

Distinguished Visitors @ The AJL: Devin Leigh



Devin Leigh is a PhD Candidate in the History Department at the University of California, Davis, in the United States of America. He researches the history of the English-speaking Atlantic World during the long eighteenth century, which he dates from roughly the 1650s to the 1830s. His research typically explores connections between West Africa, the West Indies, and Britain. Currently, he is conducting research for his dissertation project. This work is tentatively entitled 'Necessary at This Time: The Politics of African History in an Age of Abolition, 1760-1807. In this project, Devin explores the lives and works of British slavers who turned to writing African History as a way to prevent slave-trade abolition. Two of the figures that he studies were prominent residents of the West Indies.

Devin came to the Caribbean this summer to research his project and network with scholars of Caribbean history. After attending the 50th Annual Conference of the Association of Caribbean Historians in Barbados in mid-June, Devin flew to Trinidad to consult materials here in the West India and Special Collection (WISC) Division of Alma Jordan Library. Specifically, Devin is examining minute books for two eighteenth-century lobbyist organizations. These are the Society of West India Planters and Merchants and the Society of West India Merchants. The books are preserved in manuscript, under call number SC 89, as part of the Library's West India Committee Records. These books were originally purchased by the government of Trinidad and Tobago in the late-twentieth century, and the WISC is the only place in the world that the originals can be seen. They are crucial for helping Devin trace the activities of the central figures in his study.

Devin is grateful to all of the staff here at the Alma Jordan Library for welcoming him into their research community and for accommodating him during his visit to Trinidad and Tobago. The WISC Division of the Alma Jordan Library is a special institution, and Devin has thoroughly enjoyed his time here.