

Final Written Report
Professional Development Grant

“Rhetoric across Religions: Communication via Rods and Snakes”
18 July – 30 July 2006

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B. Restatement of professional enhancement opportunity

My research presentation, *Rhetoric across Religions: Communication via Rods and Snakes*, was made at the biennial conference of the International Society for the History of Rhetoric (ISHR) held in Strasbourg, France. I presented several images of religious rhetoric and discussed how significant these visual tools were to communication in religions, particularly the Old Testament. The main symbols are embodied in rods and snakes and how these rods and snakes become the basic symbol for communication that we know as the caduceus (often mistakenly used to symbolize medicine). In terms of the history of rhetoric, my outline explored the earliest Egyptian gods/religions and worked through the Greeks and Romans and up to the Bible.

C. Brief review of the professional enhancement opportunity

The ISHR is the global organization under which several geographic organizations fall (e.g., American Society for the History of Rhetoric, Canadian Society for the Study of Rhetoric, etc.) and a paper proposal I submitted was accepted to this conference in Strasbourg. This conference had 300 participants from all over the world and presentations were in English, French, German, Italian, Latin, and Spanish (mine was in English). Not only was I able to make a presentation on my research, but I heard other papers as well and made contact with others pursuing similar research interests.

D. Summary of experiences had

Overall, my experience was a good one. I made my presentation as the last one of the day, which makes the audience difficult. I enjoyed meeting other professionals who are interested in this field of research and, in particular, sharing information with others interested in iconographic renderings of rhetoric. It took me a few days to get over the

jet-lag, but having some time to adjust was well worth it and made for a better experience.

I also was able to visit nearby Freiburg, Germany, and do some Rhetorica-related research that netted one photograph of Lady Rhetoric in the entryway of the Freiburg Dom. I hope there is more to report on this in the near future.

Overall, it was nice to be the only professor representing this geographic area (even beyond the borders of Arkansas) at the conference. I think my nearest compatriot was a former colleague of mine at Louisiana State University (Malcolm Richardson – who is good buddies with Deborah Wilson in my department here at ATU). This was perhaps the most professional conference which I've ever had the privilege to attend let alone make a presentation.

E. Conclusions and recommendations

The overarching conclusion is that attending this conference was good on several levels. It was good for my professional development in hearing what others are currently doing and networking in this area of rhetoric. It was good for me to have my research vetted – and that's just what happened. One Italian rhetorician in the audience at my presentation really delved into my images and questioned me. Making a presentation at ISHR was also good for Arkansas Tech University and put the university and the solid English program in the spotlight: at the conference, in the Uni-Strasbourg newspaper, and in several Arkansas newspapers (upon my return).

My goals for this trip were met. I made a successful, academic presentation to an international audience. Also, as a bonus, I was able to add to my rhetoric icons collection.

Thank you for your support.

Copies to: Dr. Carl Brucker, Department Head, English
Dr. Georgena Duncan, Dean, College of Liberal and Fine Arts
Dr. Jack Hamm, Vice-president, Academic Affairs