lecture on the 'Development of Printing', which was given by Dr Peter Mitchell. In this presentation, we discussed the collections that the Roderic Bowen library holds at the university and we also conversed in great detail the beginnings of printing and how this technique developed. This lecture also extended on to discuss book printing in England. The presentation was very informative and I found it to be the most interesting lecture out of the whole course.

As well as looking at the development of printing, we also were given our own individual books that were the basis for the Book Biography Project. The specific book that I was given was an early printed book, which is why the presentation that was given in this lecture was so useful to me. We were instructed to discover the class mark, format and the pagination along with constructing a statement of signing.

The whole of lecture 6 was very informative and provided me with enough background information to dive further into book binding and focus on collecting relevant information towards to completion of the Book Biography Project.

Lecture Seven – 20th March

The seventh lecture, again, focused on aspects of book binding, but this time had a heavier focus on the how books were bound and having a hands on experience with early printed books. First, we were given a step by step walk through of how early printed books were bound and then we were given a video tutorial to watch. I found this very helpful as seeing the process of the outside structure of the book; the spine and all of the different material that would have been used visually provided me with a greater understanding. For example, it was noted that the types of material that could have been used for the outside of the book included calfskin, pigskin, goatskin and vellum.

Overall, this lecture provided great information that contributed towards the Book Biography Project, as I was able to transfer the skills and knowledge about the process of bookbinding for examining my own early printed book.

Lecture Eight – 27th March

This lecture focused entirely on completing research and conducting in depth analysis on our individual books given to us for the Book Biography Project. Although I did not come into contact with many issues, which cannot be said for the Student Biography Project, there were a small amount of inconveniences surrounding this project. Firstly, although I was able to get a large amount of information surrounding the actual binding, I found it difficult to discover who the book originally belonged to or how it was used throughout the decades.

Lecture Nine – 24th April and Lecture Ten – 1st May

This lecture introduced us to the presentation assignment, which involved us selecting up to five images from either/both early printed books and illuminated medieval manuscripts that connected in a coherent way. Originally, I wanted to purpose animal anatomy but I found it difficult to find a variety of different images from different books. I then narrowed down my search and decided to showcase the presentation of mammals in early printed books.

The research for this was completed over both lecture nine and ten, and I was able to find four images that related directly to my topic of study.

Overall, I found these lectures very useful thanks to the amount of early printed books that were readily available to us.

Bibliography

De Hamel, C., 1997. *A history of illuminated manuscripts* 2nd ed., pbk., London: Phaidon Press.

Harthan, J.P. et al., 1983. *An introduction to illuminated manuscripts*, London: H.M.S.O.

Price, D.T.W., 1990. *A history of Saint David's University College, Lampeter. Vol. 2, 1898-1971*, Cardiff: University of Wales Press.

UA/A/18, Tutor's Register, Roderic Bowen Library and Archives, Lampeter