Hello IMS members, associates, colleagues and friends,

This year marks a passing of the reigns as I take over directorship of IMS from Dr. Little. My thanks to Walt for his years of service and support in making the transition smooth and seamless. I hope to carry on many of the projects he has initiated over the past four years. One of the priorities this year is to make the IMS web presence more bilingual and IMS Graduate Assistant Yahaira Nuñez Cortes is currently hard at work translating and updating our webpage.

We are thrilled to welcome Dr. Lauren Clemens as a new faculty member in the Department of Anthropology and as a new colleague to the IMS. Her research on the Maya languages of Chiapas and Guatemala compliment the work of many board members and graduate associates. Welcome Lauren! Also, Dr. Jennifer Burrell’s has returned from two years of fellowship supported research and writing in Germany. Welcome back Jenn! We are now at full force with ten Mesoamerican faculty members in residence.

Numerous events have been undertaken by IMS over the past year. In the Spring, the second Day of Triqui Culture where traditional food literature and dance were featured and brought members of this indigenous community from Oaxaca into UAlbany. Then, IMS co-sponsored a symposium on Mesoamerican codices with the UAlbany library and featured presentations by Dr. Burkhart, Schwaller and Justeson. This fall, Yale University’s Dr. Oswaldo Chincilla came to give a lecture and Dr. Burkhart presented results of her recent research that will soon be published in her most recent book. Also, the latest IMS publication by Dr. James MacKenzie is just about to be released and you can read more about it on page 2.

This year has been busy with new research by, and recognition of, IMS members. Dr. Louise Burkhart was awarded the Harold J. Grimm Prize for a recent article and Dr. John Justeson gave the keynote address as Universidad de Ciencias y Artes de Chiapas. Drs. Masson, Pérez Rodríguez and Rosenswig were all in Mexico undertaking separate archaeological research projects each funded by a different grant awarded by the National Science Foundation.

Among the most important missions of IMS and the DeCormier Memorial Scholarship fund is to train students. You can read Jeff Bryant’s report on the research this scholarship funded last summer studying archaeological microbotanical remains from Oaxaca (p. 3) as well as Rebecca Dinkel report on how she spent last summer participating in the Yucatec Maya Summer Institute (p. 4).

The DeCormier Memorial Scholarship is supported through the generous donations of friends and colleagues such as yourself. Please consider contributing to the DeCormier Memorial Scholarship and help IMS help future generations of Mesoamerican scholars.

Happy Holidays to all,

Letter from the Director

2015-2016

Institute for Mesoamerican Studies
Newsletter

ISSUE 10

IMS Board of Directors

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Yahaira Nuñez-Cortes

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Faculty Associate Updates
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UNIVERSITY AT ALBANY
State University of New York
In the Spring of 2015 IMS hosted one speaker and one symposium. In February 2015, the IMS co-sponsored a lecture with the Office of International Education, the Department of Latin American & Caribbean Studies, and the Department of Anthropology at the University at Albany. Luz Rivera will gave a talk entitled “Maíz y el País: Political Violence in Mexico and Corn’s Lessons for Justice.” In April 2015, co-sponsored the “Symposium on Triqui Transnational Migration Experiences: Health, Labor and Language”, with the New York State Office of New Americans, the Center for Latino, Latin American & Caribbean Studies, the Department of Anthropology, and Office of Diversity and Inclusion at the University at Albany.

In Fall 2015, the IMS hosted two speakers. In September, Oswaldo Chinchilla Mazariegos (Yale University) presented his research on “Cotzumalhuapa: The Archaeology of Urbanism in Pacific Guatemala.” In November, IMS hosted Louise Burkhart (University at Albany-SUNY) as she presented his research on “Pictography and Memory in the Seventeenth Century Atzaqualco, Mexico.”

In May of 2015 the IMS co-sponsored a symposium with the M.E. Grenander Department of Special Collections and Archives at the University at Albany. The University at Albany Libraries has a comprehensive collection of Mesoamerican codex facsimiles and replications that are currently available. During the event, Louise Burkhart, John Schwaller and John Justeson shared their knowledge and interests about some of the codices in the collection.

