

TELLS OF SPACE AND TIME....

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I've always always loved learning and reading about the ancient world. It seems to me to be full of unsolved mysteries and puzzles, tantalizing enigmas about who-done-what and what happened where. Definitely by the time I got to University, I knew I really wasn't even interested in anything else other than the distant past. I am currently researching for my dissertation in MSc in [Web Science](#) at the University of Southampton, and I'm looking at how to [represent](#) ambiguities in the spatial and temporal elements of the ancient cities of Mesopotamia.

My path to this MSc has been long and winding. During my undergrad years at Birmingham University I focused on studying [Mesopotamia](#) and the cultures of the Early Bronze Age in the Near East. I learnt to read [Sumerian cuneiform](#), as well as various dialects of [Akkadian](#) – I'd say that Sumerian and [Old Babylonian](#) remain my favourites, and in the course of my current research I've got the opportunity to again engage with these elements from my academic past.



A few years ago, I went back to University, this time to do a Master's in Museum Studies at Leicester. It was there that I got excited about digital heritage, and the potential of the [Semantic Web](#), metadata, and the rest. After completing this MSc in Museum Studies I worked in a few museums in various countries (the UK, Finland and Egypt), but ultimately couldn't resist the pull of academia....and it's through these earlier studies that I've ended up doing the research I'm engaged in now.

In simple terms, what I'm working on now is a conceptual model to represent the changes that have occurred in the cities of Mesopotamia over time. One of my case studies, might, for example, be the city of Ur, which was founded, grew and peaked during the third millennium BC, before being sacked and destroyed by armies from the east:

the [Lamentation over the Destruction of Sumer and Ur](#) specifically names the armies of [Elam](#) and Shimashki. The city wasn't abandoned though, but was but reduced in size. I am hoping to come up with a system which would allow us not only to represent these changes over periods of time, but to do so in such a way that the system can infer or deduce additional knowledge about these events. What tends to



daunting pile of books I face every day, instead 😊

complicate the research is that these events aren't necessarily always an exact point in time, but have vague temporal boundaries. The ancient sources do occasionally provide some light by naming events occurring in a particular year of the reign of a specific ruler (e.g. the destruction of Ur in the 24th year of the reign of **Ibbi-Sin**), but linking these relative chronologies to absolute dates isn't always straightforward.

At the moment, my days are filled with research. Lots and lots and lots of reading. Reading about [Geospatial Semantics and the Semantic Web](#), and [Reasoning about Fuzzy Temporal Information from the Web towards Retrieval of Historical Events](#), as well as excavation reports, administrative records and royal letters from the third millennium BC, and many things in between. I'd upload a photo of my study, but frankly it's beyond chaotic. Here's a lovely image of the