Challenges and Unexpected Finds: Research, Archives, and Qualitative Methods

For emerging scholars there are many factors involved when considering how to approach and conduct research. While traveling to distant archives or sifting through local records is a rewarding experience, the time commitment, resources, and costs associated with the historical research process may seem daunting and unrealistic. In this session, Dr. Matthew Wiseman will discuss the opportunities, challenges, and expectations of archival research for graduate history students, including the pros and cons of visiting national, provincial, regional, and institutional repositories. Dr. Wes Kinghorn will then briefly discuss various qualitative research methods, including grounded theory, insider research, interview research, and discourse analysis for graduate history students. He will end the session with some thoughts on conducting these forms of research during the current pandemic (with examples from his own current research).

Drs. Wiseman and Kinghorn will also answer your questions and address any concerns you have about the value and utility of conducting archival and qualitative research in an increasingly digital field.

Here are some of the questions this session will address:

- Does the work involved in conducting archival research warrant your time, energy, and money at this stage of your degree?
- Which archives should you consider, and, conversely, which should you avoid?
- Does quantity matter, and, if so, how much archival research is too much?
- If visiting the archives you require is not possible, how do you access the documents you need to research and write on your topic?
- Are access to information and privacy laws a barrier to archival research?
- Do archives provide research funding for specific projects?
- Is archival research a prerequisite for academic publishing?
- Does archival research still hold value as the historical discipline evolves?
- What is grounded theory, and what are the challenges and benefits to this approach?
- What is an insider researcher, and how does one mitigate this insider status?
- What strategies can one use when conducting interview and discourse analysis in pandemic times?

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