Indigenous Bodies, Maya Minds examines tension and conflict over ethnic and religious identity in the K’iche’ Maya community of San Andrés Xecul in the Guatemalan Highlands and considers how religious and ethnic attachments are sustained and transformed through the transnational experiences of locals who have migrated to the United States. Author C. James MacKenzie explores the relationship among four coexisting religious communities within Highland Maya villages in contemporary Guatemala—costumbre, traditionalist religion with a shamanic substrate; “Enthusiastic Christianity,” versions of Charismaticism and Pentecostalism; an “inculturated” and Mayanized version of Catholicism; and a purified and antisyncretic Maya Spirituality—with attention to the modern and nonmodern worldviews that sustain them. He introduces a sophisticated set of theories to interpret both traditional religion and its relationship to other contemporary religious options, analyzing the relation among these various worldviews in terms of the indigenization of modernity and the various ways modernity can be apprehended as an intellectual project or an embodied experience. Indigenous Bodies, Maya Minds investigates the way an increasingly plural religious landscape intersects with ethnic and other identities. It will be of interest to Mesoamerican and Mayan ethnographers, as well as students and scholars of cultural anthropology, indigenous cultures, globalization, and religion.
2015 Award Recipient: Jeff Bryant

During this year Jeff worked at two different field projects in Mexico. First, at the site of Cerro Jazmín in the Mixteca Alta directed by Verónica Pérez Rodríguez, he excavated and sampled soil conservation infrastructure for paleobotanical analysis, and sub-sample the archived project soils.

Secondly, he traveled to the Yucatán where he served as field director for a soil survey at Mayapan in support of the dissertation research of Caroline Antonelli.

During the summer he was honored with the DeCormier Award, which made it possible to travel to Leicester University in the United Kingdom to study microbotanical methods under the mentorship of paleoecologist Juan Carlos Berrio. Using samples collected at Cerro Jazmín by Jeff earlier in the year, he learned the procedures for extracting pollen, fungal spores, and micro-charcoal, and was trained on their identification and quantification. He will be presenting a paper on the preliminary results at the Society for American Archaeology annual meeting in spring of 2016. Jeff was also selected in 2015 as a California Doctoral Incentive Program scholar by the CSU Chancellor’s office.

During 2016 he plans to utilize his new skill set made possible by the DeCormier Award to collaborate with geoarchaeologist Tim Beach in Belize. The project will involved taking sediment cores and surface samples to examine the introduction of cattle on pastures cleared from forest during the 1950s, focusing on fungal spores associated with herbivore feces. The project will help to illuminate formation processes that will provide a foundation for his dissertation involving investigation of environmental degradation during the colonial and industrial periods in Mexico.

Jeff used his DeCormier scholarship to learn the procedures for extracting pollen, fungal spores, and micro-charcoal, and was trained on their identification and quantification.

Pollen identified by Jeff at Leicester University

View from Cerro Jazmín, Oaxaca, 2015

Jeff in the field in Cerro Jazmín, Oaxaca, 2015
Becky spent this summer participating in the Yucatec Maya Summer Institute thanks to funding by FLAS and the First Encounter Award. The program focuses on teaching spoken Yucatec Maya and about the present and past culture of the region. Becky participated in the program to help herself prepare for her research on Mayan languages, both historical and contemporary. Specifically, Becky is interested in utilizing Yucatecan and Cholan languages for her doctoral research on the structure of metaphors in Mayan languages. This program was of immense benefit to Becky because it allowed her to situate knowledge of Mayan languages in context of use, allowing for a richer understanding of Mayan languages that is not always available from standard grammars and dictionaries. A rich understanding of context of use is essential in understanding metaphors that may have very particular cultural meanings.

The Yucatec Maya Summer Institute began at the University of North Carolina, Chapel Hill and continued in Vallalolid and Xocén, Yucatán. The program in Chapel Hill was beneficial because in addition to daily language instruction, hieroglyphic workshops were held by Professor David Mora-Marín, which are essential for her research on pre-Columbian Mayan hieroglyphic texts. While in Yucatán, the program focused heavily on strengthening speaking skills by regularly taking participants to the Maya town of Xocén, where each participant was placed in a Maya home to practice speaking. Visiting Xocén gave Becky the opportunity to learn about daily life in a Maya town, and importantly how she can successfully gather linguistic data in a more natural setting as one of the conversational participants. It also showed her how language use is embedded in daily life. The program also afforded Becky the opportunity to visit numerous cultural and archaeological sites in Yucatán, including Chichen Itza, Ek’ Balam, Coba, and Tulum. This allowed her to have a better understanding of how pre-Columbian monumental art was used and situated in space and its relation to hieroglyphic texts. Becky also started working with

Becky at Ek’ Balam, Yucatan, Mexico, 2015
**Walter Little**

Since stepping down as director, Walter Little has been actively working with publishers on behalf of the IMS. With the University of Colorado Press editors, he is busy discovering works by emerging and established Mesoamerican scholars that range from transnational Maya spirituality, K’iche’ grammar, community-based tourism in Yucatan, and the racialized histories of Mayan politics, among other projects. While at the American Anthropological Association annual meeting in Denver, he met with Routledge Press’s editor to discuss future editions of IMS’s textbook, *Legacy of Mesoamerica*.

