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International Congress on Medieval Studies Welcome

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International Congress on Medieval Studies Welcome
John M. Dunn
May 11, 2012

- Good morning. Welcome to the campus of Western Michigan University and the 47th International Congress on Medieval Studies. We are delighted to share this beautiful spring weekend with you.
- The term "47th Congress" is a bit misleading, because this year, we are celebrating the 50th anniversary of this remarkable annual event. The congress began and WMU's Medieval Institute was established in 1962. For the first few years, the congress was a biennial event, so the congress number and its actual age do not precisely match. We'll celebrate it both ways.
- The central fact is that 50 years ago, a group on the campus of Western Michigan University and their colleagues around the world had a really good idea--to convene a regular congress that would cover the breadth and depth of international scholarship on the Medieval period. What they--and you--built together is a vibrant, democratic, collegial, affordable, occasionally whimsical and always important celebration of the scholarly work in a range of disciplines with a single common denominator--their roots and connections to the Middle Ages.
- Many of you are here to deliver your first professional papers. You are also here to listen to talks by the leaders in your particular discipline--who also may have presented their first papers here years ago.
- You come back each year, and our campus and Kalamazoo communities celebrate your return each May. For us, these four days of being the Medieval mecca of the world is a rite of spring and a celebration of all that the academic world represents.

- We take enormous pride in this annual event and treasure your presence--all 3,000-plus of you--and your scholarly contributions. And we take enormous pride in the fact that when we travel around the world and people hear we're from Kalamazoo, their reaction often refers to this amazing annual gathering. There are places in the world where Michigan is known for two things--automobiles and the International Congress on Medieval Studies.
- We also treasure the opportunities this congress brings to our community. This spring, people on the streets of Kalamazoo are discussing medieval alabaster sculpture, the wonders to be found in this year's Exhibits Hall and the fun of "Digital Medieval Studies for Dummies."
- Thank you for making this an important part of your professional lives. Welcome back this year and for many years into the future.