Happy Holidays to the IMS community.

As is evident from the faculty and student updates in this year’s newsletter, members of IMS have been busy during the past year and much more is in the works for 2017. To provide an easily accessible record of student research supported by IMS, we will be posting grant reports on our webpage and IMS Graduate Assistant Rebecca Mendelsohn is diligently at work collecting and uploading them. Another priority is to facilitate donations to IMS and we will be receiving support for the UAlbany Foundation to create new links for our webpage and initiate new strategies to engage interested constituencies. We have recently established an IMS listserv to facilitate communication with the community. So, if you have any suggestion of people who should be receiving our announcements please email us at ims@albany.edu to let us know.

This year we are very happy to welcome Dr. Joanna Dreby from the Department of Sociology to the IMS board of directors. Inclusion of Dr. Dreby (and Dr. Schwaller from History) expands our mission beyond the traditional focus in Anthropology to engage with a broader range of UAlbany scholars who share our research interests in Mesoamerica. Dr. Dreby will be giving talk during the Spring 2017 semester and all are encouraged to attend.

Many events were undertaken by IMS over the past year. The Day of Triqui Culture brought members of this indigenous community from Oaxaca, Mexico together with the UAlbany community on April 10th to share food, drink, dance and culture. The fourth annual Day of Triqui Culture is being planned for 2017. This fall Dr. Jennifer Burrell spoke about her research on youth culture and the rhetoric of security in highland Guatemala and then Dr. Amy Frappier (Skidmore College) spoke of climate change reconstructions from the Yucatan during the past two millennia and its effects on Maya culture.

Board members received awards, published books and undertook grant-supported research. Congratulations to Dr. Schwaller for his election to the Spanish Order of Carlos V as well as receiving the Tibesar Award of Lifetime achievement. Congratulations also to Drs. Burkhart and Masson who both had new books published during the past year. Despite being retired, Dr. Carmack published one book in 2016 and has another coming out in 2017 – go Bob! During the summer of 2016, Dr. Burrell conducted research in Guatemala with a grant from the Gerda Henkel Foundation. And, Drs. Masson, Pérez Rodriguez and Rosenswig each conducted archaeological analysis as part of their respective NSF-funded projects in the Mexican states of Yucatan, Oaxaca and Chiapas (respectively).

One of the most important contributions of IMS is to support student research. The DeCormier Memorial Scholarships allowed Yahaira Nuñez-Cortés to undertake mapping and artifact analysis at Lomas Entierros in Costa Rica in preparation of her dissertation fieldwork and for Juan Argueta to study Nahua in preparation of his doctoral work. A First Encounter Award allowed Alyse Stohmeyer to travel to the Yucatan and undertake analysis of effigy censers at Mayapan for her Master’s thesis project. You can read each of their reports in the pages that follow.

The DeCormier Memorial Scholarship only exists through donations from friends and colleagues such as yourself. Please consider contributing to the DeCormier Memorial Scholarship and help IMS support future generations of Mesoamerican scholars.

Again, a very Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukah and Happy New Year to all,
In February 2016, IMS hosted speaker Dr. Peter Rohloff, an Associate Physician in the Division of Global Health Equities at the Brigham and Women's Hospital in Boston and Chief Medical Officer for Wuqu' Kawiq: Maya Health Alliance in Guatemala. Rohloff’s talk, entitled “Agile Health: using Teamwork and Grassroots Organizing to Build a Different Kind of Healthcare in Maya Guatemala,” discussed his work bringing together insights from community organizing, cultural and medical anthropology, and health care delivery to provide high impact, low cost health services.

In October of 2016 the IMS hosted two speakers. First, IMS board member Dr. Jennifer Burrell (University at Albany, SUNY) discussed her recent research with a talk entitled “Todos Somos Seguridad: Security and Anti-Corruption Initiatives in Guatemala.” At the end of October, IMS hosted a lecture by Dr. Amy Frappier (Skidmore College), a geoscientist who discussed “Mud and the Maya ‘Megadroughts’: Two Millennia of Environmental Context from Northern Yucatán Stalagmite Records of Hydroclimate and Compound Extreme Events.”

In April 2016, IMS co-sponsored our third annual Day of Triqui Culture together with our friends with Triquis sin Fronteras, and with the support of The Office of New Americans of New York State and UAlbany’s Kappa Alpha Pi. This year the event was held off-campus at Saint Basil’s Center in Watervliet, NY.

This year’s event ranged from a public health discussion about diabetes, to singing, poetry, traditional dances, the recitation of folktales by members of the local Triqui community. As usual, the event included lots of delicious food! One highlight of this year’s celebration was the unveiling of the presentation of a new online Triqui-Spanish-English dictionary, developed by IMS faculty associate Dr. Lauren Clemens, former IMS faculty associate Dr. Aaron Broadwell and members of the Albany Triqui Working Group. The dictionary can be accessed online at copala-triqui.webonary.org.
Christopher De Cormier Memorial Scholarship