For the past year, Dr. Little’s research has been focused on exploring the transnational network of handloomed Guatemalan textiles in Mexico. Unlike the more typical studies of high-quality Mayan clothing, such as huipiles, his looks at the distribution and sale of low-end, inexpensive textiles aimed at Mexican and foreign tourists. This project took him to Mexico City and San Cristóbal de las Casas in January, Oaxaca de Juárez in March, and Guatemala in July. In these places, he interviewed Mexican vendors and consumers of Guatemalan textiles and made contacts with transnational Guatemalan merchants.

As the transnational textile sales project unfolded, Dr. Little presented this research and his earlier research on urban heritage political economies at a number of international conferences in Oaxaca, San Juan Puerto Rico, Copenhagen, and Guatemala. One of the highlights of the past year for Dr. Little was the second annual Day of Triqui Culture. The event featured speeches and poetry in Triqui, Spanish, and English, traditional folk dances, Triqui textiles, and a variety of delicious foods. His collaborations with the Triqui community continue to evolve with the most recent being a joint project with linguists Aaron Broadwell and Lauren Clemens and Triqui language consultants Ramon Vidal López and Monica de Jesus Ramirez to write a textbook on how to learn Triqui.

**John Justeson**

John Justeson has continued his work on indigenous Mesoamerican models for anticipating the occurrence of solar and lunar eclipses. This year he concentrated on the eclipse table of the Mayan Dresden Codex, the most explicit instantiation of Mesoamerican eclipse theory, reanalyzing well-understood features and uncovering previously unrecognized regularities in its internal structure. He continues his editing of lexical databases for several indigenous Mesoamerican languages, preparing them for online distribution. In May he gave the keynote address at the “Celebración de las culturas chiapanecas” at the Universidad de Ciencias y Artes de Chiapas, on what has been learned about epi-Olmec culture from its hieroglyphic texts.
Louise Burkhart

lifelong search for a broad understanding of the Reformation as a fundamentally religious phenomenon which permeated the whole civilization of Europe in the Reformation Era” (http://www.sixteenthcentury.org/prizes/grimm/). All previous winners were, indeed, writing about Western Europe, so it is gratifying to see this acknowledgment that native Mesoamerican adaptations of Christianity are important to the history of this globalizing religion.

“Christian Salvation as Ethno-ethnohistory: Two Views from 1714,” based on her 2014 Presidential Address to the American Society for Ethnohistory, is forthcoming in the journal Ethnohistory. The essay examines how two Nahua noblemen, don Lucas Mateo of Tizayuca and don Manuel de los Santos y Salazar of Tlaxcala, appropriated the Western discourse of Christian salvation to counter dominant views of indigenous religiosity and assert full and competent participation in the Christian order. Using text genres not conventionally considered historical—a pictorial catechism in don Lucas’s case and a drama in don Manuel’s—they nevertheless offer a perspective on their past, the kind of indigenous perspective on history that University of Chicago anthropologist Ray Fogelson labeled “ethno-ethnohistory.”

Dr. Burkhart presented two other talks this year: an invited lecture at the University of Miami in March, called “A Nahua-Christian Guide to Life: Deciphering a Seventeenth-Century Mexican Pictorial Catechism,” and a document workshop at the Northeast Nahuatl Studies conference at Yale in May. The latter focused on a Nahua miracle narrative about a devout shepherd girl visited on her deathbed by the Virgin Mary. As her (now former) colleague George Aaron Broadwell has versions of this story in both Zapotec and Timucua, they plan a small collaborative project.
Dr. Jennifer Burrell has just returned from two years in Berlin, Germany, on sabbatical and research leave. She spent 2014 as a fellow at Re:Work, the Institute for Global Studies, Work and Human Lifecycle in Global History, at the Humboldt University, Berlin. While there, she worked on the project ‘Workers, Respected Responsible: Migration, Work & Generational Conflict Among the Maya.’ Much of the year was spent drafting key chapters of her forthcoming book. In 2014-15, Dr. Burrell was the first joint fellow of DesiguALdades.net, a multi-institutional international research network on social inequalities in Latin America and Collaborative Research Institute SFB 700 “Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood,” at the Free University in Berlin. There, she worked with research group C3 investigating formal and informal forms of security-making in Guatemala and their transnationalization.

In July and August 2014, with funding from the Gerda Henkel Foundation’s State, Society and Security Programme, Dr. Burrell commenced new research in Guatemala on municipal governance and state/community relations. Markus Hochmuller, a PhD candidate at Freie University and member of SFB700 C3 joined her there. Dr. Burrell has been writing up the results of this research for inclusion in her book and will finish this research 2016.

Dr. Burrell’s book, Maya After War, appeared in paperback in 2014 and has been widely reviewed. Her ongoing work in Central America was noted with an invitation to write a review piece for Annual Review of Anthropology. “The Post-Cold War Anthropology of Central America” was published in Volume 44, November 2015. Her co-author, Ellen Moodie, was awarded a one-month residential fellowship by SFB 700 in November 2014 to join Dr. Burrell in Berlin in order to draft this article. Drs. Burrell and Moodie are now at work on their next collaboration, which will appear in English and Spanish in the SFB Working Paper Series in 2016.

Dr. Burrell’s Op Ed with Seth Holmes and Heide Castaneda, “American Politicians’ Reactions to Refugees Echo Past Xenophobia: Which Side of History Do We Want to Be On?” was published on Huffington Post in November: http://www.huffingtonpost.com/american-anthropological-association/american-politicians-reak_b_8611446.html. The three offer a commentary as anthropologists who have worked with refugees and migrants in Europe, the US, Mexico and Central America. In the past two years, Dr. Burrell has been invited to share her research in various institutes, departments and forums at the Humboldt and Freie Universities in Berlin as well as at the Institute for Latin American Studies, School of Advanced Studies at the University of London. In June 2015, she was invited to conduct a 2-day workshop with students of artists Heike Baranowsky and Michael Stevenson at Akademie der Bildenden Künste, Nürnberg on migration, work and culture among the Maya.

Dr. Burrell has recently returned from the international FORD/LASA Symposium, “Men With Guns,” held at the University of Arizona, Tucson in November 2015. Dr. Burrell was elected to the American Anthropological Association’s Committee for Human Rights in 2014 and serves on the board of the Guatemalan Scholar’s Network.

Burrell was elected to the American Anthropological Association’s Committee for Human Rights in 2014 and serves on the board of the Guatemalan Scholar’s Network.
Schwaller presented two papers that deal with the development of the Nahua month of Panquetzaliztli, the book-length research project on which he is currently engaged.

Over the course of 2015 Dr. John F. Schwaller has continued his work in the area of Nahua and Aztec studies. He presented two papers that deal with the development of the Nahua month of Panquetzaliztli, the book-length research project on which he is currently engaged. The book sees the transformations of the celebrations of the month as part of a larger Mexico desire to elevate Huitzilopochtli as the supreme deity of the pantheon, and to use the rituals of the month as a concrete reminder of Mexica superiority and power.

Assisting Dr. Louise Burkhart, Schwaller has also been active in the University at Albany Nahuatl seminar, an ongoing weekly meeting of students and faculty interested in learning and improving their command of Nahuatl. The Spring, 2015, saw the regular participation of six young scholars, in addition to Schwaller and Burkhart.

Schwaller continues in his role as program chair of the annual meeting of the Northeastern Group of Nahuatl Scholars at Yale each May. Also participating on the organizing committee are Dr. Burkhart, Dr. John Sullivan (University of Zacatecas) and Dr. Catarina Pizzigoni (Columbia University). The May, 2015, meeting saw the largest ever attendance in the 6 years of meetings. The 2016 meeting is being planned and will include activities over three days.

Lauren Clemens

Dr. Lauren Clemens is a new IMS faculty associate, who joined the Department of Anthropology and the Program in Linguistics and Cognitive Science this Fall. One aspect of Dr. Clemens’ work in Mesoamerica is to study the prosody of Mayan languages, including Ch’ol (Chiapas, Mexico) and Kaqchikel (Central Highlands of Guatemala). The aim of this research is to contribute to the diversification of prosodic data that informs prosodic theory and to develop prosodic diagnostics for different syntactic structures. This past summer, Dr. Clemens travelled to Chiapas with a group of linguists. Dr. Clemens and Cora Leslie (McGill) presented their findings at the Center for Indigenous Languages of Latin America at the University of Texas at Austin this Fall, and they will present at the Society for the Study of Indigenous Languages of the Americas in January. During this trip, Dr. Clemens and Dr. Jessica Coon (McGill) also ran a production experiment on the syntax and prosody of different types of focus constructions (broad, subject, object, and contrastive), which they are in the process of analyzing. Another experimental study, “Ergativity and the complexity of extraction: A view from Mayan” was published in Natural Language and Linguistic Theory this May. This paper, co-authored with a number of other colleagues, discusses the processing of relative clause in Ch’ol and Q’anjob’al (Huehuetenango, Guatemala).

Since moving to Albany, Dr. Clemens has begun to work with local speakers of Copala Triqui, an Oto-Manguean language from Oaxaca, Mexico. Dr. Clemens has been inspired to begin working on Triqui by the commitment of the local Triqui speaking community to support the study of their language, and by the research and assistance of former IMS Associate Dr. George Aaron Broadwell. Dr. Clemens is meeting twice a week with Román Vidal López, Monica De Jesus Ramirez, and other members of the UAlbany community and will use Triqui as the language of instruction for Field Methods in the Fall of next year. In collaboration with these speakers, Dr. Clemens and IMS Associate Dr. Walter Little are compiling pedagogical materials for the language.
In 2015 Dr. Perez and her team concluded her third season of NSF-funded fieldwork at Cerro Jazmin, Oaxaca. They conducted excavations in two residential areas that dated to the Late Preclassic period. One of these houses revealed an undisturbed tomb associated with a well-preserved offering that should further our understanding of the ceramic traditions of the Early and Late Ramos periods. Her excavations also sampled four different narrow terraces in order to learn about their function within the city’s layout.

With help from an excellent team of archaeologically-trained local workers from Santa Maria Tiltepec and archaeologists Antonio Martinez Túñon, Mariana Navarro Rosales, and Christian Medellín Martinez they processed, classified, and recorded all lithic and ceramic materials that were later turned over to the Centro INAH Oaxaca for their permanent storage at the INAH laboratories in Cuilapam de Guerrero, Oaxaca. In addition, faunal materials were sent for analysis to the Autonomous University of San Luis Potosí at Dr. Gilberto Pérez Roldán’s zooarchaeology laboratory and human remains were processed and analyzed in the field laboratory by Ricardo Higelin Ponce de León ABD. Bioarchaeological materials were also turned over to INAH’s physical anthropology laboratory in Cuilapam. The CJAP team is currently working on completing the third and final field report for its approval to the National Council of Archaeology and additional analyses are being undertaken in collaboration with colleagues at various laboratories in Mexico and abroad.

A session focusing on CJAP results is scheduled for the upcoming SAA conference in April 2016. Other presentations deriving from the work undertaken at Cerro Jazmin have been presented at the 2015 Juan Comas bioarchaeology conference held in Durango and the poster session in honor of Roberto Zárate Morán held in late November, which was sponsored by the Centro INAH Oaxaca at the Museo Casa Juárez in Oaxaca.

Dr. Carmack, along with Dr. James Mondloch and Dra. Teresa Carranza are finishing a new version of the Mayan book, Popol Wuj. This marvelous book records the history of a powerful Quiche-Mayan kingdom in Guatemala, from ca. 13,000 AD to 15,000 AD. The original book, probably with late-postclassic pictorial writing, tells the story of the founding fathers traveling from Yucatan, Mexico to the Western highlands of Guatemala. They have located their original settlements in the northern part of the township of Santa Cruz del Quiche, from where they moved south to an area in where they constructed numerous political centers (“tinamit”, a Nahua name for city or fortress). The Quiche’s eventually expanded throughout Guatemala, as they engaged in conquests and other interactions with the many Mayan groups of that region. There are many versions of this monumental Mayan history, but they think that none of them are as accurate or better describe history than our new Spanish version. Fortunately, the University of Mesoamerica will be publishing a beautifully illustrated version of our highly professional translation of the Quiché language, along with its histories, and commentaries. The book should be out by June, 2016.
Robert Rosenswig

In previous newsletters Dr. Rosenswig have presented results of his survey and excavation at the archaeological site of Izapa. Located on the hot, humid Pacific coast of Chiapas Mexico, Izapa was an early urban kingdom that emerged during the Middle and Late Formative periods between 800 – 50 BC. With a new grant from the National Science Foundation this research was significantly advanced. This past March, 250 sq km of lidar (light detection and ranging) data was collected. This technology uses light pulses to penetrate modern vegetation and map Prehispanic mounds, pyramids and other architectural features. Adding these data to the earlier phase of the survey project they now have 400 sq km of continuous lidar coverage and the entire Izapa polity is coming into focus.

He spent 2 month this summer in the field with UAlbany graduate students Rebecca Mendehlson, Yahaira Núñez Cortes and Morgan Marx ground-truthing the architecture documented by lidar. The location and arrangement of large secondary and lower-order centers within the Izapa polity are documented as well as how these sites are distributed in relation to each other and to the rivers than cross-cut the region. Each day they visited one or more site to confirm what the lidar shows as well as to recover artifacts that help date the occupation of each site. Within the survey zone they have now documented 40 monumental centers that date to the Middle and Late Formative like Izapa. Further that the largest centers are distributed around the smaller one in what appears to be a defensive arrangement. These exciting new results provide an understanding of Izapa that was never before possible.

In late October he presented these results to a select group of colleagues at a Wenner-Gren sponsored conference on early Mesoamerican urbanism held in Antigua, Guatemala. He have also been invited to the University of Connecticut to give a lecture in March and will present a poster at the Society for American Archaeology Meetings in Orlando in April. The site of Izapa has been known to the archaeological community since the 1930s but only now are we beginning to understand this early kingdom from beyond its capital city!!

Rosenswig this summer with graduate students Rebecca Mendehlson, Yahaira Núñez Cortes and Morgan Marx as well as art historian Dr. Julia Guernessy whose research focuses on the Izapa’s sculptures.

LiDAR imagery of the newly discovered site of El Carmen

Rosenswig and Guernessy at El Carmen, a tertiary center in the Izapa polity
The Proyecto Económico de Mayapán completed an eight week field season during the summer of 2015, with the goal of documenting the changing rural economic foundations of the Yucatecan countryside through time (Classic to Postclassic). This project was directed by Marilyn Masson, Carlos Peraza Lope, Timothy Hare, and Bradley Russell, with the support of a National Science Foundation grant (M. Masson, PI). The research took place outside of the city wall of Mayapan and was designed to complement prior studies of household economy within the walled urban zone. During the Terminal Classic, Mayapan did not exist and local settlement was located far from major political centers; the area was a remote rural countryside. During the Postclassic Period, Mayapán arose to become a large urban capital of 15-20,000 people and rural settlement in this area formed part of its sustaining area. How did rural life change through time in these two contrastive local settings? What temporal differences are observable in terms of wealth or occupational differentiation of households? How long were house groups occupied, and what do they tell us about family size and growth? This study arose from a 2013 LiDAR (remote laser mapping from the air) survey performed by the project directors (Timothy Hare, PI, UAlbany PHD 2001) that documented nearly continuously distributed dwelling platforms across a 40 square kilometer area in the periphery of Mayapán. The LiDAR technology is fast becoming popular in archaeology due to its ability to map ancient architecture beneath the forest canopy. The full-coverage LiDAR work followed traditional (transect sample) survey conducted outside of the city wall by Bradley Russell for his 2008 UAlbany dissertation. Ground inspection in 2013 focused on 38 house groups that represented a tiny sample of all of the dwellings revealed in the LiDAR map. From these case studies, they chose to extensively investigate four domestic groups each from the Terminal Classic and Postclassic Periods. In 2015, the team fully excavated eight dwelling groups (one per week), as well as affiliated structures and trash deposits. This work was aided by a team of landowners and workers from the host community of Telchaquillo, Yucatan. Field directors (and Mexican professional archaeologists) Pedro Delgado and Bárbara Escamilla oversaw the excavations, and UAlbany doctoral students Collin Gillenwater and Caroline Antonelli also supervised the excavation of houses in greater Mayapán. UAlbany honors students Katarina Spero and Amanda Jesser, along with Anthropology graduate program alumna Kendra Farstad, also provided valuable field and lab assistance. Analysis is now in progress that will address the project’s research questions regarding social and economic variation at agrarian house groups in this part of northwest Yucatan, Mexico. Two additional side projects were begun. Bradley Russell and Kendra Farstad studied and mapped a traditional Maya house yard and garden. Bradley Russell, Collin Gillenwater, and local foreman Fernando Flores located a lost sixteenth century church (and abandoned town) in the jungle about 10 km south of Mayapan, known in the documents as Yacman; Marilyn Masson and Carlos Peraza had been looking for this church for several years.
Crystal is now in her fourth year at SUNY Albany. In the fall semester of 2015, she has become a doctoral candidate. Her research continues to concentrate on changes and continuities within work patterns and cultural linguistics practices of Mayas from the Yucatan Peninsula, specifically focusing on the language surrounding Maya women’s identities and socio-economic positions in the community where she works. This past year, she was awarded a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship and a Firebird Fellowship for her project entitled, “Mayas in the Global Economy: Gender, Work, and Household Change and Continuity.” The ethnographic fieldwork for this project will be conducted in 2016. The data collected during this time will be used to write her dissertation. She is looking forward to both exciting and challenging experiences this upcoming year.

Juan Argueta

This fall, Juan became a new addition to the PhD program. Before arriving to Albany, Juan conducted ethnographic research at his primary site in central Mexico and the Yucatan. Throughout the summer of 2013, Juan served as the project ethnographer for the Xaltocan Museum Project directed by Dr. Lisa Overholtzer. During this period, Juan collected ethnographic data for his master thesis, which examined historical and contemporary sociocultural/sociopolitical factors that contributed to successful collaborative community-based projects organized by foreign archaeologists and local stakeholders in Xaltocan, Mexico.

The following summer, Juan returned to Mexico to serve as an ethnographer and research assistant to Dr. Sarah Taylor in an interdisciplinary pilot study that examined the relationship between neoliberal policy, biodiversity, and rural land-use in Ek’ Balam, Yucatan. Throughout the field season, Juan helped develop research methods that incorporated ethnographic, ecological, and GIS data.

Looking toward the future, Juan plans to expand on his work in Xaltocan, Mexico for his dissertation. Focusing on topics that include the commodification of intangible pre-Hispanic heritage, revitalization of indigenous identity, and the advent of tourism.

