

Oxford University Byzantine Society

The Oxford University Byzantine Society is a graduate student-run organisation which provides support and information for graduate students in Late Antique and Byzantine Studies at Oxford University. However, anyone with an interest in the Late Antique and Byzantine worlds, defined as broadly as possible, can join the Society and participate in its many events and activities. As you will soon find out, our members come from a variety of sister disciplines and backgrounds and therefore the OUBS serves as a platform for interdisciplinary collaboration at Oxford and abroad. It also provides opportunities for graduate students to present their work to their peers from institutions across the globe and acts as a hub for the sharing of information about job opportunities, studentships, conferences and seminars. Members of the Society in Oxford can also expect to meet for drinks, dinners and trips.

 <https://oxfordbyzantinesociety.wordpress.com>

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OUBS activities and responsibilities:

- Mentoring scheme for new LABS graduates
- Operation of two weekly mailing lists: the Byzness and the Byzantine Listings
- A 2-day international graduate conference held annually in February
- *The Byzantinist*
- Annual trip during spring vacation
- Organisation of social events and activities

You have all been assigned an OUBS “mentor”. Despite the formality of the term, your mentor is a nothing more than a friendly face to go to with any questions and concerns about your studies, applications etc. They are fellow graduate students and OUBS members who have kindly agreed to serve as your initial contact within the society and they are not members of the Faculty or involved in your degree in any way. We have made every effort to pair you up with somebody with whom you seem to share academic interests and background. Your mentors should get in touch with you within the first couple of weeks of your study at Oxford: please do not hesitate to get in touch with us if they have not. But, of course, feel free to mix and mingle.

We operate two weekly mailing lists, both circulated on Sunday evening from the Society’s e-mail address, also published on the OUBS website and Twitter account.

■ Mentoring scheme for new LABS graduates

■ The mailing lists

> The Byzness

This is an international newsletter with events, calls for papers, as well as jobs and scholarship opportunities in Oxford and abroad. It is circulated throughout the year, except for some quiet weeks during vacation. Many of the events and opportunities advertised in the Byzness have deadlines several weeks, or even months, ahead and we do not circulate reminders. Therefore, if you read something interesting make sure to **mark the date**.

> The Byzantine Listings

Unlike the Byzness, the Listings are a weekly newsletter with events that are scheduled to take place at Oxford in the coming week that may be of interest to you.

Every year we host an international conference for graduate students and young researchers, which is the annual highlight of the OUBS's activities. It takes place on the Friday and Saturday of Week 6 in Hilary term at the History Faculty. Selected papers are published with Brill, making it an exceptional opportunity for participants to circulate their ideas and get those valuable lines in the CV. This year's conference will explore the ideas of Late Antique and Byzantine **innovation, reuse and reception across diverse media**. The Call for Papers will be circulated at the end of Week 3 in Michaelmas term and **the deadline for the submission of 250-word abstracts, for 20-minute long papers, will be the end of Week 6**.

Although presenting a paper is by no means a requirement for your degree, LABS graduates are strongly encouraged to present. Those studying for a masters, particularly, could take advantage of the deadline to have their first essay sorted out early, gain valuable feedback from the academic community in a relaxed and friendly context and practise their presentation skills.

The OUBS annual conference is much more than a series of presentations. It is the product of the Society's collective work and you are strongly encouraged to **sign up for the conference committee** and earn valuable organisational experience. Depending on your availability, you will be asked to participate in the selection of abstracts, chair sessions relevant to your academic interests and provide general support before and during the event. The conference is our opportunity to showcase the quality of graduate research at Oxford and to meet our counterparts from across the globe.

Please do not hesitate to get in touch with any questions or suggestions.

The Byzantinist is the Society's annual newsletter and is distributed at the OUBS conference as well as electronically on our website. It is made up of articles (of around 1500–2000 words, excluding footnotes), interviews, and book reviews related to the Late Antique and Byzantine worlds contributed by members of the OUBS. For the budding scholar of Late Antique and Byzantine studies, it is an exciting opportunity to share your work with a larger audience and begin to make a name for yourself—a tremendous boon for those thinking of applying for doctoral study. We shall get in touch with all OUBS members in early Michaelmas term to ask if they wish to provide any of the above.

The OUBS trip takes place every year during the spring vacation and scholars of all levels participate in it. Its itinerary is tailored on the participants' academic interests: therefore, it is a unique opportunity to visit monuments and sites that you would probably have a hard time convincing friends to accompany you to!

In the recent past, OUBS trips have taken us to Armenia, Bulgaria and Iran. This year's trip will take us to central and southern Greece and we will visit sites like Osios Loukas, Daphni, Acrocorinth, Mystras, Monemvasia amongst others. The itinerary will be extensively discussed throughout Michaelmas term, which may be useful to keep in mind while deciding your essay topics. **Please do not hesitate to get in touch with the committee for further information, particularly if there is any site (or sites) that you would like to visit for your research.**

OUBS graduate conference



“Presenting my first research paper and serving as a chair at the OUBS Graduate Conference 2017 was one of the highlights of my involvement with OUBS. The OUBS Graduate Conference is a first-class opportunity to get constructive feedback so as to develop and refine your research question.”

