

My Reflections on ILET 2005

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I had the wonderful opportunity to travel to London and Barcelona for the 2005 ILET Summer Academy and found the experience rewarding in a number of areas. I had traveled and conducted business in Europe for many years in my life prior to joining UVA, but doing so in an academic arena was most rewarding.

The presentations at the University of London Doctoral conference were uniformly excellent. The presenters were passionate about their topics, the ideas proffered were innovative, and the methods well thought out. Having been to a number of academic conferences in the States where assistant professors appeared to be “punching their cards” towards tenure, this was a pleasant surprise.

There seemed to be a fundamental difference in the approach of the UK and European presenters. Where the US students tended to be more pragmatic and practice grounded, they often had strong theoretical underpinning to their research. To my mind, both parties might benefit from the other’s perspective.

I became aware of a number of books and articles that I will check out, and some of the conversations I had with other doc students gave me ideas about my own work. I was inspired by the Dean’s presentation on what the goals of achieving a Doctorate and wished that my own institution had articulated them to me earlier.

The opportunity for me to present my work twice in an environment when constructive criticism was available was most useful for me from the perspectives of better understanding what makes a good presentation, where the flaws in my thinking were, and how people understood the material as I presented it.

The most valuable thing I got from the experience was the feeling of community that traveling with a diverse group of people brings. We ranged in age from 25 to 70, students, professors, and administrators came from at least a dozen countries, brought a wide range of past life experiences to the table, had a myriad of research interests, but for that period, were peers.