2016 Award Recipient: Yahaira Nuñez-Cortés

Yahaira Nuñez Cortés is a doctoral candidate at UAlbany. During the fall of 2016 and with funds from the DeCormier Memorial Scholarship, Yahaira was able to visit the archaeological site of Lomas Entierros, located in Central Pacific Costa Rica. This archaeological site is currently situated under the primary rainforest of Carara National Park. However there is high visibility on the ground, making it possible to observe the cobblestone structures, as well as great quantities of ceramic fragments, metates, manos, and polished and flaked celts. During this visit to Lomas Entierros, Yahaira located with a handheld GPS unit the structures excavated in 1988, as well as four more retaining walls and seven more house foundations. Due to the presence of structures and materials on the surface, the area of the site was estimated to 4.5 ha. Lomas Entierros is one of the largest centers located in the Central Pacific region of Costa Rica, and it was occupied during the centuries before the Spanish arrival (AD 800-1500). The site is known for its monumental construction in cobblestone on top of a hill and large quantities of imported items coming from the Greater Nicoya region. With these funds Yahaira was also able to analyze the artifact collections from the 1988 archaeological work at Lomas Entierros, which is currently housed in the Museo Nacional de Costa Rica. The analysis of these collections led to new insight into the diversity of imported and local items. Variation in forms, decorations, and raw materials were important components of this analysis that could lead to an understanding of material culture in terms of gradations of value. This was essential since understanding the expression of value in objects along a continuum is one of the main objectives of this research. Items coming from both domestic and burial contexts are present in the artifact collection of Lomas Entierros. Artifacts range from metates, manos, pestles, a variety of ceramic pots, celts, spindle whorls, figurines, whistles, and personal ornaments. Human and animal remains were also recovered at Lomas Entierros. The best-preserved examples were found in a mass burial of 20 individuals. Two carved bone pendants are among the most impressive items found in this context. This upcoming spring of 2017 and with funds from the DeCormier Memorial Scholarship and the Dissertation Research Fellowship Award from UAlbany, Yahaira will conduct another short season to map more structures at Lomas Entierros in preparation for her dissertation excavations. Yahaira is deeply grateful to the DeCormier family and the IMS community for making this project a reality.

2016 Award Recipient: Juan Argueta

Thanks to the DeCormier scholarship, Juan spent 6-weeks this summer at Yale University’s Intensive Nahuatl Language Study to increase his proficiency in Nahuatl and prepare himself for preliminary dissertation fieldwork. Every weekday, Juan spent several hours immersed with native speakers learning Modern Nahuatl (Huastecan variant) and with John Sullivan who provided instruction on Classical Nahuatl. During those 6-weeks, he developed his oral comprehension, speaking, reading, writing and understanding of language structure. Through these means, Juan was exposed to historical, economic,
Thanks to the DeCormier scholarship, Juan spent 6-weeks this summer at Yale University’s Intensive Nahuatl Language Study to increase his proficiency in Nahuatl and prepare himself for preliminary dissertation fieldwork.

The First Encounter Award allowed Alyse to spend two weeks in Mayapan to conduct research on effigy censers for her Master’s paper. Her research addresses the contexts of effigy censers in commoner households at Mayapan. This trip allowed her to identify the types of effigy censer fragments recovered from 2002-2009 excavations of eight house lots. While these fragments usually make up less than one percent of household pottery, little is known about how they arrived at residential contexts and whether they were used in a meaningful way. This experience allowed Alyse to work with artifacts in a lab as well as expand upon her field experience. This award also provided her with an opportunity to visit other archaeological sites such as Chichen Itza and Uxmal. In addition to the data collected, and the lab and field experience, the time spent in Mayapan granted her with a firsthand, cultural opportunity to learn about today’s Mayan communities. She nowplans to incorporate a wider perspective in the writing of her Master’s paper which would not have been possible without the gracious pecuniary support provided by IMS’s First Encounter Award.

First Encounter Award

2016 Recipient: Alyse Strohmeyer

The First Encounter Award allowed Alyse to spend two weeks in Mayapan doing research for her Master’s paper. Her research addresses the contexts of effigy censers in commoner households at Mayapan. This trip allowed her to identify the types of effigy censer fragments recovered from 2002-2009 excavations of eight house lots. While these fragments usually make up less than one percent of household pottery, little is known about

Juan (sixth from the left) with his classmates in Yale University’s Intensive Nahuatl Language Study Program

Alyse at Chichen Itza, Yucatan, Mexico, 2016
The official publication date for Dr. Burkhart’s *Painted Words: Nahua Catholicism, Politics, and Memory in the Atzaqualco Pictorial Catechism* is her birthday, January 30, 2017, with advance copies coming in December. Co-authored with Elizabeth Hill Boone and David Tavárez, the book presents a facsimile, her pictograph-pictograph decipherment, and extensive analysis of this seventeenth-century Nahua text from Mexico Tenochtitlan. The authors analyze the work as a new form of indigenous pictographic writing, as an expression of Nahua understandings and usage of Catholic religion, and as a politicized expression of historical memory formulated by Atzaqualca who memorialized don Pedro de Mo-teuczoma (son of the emperor) and other illustrious ancestors. It is published as Dumbarton Oaks (through Harvard University Press) as Pre-Columbian Art and Archaeology Series 39.

Dr. Burkhart has a chapter entitled “The Aztecs and the Catholic Church” in the brand-new *Oxford Handbook of The Aztecs*, edited by Deborah Nichols and Enrique Rodríguez-Alegría. Also, her 2014 American Society for Ethnohistory Presidential Address was published in *Ethnohistory* in April, 2016. This piece, “Christian Salvation as Ethno-Ethnohistory: Two Views from 1714,” reads two Nahua texts—the pictorial catechism from Tizayuca depicted on the issue’s cover and a drama about Emperor Constantine and Saint Helen—as works that inscribe Nahua views of their history in these not overtly historical text genres. Judging by overheard comments at this November’s American Society for Ethnohistory conference, Dr. