

Building Up Steam: Preparing for the Dissertation Years. **Mark A. Thorne** (University of Iowa)

After years of writing term papers, memorizing Homeric hapax legomena, and studying for (and passing) departmental exams, what most students feel they need is a long break—but instead they get an often sudden introduction into the realm of “The Dissertation”! Whether a student has a vague idea of a topic going in, or if the very thought of choosing a topic drives him or her to apoplexis and denial, entering the dissertation years can and will present major challenges. In this opening talk, speaking from the perspective of someone who is currently writing his dissertation, I will discuss some of these challenges and offer some strategies for overcoming them. Foremost I will talk about what graduate students can do in the first four years of their program so as to be more prepared in the last 2 or 3 (or 5...) years of the dissertation. By keeping in mind the needs and demands of the dissertation as early and often as possible, one can better tackle the challenges of running the ABD race and surviving through to a successful finish.

The Right Track: How to Reduce the Stress of Selecting a Dissertation Topic. **Tom Hawkins**
(Ohio State University)

So, preliminary exams are finally behind you, and now it's time to make the Big Choice. “What do I like? What do I know about? Who should I work with? What topics are hot? Which are duds? How creative should I be? WHAT TOPIC WILL GET ME A JOB!?” Questions such as these rush through the minds of panicked A.B.D. students everywhere as they seek instant brilliance from an already stressed out brain. I will help sort through these seemingly overwhelming issues and offer some advice for making this important decision through a combination of practicality and personal anecdotes (what have I seen work; what didn't).

There is no magic topic waiting for you to be discovered, but by working with a purpose in this preliminary stage you can find a worthwhile subject and hone it into that killer diss that will help you achieve your professional goals. My advice will be simple and centered around four basic issues: 1) assessing your own interests and skills, 2) assessing the resources available to you (primarily, but not exclusively, in terms of on-campus faculty), 3) seeking out help, and 4) the art of productively “reading around.” Thinking in these terms will help un-clutter your thoughts and move you closer to a thesis topic that works for you.

The Right Crew: Choosing a Dissertation Advisor and Forming a Committee. **Jenny S. Clay**
(University of Virginia)

Choosing a dissertation advisor is usually pretty easy: you find someone on the faculty that most closely matches your interests. But what if your topic does not match the specialties of any member of your department? First, you might reconsider. An advisor fully conversant with your subject can obviously be more helpful in directing your research. An additional concern: does this person have a high profile in the field, and has he or she been successful in placing advisees in decent jobs? Or what if you find that the faculty member in your area is not someone you feel comfortable working with? This is a far more delicate situation and requires tact, discreet advice, and knowledge of the dynamics of the departmental faculty. Alienating people whose support you will need is not a good idea. Finally, choosing an advisor may be not as important as analyzing your own work habits: do you need clear deadlines, constant prodding, or to be left alone to work at your own pace? Do you need prompt feedback or can you forge ahead without it?

The subsequent step of forming a dissertation committee raises other questions to consider: are the members of your dissertation committee in basic agreement as to what constitutes a dissertation? Are there going to be conflicting expectations? Should you submit intermediate drafts to other members of the your committee or wait until your supervisor approves a final draft? In this talk I aim to address these questions and provide some direction in understanding how best to go about finding helpful answers.

Full Speed Ahead: The Dissertation as the Engine for Your Job Search. **Carin M. Green**
(University of Iowa)

Getting ready for the job market is a complex task, quite different from everything else that one has learned to do in graduate school. This presentation will be an opportunity to discuss the issues important for anyone applying for an academic job, with particular focus on the role the dissertation plays. I will suggest a calendar and check-list for graduate students who are in the final year of study, and who are receiving signs from their faculty that it is time to leave the nest.

