

Alumni Interview

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

My name is Anna-Marie Pípalová and I am currently a postdoctoral researcher at Charles University in Prague. I completed my PhD in history at Cambridge, where my dissertation examined the interplay between historical scholarship, practices of erudition, and politics in Bohemia in the second half of the 17th century.

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

My research looked at how Catholic historians attempted to establish their credibility and expertise as scholars in the context of the major religious, linguistic, and socio-economic changes taking place in 17th-century Bohemia. In their works, they both legitimated and questioned these developments, and they faced various difficulties publishing their works.

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

In hindsight, I appreciate that the application documents were not too long! I had to write a timeline of what I would accomplish during my time as a fellow, which was helpful to think about.

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

I tried to do most of my archival research before arriving, so that I could focus on writing my chapters and on creating a database of correspondence.

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

Towards the end of the fellowship I often worked in a shared office in the second IEG building with other fellows, and I found that to be a very productive space for me to work. I work better when there are other people around me.

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

Welcoming; social; exciting!

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

Back to Cambridge to complete my dissertation, before eventually starting my current postdoc in Prague.

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

I spent a lot of my time at the IEG creating a database of letters, which took much more time than I anticipated. The help and support of my mentor at the IEG was invaluable in this, and I hope to make the database available soon.

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

I would want to work on my new project, which examines iconoclasm in the Thirty Years' War and how it was remembered in Central Europe.

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

I was surprised by how many things I work on at once now, as opposed to being able to focus so much on my dissertation.