

The LTSN HCA Subject Centre at the 10th International Medieval Congress, Leeds, 14-17 July 2003

The Centre made a considerable impact on the 10th IMC. The Director was invited to join the panel of a hastily arranged round table discussion on **‘Is there a place for Medieval studies in present-day society?.’** This was attended by around 50 people and while it is not surprising that a room full of people at the International Medieval Congress decided that there should indeed be a place for medieval studies, the session was sponsored by the *Times Higher* and was reported in the following day’s *Guardian*. There was inevitably some repetition of arguments among the panellists, but **Professor Jinty Nelson**, Professor of Medieval History at King’s, London and president of the Royal Historical Society reported on two positive meetings between the Minister for Education and leaders of the historical profession, with a third arranged. As Centre **Director** I stressed the transferable skills needed to analyse medieval source material, the necessity of understanding medieval society if we are to comprehend our own and the dangerous power of the middle ages as a source for modern myths if they are not responsibly studied.

The Centre’s second contribution was to sponsor a session on ‘Teaching medieval Castles’, an attempt to bring leading scholars of a subject together to discuss how they communicate their research to their students. **Prof. Sigrid Schmitt** of the Johannes-Gutenberg University, Mainz spoke on how a week long field trip examining castles could help students understand the complicated political structures of the medieval Rhine valley. **Dr. Robert Liddiard** of UEA explored how field trips could be a more rewarding educational experience by teaching students how to ‘read’ castles. The session was attended by 15 people, including a number of leading ‘castleologists’ and a lively discussion covered issues from educational theory to practical matters.

The Centre also co-sponsored a round table on ‘Graduate professionalisation’ with the Graduate Student Committee of the Medieval Academy of America. Despite clashing with the BBC session and various parties the session attracted an audience of 27, possibly attracted by the session’s sub-title of ‘how to get a [academic] job.’ The panel included **Professor David Bates**, Director of the Institute of Historical Research and **Professor Richard Emmerson**, editor of the prestigious journal, *Speculum*. Speakers covered such topics as the balance between teaching and research, CV design, and getting published. Again discussion was animated, generally taking the form of a Q& A discussion on a range of issues such as the advisability of year’s out and age discrimination. The demand for this type of session is evident from the fact that it overran by 40 minutes, such were the number of questions.

We will be sponsoring two sessions at the next IMC (12-15 July, 2004). Full details will be on the website.

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