Crystal Sheedy

Former DeCormier recipient Crystal was awarded a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Research Abroad Fellowship and a Firebird Fellowship for her project entitled, “Mayas in the Global Economy: Gender, Work, and Household Change and Continuity.” The ethnographic fieldwork for this project will be conducted in 2016. The data collected during this time will be used to write her dissertation. She is looking forward to both exciting and challenging experiences this upcoming year.
Mounia El Kotni

In July 2015, Mounia completed her dissertation fieldwork in San Cristóbal de las Casas, Chiapas. While interning with the Women and Midwives Section of the Organization of Indigenous Doctors of Chiapas (OMIECH), she also conducted weekly participant-observation with a midwife (partera) at a public hospital, and stayed with several Tzeltal and Tsotsil parteras in their home in different regions of Chiapas. During her fieldwork, Mounia was awarded a UAlbany Dissertation Fellowship Award, which allowed her to hire a Tzeltal translator, Mari K’ulub, who helped with the transcription of Tzeltal interviews with women and parteras.

During her time in the field, Mounia participated with her colleagues, Micaela Icó Bautista (OMIECH) and Alice Bafoin (Association MÂ), in the meeting of the Society for Latin American and Caribbean Anthropology (SLACA) in Oaxaca, Mexico (March 2015). Mounia, Micaela and Alice enjoyed this opportunity to present together and reflect on their ongoing collaboration (since 2013) and their future projects.

After completing fieldwork, Mounia moved back to Paris, from where she is writing her dissertation. In September 2015, Mounia participated in the European Association of Social Anthropologists (EASA) Medical Anthropology Network, and Royal Anthropological Institute’s (RAI) meeting “Anthropology and Global Health: Interrogating Theory, Policy and Practice” in Brighton, England. Drawing on results from her fieldwork, her paper “Risky Births in Southern Mexico: State Discourse, Women’s Decisions and Indigenous Midwives’ Resistance”, analyzed how the category of “risk” is used to constrain indigenous women’s reproductive choices.

This November, at the American Anthropological Association’s annual meeting in Denver, Mounia co-organized the panel “Humanizing Childbirth: Negotiating Women’s Reproductive Rights in the Face of Obstetric Violence”. She also presented a paper, “The Hospital is Where Women Die: Traditional Indigenous Midwives’ Narratives of Obstetric Violence in Chiapas, Mexico”. Mounia’s participation to the meting was made possible thanks to the support of the UAlbany Graduate Student Association and the Institute for Women at UAlbany. In Denver, Mounia was also awarded the Association for Feminist Anthropology’s Zora Neale Hurston Travel Award, as well as the National Association of Student Anthropologists (NASA)’s Emerging Leader in Anthropology Program. Mounia is now continuing with the writing of her dissertation. She plans to graduate in May 2016.

Joseph Torres-Gonzalez

Joseph is in his first year as a Cultural Anthropology Phase I Doctoral Student. His main interests are Economic Anthropology, Anthropology & History, Globalization and Heritage. He participated in the 4th Latin American Congress of Anthropology Conference (4to Congreso Latinoamericano de Antropología) celebrated in October of the present year at Mexico City. He collaborated in the research paper: “Etnohistoria y Ubicaciones Múltiples: migración corsa y el caso del comercio de café en Puerto Rico a finales del siglo XIX.” (Ethnohistory and Multi-Sited Ethnography: Corsican Migration and the coffee commerce in Puerto Rico during the late 19th century) with Dr. Waleska Sanabria-León, Assistant Professor at the Catholic University of Puerto Rico. Although the research project was geographically located in Puerto Rico, Joseph participated in a Congress that united scholars whose research projects focus in Mesoamerican and Latin American regions.
Rebecca Mendelsohn is a doctoral candidate at UAlbany with an emphasis in Mesoamerican archaeology. In the spring Rebecca served her final semester as the IMS graduate assistant. During this time, she rehoused the IMS textile collections in new cabinets and conservation grade materials to better preserve them long-term. This included their presentation in drawers in the UAlbany Ethnology lab to allow for their use in teaching and research.

This fall, Rebecca is writing her dissertation in Washington, DC as a Junior Fellow at Harvard University’s Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection. Her dissertation, entitled Resilience and Interregional Interaction at the Early Mesoamerican City of Izapa: The Formative to Classic Period Transition, presents data from her 2014 excavations at the early Mesoamerican city of Izapa, located on the southern Pacific coast of Mexico. The project combines economic data recovered from household excavations with religious and environmental data to explain why Izapa survived at a time when many early cities struggled or collapsed. Her investigations with artifacts and construction activity in Izapa’s southern periphery counter previous reports that Izapa experienced a dramatic change between 50 BC - AD 100 following a volcanic eruption. Instead, she argues that Izapa’s location along a central trade corridor, its role as an important religious center, and its shifting alliances with neighboring urban centers, all contributed to its ongoing success. Rebecca presented this research in April at the Society for American Archaeology meeting in San Francisco. This summer she presented the obsidian data at the annual Guatemalan archaeology symposium and was invited to present the ceramic data at a roundtable discussion in Antigua.