October 15 is the date when positions begin to be posted on the APA job list in substantial numbers. The APA hiring cycle goes from mid-October through the middle of March, by which time offers have been made, and positions have been filled, or they have been postponed for CAMWS or put off to the next year. There are, then, five months, between October 15 and March 15, during which the job hunt is the primary concern. It is important for candidates to be aware that, because of the nature of the tasks involved, as well as the emotionally stressful nature of job hunting, it is very difficult to do any sustained new work on a dissertation during this period. The primary message of the first part of this presentation, then, is that October 15 begins the closing of graduate study, and the transition to a professional, academic, position.

Flight practice. So preparation for the job hunt must begin long before October 15 of the last year of study. I will first discuss what to do before the dissertation begins, and then review the dissertation's function in terms of preparing a candidate for getting and keeping a job. There are three aspects to every academic position: teaching; service; scholarship. The dissertation is the primary, but not the only, evidence for scholarship potential. However, it is also much more. When the dissertation is begun, it should be recognized that it is a masterwork, not in the romantic sense of *ktema es aiei*, but in the older sense of a journeyman's demonstration of his or her mastery of the trade. A dissertation will show that a candidate has the skills to be in control of his or her work (or the opposite). A good dissertation will give clear evidence of the candidate's potential for teaching, service, and scholarship in an academic appointment.

The eaglet is launched. Candidates who have a good understanding of the place of the dissertation in the three-fold tasks of academia will make themselves viable prospects for a wider range of positions and will be able to present their work more persuasively to hiring committees. This is no guarantee of a job—there are no guarantees—but candidates with practical preparation will be more able to make something happen, to take advantage of circumstances, and to take wing on an unexpected opportunity.

Last will come a review of the *Vade Mecum* (handout) which will list the tasks and dates for the job hunting process. The hiring cycles of the APA, CAMWS and the summer season will be covered as well. I will conclude with advice for those whose first flight will need to be repeated.

Keeping the Tender Full: Flexible Approaches to Funding and Finding Post-Doctoral Positions.
Hans-Friedrich Mueller (Union College)

Graduate students nearing completion of their degrees in Classics have many questions to consider, and in this talk I will discuss two of the most pressing: 1) how to procure proper funding to complete the dissertation, and 2) where to look for a job as the dissertation draws to a close. The best advice to the question of funding is to look first to your home institution. It is your job-before-the-job to find out everything you can about what funds your department, the graduate college, and the institution at large have available to qualified ABDs. If your department can't support you through a teaching or research line, ask the powers that be if there are dissertation fellowships to apply for. Secondly, make it your task to find out who at your school runs the office for finding grants and fellowship and talk to them about external funding through travel grants or similar programs that might allow you the time required to finish.

As the dissertation process draws to a close, those going on the job market have a few more options to consider than they might at first realize. In addition to the usual academic teaching jobs, some alternatives exist that offer post-doctoral experience in the field. I will mention a few of these, using as an example from personal experience the year-long fellowship to the Thesaurus Linguae Latinae in Munich. What can one expect in the application process, and what can one expect from a year in Munich?

We begin with general questions. How crucial is a close reading of Latin texts and the use of lexica to your own research? Does broader acquaintance with Latin literature in all its genres from its fragmentary beginnings to the early middle ages, including inscriptions, medical texts, legal texts, et al. mult. Appeal to you? To apply, one must already have the Ph.D. or will have it in hand by the summer after your application. Some questions to consider: Would an NEH grant and refereed articles in a venerable serial help your prospects for tenure? Would deep inquiries into Latin lexicography and Latin literature help you think about new directions in your own research?

What might the Latin life look like in Munich (and with limited German)? The fellowship generally runs from summer to summer. The working language of the staff at the TLL is German, but the permanent staff derive from a wide range of countries, including Britain. You are sure to find a suitable language for discussion as you work up your German. Life in Munich is very pleasant: cultural and travel opportunities abound. The staff of the TLL plan numerous outings.

By being aware of the varieties of opportunities for funding as well post-doctoral positions beyond those usually considered, a student graduating with the PhD will have the advantage of maintaining the highest degree of flexibility in shaping his or her future career.