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Language, religion and print cultures in the Welsh diaspora
End of Year Report for 2007

All four two-day sessions have been held successfully. These brought together scholars from a variety of universities in Wales, England, Scotland, Argentina, Canada and the United States. Fields represented included: Welsh language, literature and history; Irish emigration history, language and culture; Scots Gaelic emigration history, language and culture; the history of German-language culture in the United States; theology and religious studies; linguistics and sociolinguistics; psychology; English and American literature and cultural history. Participants from outside of formal academia included a representative from the Welsh People's History Society (Neil Evans) and a professional documentary filmmaker and performance poet (Ifor ap Glyn). The project received considerable attention in the Welsh media (both in newspapers and on radio) and was also the subject of an article in *Y Drafod*, a Welsh-language publication in Patagonia.

The Network's work has highlighted the need to rethink traditional historiographical narratives which emphasize the 'continuity' of experience in the Welsh diaspora. This has led to the realization that, in addition to examining continuities, there should be a foregrounding and critical exploration of discontinuities and ruptures (separating different migrations and different communities, different strategies used for constructing narratives and/or ideology, different languages within the same geographical space and within the same macaronic text or individual's speech [with reference to code-switching theory and the study of bilingualism]). It has emerged that, as well as informing the practical methodology of present and future research, this tenet can be applied extremely productively to the study of period texts produced and published in the Welsh diaspora, thus allowing us to focus more closely on the relationship between the process of constructing migration and settlement narratives and the process of negotiating identity in the diaspora.

The fundamental emphasis on the plurality of experiences has been born out in a variety of ways, allowing for the exploration of a multiplicity of voices within individual texts, performances and communities, and also inspiring comparative analyses. Part of this development has been the emerging importance of the relationship between diasporas and colonialism as an important field for future inquiry, noting the complex, diverse and often conflicting roles (as well as the process of constructing historical roles through narrative) played by a 'minority' group such as the Welsh in the context of British, American and Argentinean colonialism.

An extremely exciting discovery came to light by means of comparative analyses, as multiple constructions of Welsh-American identity were set against a consideration of the work of Welsh writers living in England. It was found that Welsh writers in England articulate regional identity (for example London Welsh, Liverpool Welsh) rather than an overarching 'English-Welsh'

identity, unlike the many well-defined discourses delineating 'Welsh-American' identity.

A recurrent theme has been a need to rethink ways of defining key concepts and terms such as 'community', 'construction' and 'identity.'

On a practical level, the Research Network has highlighted the importance of this kind of endeavour. The enthusiasm of participants has been voiced in terms of a desire to see the Research Network continue to function beyond the end date of the AHRC award. Support and encourage has been offered by the School of Welsh and the University which will hopefully translate into a way of continuing the Network after the end of the AHRC-funded period.