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FURSCA End of Summer Report

Over the course of eight weeks between May and July I worked on a project called, “The Great Frost of 1709: Understanding Natural Disasters Through Texts”. This project was meant to bring texts from 1709 to the internet for professional use. I looked for documents about the Great Frost and chose one to transcribe onto UnfortunateCreatures.org where it can be accessed by individuals seeking knowledge about natural disasters throughout history. Through researching the Great Frost and understanding the effects and precautions people take against natural disasters we can apply it to modern natural disasters as well.

Although my full goal was not achieved, I did accomplish much of what I wanted. I learned new computer skills like Text Encoding Initiative, or TEI. I gained a better understanding of doing historical research and trying to find documents and firsthand accounts of life-changing events. Although I was not able to upload the full 25 page manuscript that I had been working for the last few weeks of the project, I was able to completely transcribe the digitized copy, meaning I took 25 pages of and completely re-typed it into a Google Doc, fixed broken words, translated the Latin, and formatted it to match what it would look like in a book printed today. The document itself can be viewed here, but I plan on continuing my work during the fall so the full transcript can be uploaded for public viewing.

<https://docs.google.com/document/d/19UgP2erHxJ9ki4a3-DxPwXpp2gfTpY9puQoul6pDp0Y/view>

Overall the project did go very well, I learned that there is so much more that goes into how we access historical documents and this project has helped me decide a major in history as I hope to pursue a career in archival work. Working on Philosophical Transactions by William Derham has been a struggle, but as I have discovered from doing this project, archival work *is* a struggle. Finding little to no information and having to draw conclusions from secondary sources isn't a feasible way for us to access every aspect of history. Working on such an obscure part of time and an event that not many people know about has unleashed a passion for knowledge inside me.

This project has decided my fate here at Albion. Doing FURSCA after my first year gave me so much insight into how amazing a career will be when I graduate. I'm excited to look for history clubs and classes and pursue something that I can see myself doing for the rest of my life. I plan to upload the entirety of William Derham's Philosophical Transactions in the coming year to <https://unfortunatecreatures.org/>

I also will be presenting this project at Elkin Isaac as I explain the intricacies of archival work and TEI, discovering new databases, and hopefully by next spring I will have a collection of digitized documents transcribed and uploaded to Unfortunate Creatures which I can then re-publish in a book format when I graduate from Albion. Publishing as a book was part of my original FURSCA plan, but due to the limited time I had it was a step I didn't even get to. I hope to be able to publish some documents that I have found along with key notes about each piece as a historical review, like what professors do. After all of this hard work I am ecstatic to continue my education here at Albion, and I am thankful to all of the people that have made this possible.