Tiamanta Zacharias

- English Pantomime, 1820-1900, Knowledge Transfer Project

The aim of the project was to identify archival materials which could be used to make the Victorian history of Pantomime come alive to a general audience in libraries and museums. I worked on the identification and classification of suitable visual archival materials in the University of Birmingham Special Collections, and the Library of Birmingham nineteenth century theatre and press collections which offer information about pantomime costume and scenery, stage machinery, and dance on the popular pantomime stage.

The experience has helped me to become more confident in myself and my ability to overcome unfamiliar challenges, and I am confident that the transferrable skills I have developed will be as valuable as the new appreciation I have gained for the rewards and challenges of a career in academia.

The Undergraduate Research Scholarship has helped me to develop a far deeper understanding of what an academic career would entail and the skills I will need to hone in order to achieve my aim of completing an M.A. and PhD. The experience of working so intensively with archives in Special Collections, Colindale Library and online has been extremely valuable to me. Not only do I have a new level of appreciation for the resources available to students at the university, but I now have the confidence and understanding needed to consult archives in unfamiliar libraries and will be looking for opportunities to do so throughout my Third Year. Moreover, using the *Illustrated London News* and *Illustrated Sporting And Dramatic News* has shown me the benefits of working with different kinds of primary materials to find information about social context as well as specific factual details. However, I feel that I benefited most of all from attending the three day academic conference on Victorian Pantomime. Listening to the panels and meeting the academics was a challenging and at times very daunting experience, but I am extremely grateful to have been given such a valuable insight into one of the integral aspects of an academic career and I really enjoyed learning about the different projects and approaches to research which were discussed.

In addition to gaining first-hand experience of using archives and a database, I have learnt a great deal about the rewards, commitments and challenges which an academic career involves, thanks to the advice of my supervisor (Professor Newey) and the numerous academics I met at the conference. As a result, I feel that I can say with confidence that I understand the demands and challenges of completing an M.A. and a PhD, and I am now even more committed to pursuing a career in postgraduate research than I was at the outset of the scholarship. The scholarship has helped me to become far more secure in my understanding of what I am aiming for and how to achieve it.

© University of Birmingham 2014