- Nathalie Defne Gier

“Get involved with the conference: free feedback on your work if you present, and organising it will be both a good laugh and great prep for later, whether you stay an academic or not”

- Maximilian Lau, former OUBS president, former OUBS president, joined in 2010, Assistant Professor in Tokyo

The Byzantinist

The OUBS trip

Bodleian Libraries for LABS students

As a rule of thumb, most of what is on your reading lists can be found in the following places:

The History Faculty Library can be found in the underground Upper Gladstone link, and you will no doubt become firm friends with its two shelves of Byzantine material.

The Old Bodleian (A.K.A. the Upper and Lower Reading Rooms) has a large selection of theology books, critical editions of Latin and Greek works, and Classics journals.

The Sackler (the Classics library) has the lion's share of Late Antique resources and is generally your best bet for Archaeology, Art History, and Architecture.

The Taylor Institute Library (the Modern Languages library) also contains a wealth of Slavonic and Greek material (once again, underground with no windows).

The Oriental Institute Library is your go-to place for anything concerning the Islamic world, as well as eastern languages like Armenian and Syriac.

The Weston Library is home to the University's manuscript holdings, rare books, and special collections. Here you can also access unpublished DPhil theses.

As Late Antique and Byzantine Studies bridges a number of disciplines, the resources that you need are scattered across a number of libraries.

Oxford has many of these: <https://goo.gl/5JYiZE>

Your best bet for finding the library you need is the Bodleian Libraries' online search tool **SOLO**, which is a database of the books held in university collections. <http://solo.bodleian.ox.ac.uk>

Some college libraries are better stocked in Late Antique and Byzantine texts than others. You can always access college libraries other than your own if you give them advanced warning, but an illicit book trade does tend to develop between LABS students at different colleges.

Do sign up for an induction to the Bodleian. It will save you time in the long run!!!

The Rare Books, Maps and Manuscripts induction at the Weston Library is also well worth attending.



When it comes to the trip's cost, it is usually subsidised. Most colleges also offer travel and research grants that you can apply for. Therefore, you really should not worry too much about the cost.

“The highlight was probably the 2017 OUBS research trip to Bulgaria. I wouldn't have considered going there if it hadn't been for OUBS, but I found the experience very inspiring. The trip was well organised and we visited a wide range of sites, ranging from churches to Roman cities to medieval fortresses, so there was something there for everyone.”

- Stephanie Forrest

“The annual trip abroad is great fun and the ideal set-up for bonding with fellow students and faculty members outside the Oxford routine.”

- Nathalie Defne Gier

Tips and tricks from past students ...

“Do your first essay over Christmas like they say to.

Hattie Mansell,
joined the OUBS in 2017, now a civil servant

“Apply for money from Oxford Centre for Byzantine Research. Ask other postgrads (esp. the committee) questions. They will either know the answer or who to ask.

Matthew Kinloch, former OUBS president, joined in 2014, now a post-doc researcher at the Austrian Academy of Sciences in Vienna

“Make the Wednesday seminars a part of your weekly routine, don't just go when the subject is directly relevant to your research interests. At all times, but especially at masters level, you need a broad exposure to an already quite niche field. And do go to the archaeology seminars, they are really good and seeing material culture presented well will help with the archaeology component of your degree course.

Hugh Jeffery, former OUBS secretary and treasurer, now Predoctoral Fellow at Koç University Research Center for Anatolian Civilizations (ANAMED)

“It is great having a weekly chance to chat to everyone - friends, peers and tutors - over wine on Wednesday evenings after the LABS seminars.

Frederick Money, trainee at Freshfields Bruckhaus Deringer

“My main advice is: be daring. You are at Oxford for one or two years, depending on your course. That time will disappear in a blink, so make the most of it and try something new! [...] When I started the MPhil, I planned to play it very safe and take more examinations in Greek. Instead I somehow ended up taking examinations in Arabic and Classical Armenian, and taking classes in Syriac and sigillography. I can't think of anywhere else in the UK where it would have been possible to do all of this in just two years.

Stephanie Forrest, joined the OUBS in 2016, now doing a PhD in History at Cambridge

“The atmosphere can be unnerving and competitive -try to get over this and the impostor syndrome as soon as possible (Don't compare yourself to the rest of your cohort! Everyone has their own strengths.) Developing a steady relationship with your supervisor is extremely important because the course is structured more like an independent study rather than a taught course. Do start to think about your essay topics as early as possible within the year, communicate about this in honesty with your supervisor.

Meriç Özölçer, joined the OUBS in 2017

“The academic schedule may appear daunting at first. Explore the vast array of topics offered at lectures, and then try to prioritise the aspect of the degree that you personally want to focus or need to work more on (e.g. language over readings or vice versa).

Nathalie Defne Gier, joined the OUBS in 2016, project assistant at the German Archaeological Institute in Istanbul

“Try to find ways to get involved, it's a great way to start building skills and getting new academic opportunities, in a collegiate and comfortable environment.

Nicholas Matheou, Past & Present Post-doc Fellow, Institute for Historical Research of London

OUBS Committee 2018-9

President: Katerina Vavaliou

Treasurer: Dan Gallaher

Secretary: Callan Meynell

