

Alumni Interview

1. Please introduce yourself in a few sentences and tell us what your thesis topic was.

My name is Corinna Schattauer, I studied modern history in Mainz, Munich, and Erlangen with a focus on cultural history. Since I have finished my Phd I have been working for a history communication agency in Cologne. In my dissertation I researched and analyzed early commercial beauty contests for women in Germany (1900-1933) and how participants used them to gain social and spatial mobility.

2. How would you describe your research topic to someone without a background in history?

Commercial beauty contests in Germany have not been well researched, even though they were extremely popular in the 1920s and 1930s. They are quickly written off as frivolous and anti-feminist but participants often used them to further their own careers and gain some financial independence (if only for a little while). By focusing my research on these women I could show that even though they operated in a patriarchal system, they had a lot of agency.

3. What was the application process like for you? What advice would you offer future applicants?

The IEG was highly recommended to me by my thesis supervisor. Since I had worked there as student assistant before, I knew it well, which helped with my application.

4. How did you prepare yourself for the time at the IEG, both academically and personally?

I made sure that I had my dissertation structure ready, so 'all' that was left to do was some additional research and the writing.

5. What was your favourite place in the IEG building or Mainz to write your thesis and why?

My room. I can always concentrate best when it's quiet around me and I have the opportunity to make coffee nearby.



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6. How would you describe your first week at the IEG in three words?

Exciting - Fun - Welcoming

7. Where did your path take you after the IEG?

I knew early on that my future didn't lie in research but in some form of public history. After I had handed in my written thesis I applied to history agencies and found a job with the Geschichtsbüro in Cologne.

8. Where there any moments of frustration or failure that later became breakthroughs?

Luckily, I had overcome my major moments of frustration before coming to the IEG. I managed them with the help of my supervisor.

9. If you could return to the IEG today, what would you want to work on now?

I'd like to continue my research on women and their bodies in the public eye. For one, the beauty contests after 1945 are in desperate need of research...

10. What surprised you most about transitioning out of the fellowship into the “real world”?

The speed at which things (need to) happen when you provide services for private companies. It's more about getting things done efficiently, and less about following up every trail and researching every detail.