



HAYLEY ANDREW

Letters from History Alumni

Hayley Andrew is currently Program Coordinator at Historica Canada (Toronto), and formerly served as Exhibition Project Coordinator at Buckingham Palace, The Royal Collection Trust (London, UK). Hayley completed her Honors BA (2005) and MA in History (2006) at Western. She has an MA in Museum Studies from the University of Leicester (2007), and a PhD in History from York University (2016).

Ten years ago, I sat in Professor Roger Hall’s office for an interview before starting the MA program. Professor Hall asked me, “Where do you see yourself in five years?”, to which I had no clear reply. It was a passion for history, research, and writing that had landed me in that interview, rather than a concrete plan for my future. I was swept into a love of history in high school. Inspiring teachers and experiential learning through a summer history course in Europe sparked my curiosity about the world. Yet when I arrived at Western, I was unsure of what my major would be or what I would do with it. It was through the inspiration and mentorship of a few Professors that I was encouraged to pursue further study. The courses I took with Monda Halpern, Katharine McKenna, and Neville Thompson had a lasting impact on my worldview – it was the ideas and questions explored in their courses that have stayed with me and that I revisit often.

History education has been at the centre of my work for the past ten years, and a career in heritage and museum education means reaching a broad and varied audience – whether through exhibitions, teaching, or creating educational resources. Through the History program at Western, I discovered my passion for public history and museums. After completing a Masters in Museum Studies at the University of Leicester, I worked for three years on the Exhibitions team at the Royal Collection Trust. Starting as an intern, and working my way up to coordinator, I had the privilege of mounting exhibitions in the Queen’s residences across the UK, including Buckingham Palace, Windsor Castle, and the Palace of Holyhoodhouse. At the Royal Collection, I also had the unique experience of being an art courier – travelling with priceless works of art to museums across Europe and North America. Leaving the UK to begin a PhD in History at York University, I found myself in the classroom as a Teaching Assistant, which deepened my belief in the importance of history education. Upon completing my PhD in June 2016, I became Program Coordinator at Historica Canada. My present role involves coordinating the development, production, and distribution of education guides to middle- and high-schools. The most recent projects I’ve worked on – education guides on Women’s Suffrage and Wilfrid Laurier – are now in more than 7,000 schools across Canada! In many ways, this role is a perfect blend of my experiences and skills: the research and writing of my PhD, the classroom perspective from teaching, and the experience with design, layout, and project management from my work in exhibitions. But much like the study of History, it’s only upon looking back that those connections appear.

In History, the career path is not entirely clear. If you find yourself wondering, as I did, where you might be in five or ten years, remember to stay open to opportunities, even when they seem to diverge from your goals. Seek out inspiring teachers and mentors. Take advantage of opportunities to practice and improve your writing, for it is a life-long craft to learn. Now, perhaps more than ever, the critical thinking and writing skills gained through a degree in History are invaluable. Whether your future takes you into a career in history or not, it is the habits of critical thinking, the practice of research, the craft of writing, and the support of mentors that will serve you throughout your career and life.