2015 Fisher Fellow Sean McDaniel

The Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center awarded the competitive Fisher Fellowship, now in its third year, to a participant of the Summer Research Lab (SRL). The fellowship, named after Dr. Ralph Fisher, the founder of SRL and REEEC, and a champion for building the Slavic collection at the University of Illinois Library, provides full domestic travel support, a housing grant, and an honorarium to a scholar with a particularly promising research project. This year’s Fisher Fellow was Sean McDaniel, a PhD candidate in History at Michigan State University.

McDaniel’s broader topics of research include migration within the Russian political space, the formation of ground-level power dynamics resulting from those movements, and the extent to which imperial policies and practices informed those of the Soviet state. This summer, McDaniel is focusing specifically on the role of horses at the intersection of state, settler, and indigenous power in the Kazakh Steppe during the late imperial and early Soviet periods. At SRL, he is interested in finding material on late imperial horse breeding, mostly from government data and directives.

McDaniel learned about SRL through his advisors at Michigan State, who encouraged him to apply and take advantage of the Slavic Reference Service and collection at the University of Illinois. He has been pleasantly surprised and somewhat overwhelmed by the amount of resources he has found available to him here. He is most impressed with the Slavic Reference librarians who have been helping him collect materials on his topic. McDaniel says he has never taken advantage of the resources offered by librarians before his trip to SRL and will now go back to the library at his home institution to see what they have to offer.

The application for the 2016 Fisher Fellowship will open in January 2016. Doctoral candidates at the dissertation stage of their research and post-doctoral scholars in any discipline with a focus on Russia, Eastern Europe, or Eurasia are encouraged to apply.

Samantha Celmer is a graduate student in Russian, East European and Eurasian Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. Her research focuses on incidents of genocide, crimes against humanity, and sexual violence in Russia and Eastern Europe. She received her B.A. from Oberlin College in History and Russian and Eastern European Studies in December 2013. After graduation, she hopes to work with organizations that focus on international human rights.