In addition to her work on her dissertation, Rebecca helped Dr. Rosenswig this summer on the most recent season of survey with the Izapa Regional Settlement Project. During the season, she reanalyzed ceramics collected from the 2011 and 2012 survey seasons with her updated understanding of the Protoclassic (50 BC - AD 250) and Classic period (AD 250-1000) ceramic chronology. She is currently working with Rosenswig to publish these results. Rebecca also spent the month of May conducting ceramic analysis at the New World Archaeological Foundation in the highlands of Chiapas, Mexico. Her work with the Drucker survey collections and notes from research conducted in the 1940s led to the re-discovery of 6-meter tall mounds at the archaeological site of Los Toros, which was thought by archaeologists to be completely destroyed.

Yahaira is a fourth year doctoral student at University at Albany-SUNY. This April, Yahaira participated in the Society of American Archaeology (SAA) meeting in San Francisco, California. At the conference Yahaira presented the paper entitled “Traveling and Trading in Ancient Costa Rica”, in which she explores previous ethnohistorical and archaeological work related to her upcoming doctoral research.

In July she attended the International Conference of Americanists (ICA) in San Salvador, El Salvador, where she presented the paper “Interaction Spheres and Cultural Affiliations at Pearl Island, Panama”. Yahaira recently published this research in the article entitled “El Sitio Punta Zancadilla (L-100), Primera Evidencia en el Archipiélago de las Perlas de los Bienes de Prestigio, Asociados a un Nuevo Conjunto de Cerámica (1700-1400 cal a.P.)”, issued in Volume 10 of the journal Canto Rodado.
IMS Student Alumni

Marx Navarro Castillo

After receiving his PhD from the Department of Anthropology at the University at Albany-SUNY, Marx applied for CONACYT’s (National Council for Science and Technology) repatriation program. He was accepted which was a huge honor for him, and allowed him to returned to Chiapas, his home state. This had been one of his main goals since he earned the Fulbright-Garcia Robles scholarship in 2006. His deepest gratitude to CONACYT that has always supported him during his career.

Back in Chiapas, he began a new project near the Lacanja River, which consisted of a systematical surface survey and he was able to identify new sites. In company with other scholars, they are planning to have an interregional research at the Usulacinta region.

At his new institution, Universidad de Artes y Ciencias de Chiapas (UNICACH) they were pleased with the visit of Dr. Justeson, who gave conferences about Epi-Olmec writing system. He have also continued working at the region where he was born, the Soconusco. Marx have been co-directing the Proyecto Arqueológico Costa del Soconusco thanks to the invitation and support of its director, Dr. Hector Neff. He is positive that they will keep collecting interesting data from the archaeological sites located in the estuaries.

He would like to thank to University at Albany-SUNY for all the support during the years he spent there. He will always consider it his Alma Mater.

Marx going to the archaeological site Pihuia, in the estuaries of Soconusco, Chiapas

The IMS website is now live! Visit us at: http://www.albany.edu/ims/
If you would like to share projects with the IMS community or update your current profiles, please contact us at ims@albany.edu.

We are also looking for pictures for the new webpages and our Facebook page, so please share your best shot from the field with us! You can email your pictures or post them on our Facebook page: (www.facebook.com/IMSUAlbany)
Giving to IMS: Support the DeCormier Scholarship Fund

IMS is grateful for the numerous small donations that we have regularly received from current and former IMS faculty and students, and from friends of Mesoamerican studies generally, to support IMS-sponsored research and publication activities. The national economic downturn has affected our general resources for this work. It has particularly affected endowments. For IMS, it is the DeCormier endowment that is most seriously affected. For more than 30 years, this fund has supported dissertation field work by graduate students in Mesoamerican studies -- sometimes enough to complete dissertation work, often a basis for pilot studies that have led to successful applications for larger external grants.

For many years, IMS has generally been able to support dissertation field work by two graduate students every year. For the immediate future, the likelihood is that this fund will provide significantly reduced levels of support for dissertation research. For those who are able, your contributions can help to renew this important part of the infrastructure for Mesoamericanist research.

Donations to the Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, the DeCormier Endowment, or to the Mesoamerica Endowment can be sent by check to the Institute for Mesoamerican Studies at the address on the left. All donations go to support student research.

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Recent publications

BASIC K’ICHE’ GRAMMAR (Revised Edition) by James L. Mondloch, forthcoming, Institute for Mesoamerican Studies and the University of Colorado Press.


The Institute of Mesoamerican Studies (IMS) is a nonprofit scholarly research center dedicated to the study and dissemination of knowledge about the ancient and modern peoples and cultures of Mesoamerica (Mexico and northern Central America).

Since 1975, IMS helps coordinate the work of the Mesoamerican faculty at the University at Albany – SUNY. We have the largest number of full-time Mesoamericanists of any institution north of Mexico, and our members are among the most active and prominent scholars in the field of Mesoamerican anthropology. The primary activities of IMS are research and publication.