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Lauren Alex O'Hagan

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Name	Dr Lauren Alex O'Hagan
Age	30
Ethnicity: Description/free text *We don't want to define your ethnicity so please tell us how you describe yourself.	White European (British/Irish)
Gender and sexuality: Description/free text. * We don't want to define your gender or sexuality so please tell us how you describe yourself.	Female, heterosexual
Geographical location and current institution.	Örebro (Sweden), Örebro University
Personal Bio: What makes you diverse? Information about your background. 250 words	<p>I grew up in a working-class family in a poor, culturally diverse area of Bristol, England. My academic journey has been a constant struggle in the face of social class barriers, yet through hard work and perseverance, I have been able to achieve my goals. I wanted to pursue a career as a translator, but there were limited subject options at my school, so I spent my free time teaching myself French, Spanish and Italian. I managed to obtain A Levels in all three subjects, receiving the highest result in the UK for Italian and receiving a letter of recognition from the Italian Consulate. After leaving college, I undertook a degree with the Open University, working full-time to support myself. I then progressed to an MA and PhD, during which time I set up my own translation and proofreading business to fund my studies.</p> <p>Another major struggle throughout my life has been my mental health. At 14 years old, I was diagnosed with an anxiety and panic disorder, which makes day-to-day life very challenging. Tasks or social situations that may seem normal for most people are an uphill battle for me. I have received very little support for my condition and have only started to tell others about it in recent years in order to break the stigma and show that mental illness does not have to define you and that EVERYBODY is capable of achieving great things.</p> <p>If you've got a dream, then chase it!</p>
Interesting / fun fact about you. Any interesting fact about you – doesn't need to be research related. 100 words	<p>My biggest passion is music. I play bass guitar and run an Instagram fanpage and blog for my favourite musician, Rory Gallagher. It is through Rory—who suffered from anxiety and depression throughout his life—that I have found the confidence to talk openly about my own mental health struggles. I use the fanpage and blog to promote his musical legacy, but also to raise general awareness of mental health. I also regularly collaborate with Heavy Metal Therapy, an organisation that uses rock/metal to help mental wellbeing. Through my advocacy work, I have connected with the Gallagher family and Rory's closest friends.</p>

<p>Research: What do you research? How/why did you become a researcher? 250 words</p>	<p>I was always interested in foreign languages and, from a young age, wanted to be a translator. I studied English, Spanish and Italian at university and, at the same time, worked in (and later managed) a second-hand bookshop, where I developed a knowledge of antiquarian books and became interested in the ownership marks left inside. I had planned to undertake an MA in Translation, but towards the end of my degree, I came across a piece of research that changed my life: it was a study by Prof. Julia Gillen on Edwardian postcards and what their images and text could tell us about life in early 20th-century Britain. Reading her work, I suddenly realised that I could combine my love for books, history and languages into one career path as a researcher in Sociolinguistics. I swiftly changed my plans and studied an MA in Applied Linguistics, followed by a PhD in Language and Communication, specialising in performances of social class in Edwardian book inscriptions. In 2021, I wrote a monograph on the topic, which was published with Routledge. I have since developed this research further by looking more broadly at class relations and material culture in the Edwardian era, covering food advertisements, propaganda postcards and writing implements. In the last three years, I have also developed a secondary – and very different – research area of Irish musicology, where I investigate expressions of Irish identity in popular song lyrics, music videos and YouTube comments.</p>
<p>Interesting / fun fact about your research. 100 words</p>	<p>Through my book inscription research, I have uncovered the hidden histories of more than 1,500 working-class Edwardians. I have found that working-class inscribers used the spaces in their books not just to mark ownership, but also as diary entries to record personal events in their lives, challenge established religion and show support for socialism and women’s suffrage. Their marks, therefore, offer new perspectives on working-class life, contesting stereotypes around illiteracy or lack of intelligence and demonstrating that many people were, in fact, politically active, well educated and able to oppose their marginalised status through the power of writing.</p>
<p>Research activity: Provide a short activity which would be a research question, a task, game, experiment etc. Max 250 words</p>	<p>Look around your home for old books or talk to your family and friends and see what old books they might have. Start flipping through them for annotations, scribbles, doodles or any other signs of ownership. Look particularly on the front and back inside covers – a spot where many people choose to inscribe. Do you know the owner? If yes, what do you know about them? Are any of the things you know about them reflected in their inscription? If you don’t know the owner, think about where you could go to find out more information about him/her. Why not visit your local library, where you can access www.ancestry.com, a database full of historical records like census returns, military papers and birth, marriage and death certificates? Use the information in the inscription (e.g. name, date, geographical location) to try and track down the person. Are there any clues about their social class from the census? What about the inscription itself (e.g. handwriting, spelling, grammar) or the book in which it is written? Do you think inscriptions are a valuable tool to learn about the past? What else might be learnt from them?</p>
<p>School location / district nominated to receive a free book for their school library/libraries. *Please confirm country and local area.</p>	<p>Easton in Bristol, UK</p>