

URSS Evaluation Report

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Reflections on the learning experience

I found the research to be a very enjoyable, interesting and rewarding experience. However it has also been very intensive, involving long periods of working alone reading around the subject area. There were also enjoyable and stimulating discussions with my supervisor about the project, so it is important to have a great passion for the subject of study, which I have. The overall result of this was a great feeling of achievement, having learnt skills and also advanced my knowledge of an area of study I am interested in. With my study in particular I was able to learn new skills in the planning of, organising and filming of a documentary. I have worked on filming various projects before, but never with such detail. I also learned new skills at the Oxford Academy of Documentary Filmmaking, a workshop I attended over the summer, which has changed the way I look at the editing process and helped me refine my skills there. I have also discussed my work with other academics in the Geography department who have taken an interest and asked me about my research, which has helped me to feel more integrated in the department.

Skills gained

I feel that I have gained many skills in the course of this research:

- Time Management – As well as having to plan my project, I also had to plan a filming schedule to get all my footage within the two weeks I had in Exmoor.
- Communication of Ideas – I have had to express my ideas, views and thoughts both on paper and in conversation with academics and also family and friends that have asked about the study.
- Self-Motivation – I got myself used to getting up and working for a decent amount of time without distractions.
- Interviewing Techniques – I studied and practiced interview methods on participants and many times before undertaking the research on my supervisor and other friends to develop and refine my technique.
- Research Techniques – I used my already gained skills for finding and evaluating current research.
- Video Editing and Critique Skills – I learnt how to use a new piece of editing software (Final Cut Pro) on a Mac, a system previously alien to me, and to be more critical of my video work, as well as to plan ahead with my video work. Through the editing process I have also begun to watch documentaries critically to develop my ideas.

Use of the work in the future

This research has been an incredibly useful experience. I was originally planning on making a documentary with a friend, which I then realised I could get modular credit for as an Independent Study, and then I heard of this scheme which would give me funding to do all of this. The URSS scheme has made this possible for me. During the time I have learnt transferable skills both for the remainder of my degree and for the workplace, as well as learning these skills in a novel, exciting way, which will look good to employers – it's not just another research dissertation. I had the chance to do a project of my choice and also get paid for doing it. It has also taught me about the life of a researcher, a path I had previously given some thought to. In that way it has been work experience, which is a good thing

because research experience is not easily accessible. I also have an interest in presenting and producing documentaries as a career. This project has helped me see exactly how documentaries work, and the amount of work that goes into them in terms of research and planning, which is normally overlooked. It has helped me decide that ideally I would like to work on documentaries!