

Memorial University of Newfoundland 1992-2002

Aileen Ann MacDonald

2002 marks the tenth anniversary of the establishment of a program in Medieval Studies at Memorial.¹ The establishment of the program was the response of a group of established and some newly arrived medieval scholars to a challenge from the Arts Administration to establish a program in Medieval Studies at the undergraduate level. The working group realised that a fairly distinct program could be established at Memorial to dovetail with such local strengths as Archaeology and Folklore, both of which departments were amenable to establishing a medieval dimension to their own programs. Accordingly Major and Minor programs were established at Memorial, starting in 2002.

Both Majors and Minors follow a core program and additional electives. The core program comprises courses from the second to the fourth year, twelve for Majors, eight for Minors. The second year is made up of two introductory History courses, MST 2001 and 2002 “Medieval Europe to 1050” and “Medieval Europe 1050 to the Reformation” which are cross-listed from History and an introductory course to medieval culture, MST 2000 “The Cultural Legacy of the Middle Ages.” At the third year, the core program has seven courses regularly offered:

- MST 3000: Medieval Books
- MST 3001: Art, Architecture and Medieval Life
- MST 3002: Folklore in Medieval Society
- MST 3003: Christianity in the Middle Ages
- MST 3004: Medieval Philosophy
- MST 3005: Medieval Latin
- MST 3006: Women Writers in the Middle Ages

Students pursuing both Majors and Minors must choose a minimum of two of these courses, which cover areas of study particularly characteristic of or pertaining to Medieval Studies. At the fourth year, there is a series of seminars, MST 4000-4020, which are offered less frequently and which include such subjects as The Medieval Stage, Women in Medieval Society, Scholasticism, Dante's *Divine Comedy*, Arthurian Romance, Jewish Medieval Communities, Muslim Art and Architecture, The Byzantine World, and Medieval Historiography. In addition, Majors must take two courses in classical Latin, Classics 1120 and 1121. Students complete their program with electives generally chosen from the medieval offerings of departments which have been recognised by the program.

Both programs, Major and Minor, have survived the past ten years of cuts and other threats to interdisciplinary programs. Relying on the services of teachers from the established disciplines, notably English, French, History, Folklore, Religious Studies and Archaeology, they have proceeded thanks to reciprocal arrangements between the higher administration in Arts and departments to release professors to take on the interdisciplinary courses. Cross-listing of departmental and interdisciplinary courses has also helped to maintain the momentum of the program while enabling the forging of links between different academic disciplines and the bringing together of students from different backgrounds to their mutual enrichment. A regular flow of graduates has been produced over the last decade, several of whom have gone on to further study in other universities both in Canada and Europe. Clusters of expertise have been developed amongst the core of professors who provide the greater part of the teaching, notably in manuscript work, art and archaeology, medieval women, and historical linguistics.

Such has been the regular pattern of activity of the program over the last decade but there have also been a number of significant and special landmarks. In 1992 and 1995, two special summer programs were held both for students in the program and others who chose to do medieval electives. The first program was held at Memorial's campus in Harlow, Essex and was run by two professors who teach regularly in the program. The general theme was Anglo-Saxon and Anglo-Norman culture in the twelfth century. The courses were augmented by visits to historical and archaeological sites in the vicinity. The second program was a collaboration with the Russian section at Memorial and was based at St John's and also St Petersburg in Russia. The general theme was Northern Medieval Worlds. While in Russia, the students visited historical and archaeological sites including Novgorod. A highlight of the program was a cruise

from Moscow along the Volga back to St Petersburg, visiting en route medieval cities such as Jaroslavl and monasteries on the holy island of Valaam on Lake Ladoga.

An extremely important landmark was our Viking Millennium Conference held in September 2000, for which we joined forces with Newfoundland Historic Parks and the Labrador Straits Historical Society in a joint provincial enterprise for the Millennium. The conference was ambitious, held over ten days in four sites, St John's, L'Anse-aux-Meadows in Newfoundland, Red Bay in Labrador and Corner Brook back on the island. Planes, buses, and jeeps were hired to ferry some two hundred participants throughout the province. Many of the most renowned scholars of Viking Studies attended and the conference was hailed as a great success. The proceedings will be published shortly. The Millennium Conference invigorated us for the new century and encouraged us that, after a decade, Medieval Studies are still strong and vibrant at Memorial.

Editor's Note: The dates offered here by Professor MacDonald refer obliquely to the fact that her first report on the state of medieval studies at MUN was for the second issue of the first volume of the newsletter for the CSM/SCM. That report was submitted to me (in my first role for the CSM/SCM) and published in January 1993, if memory serves.

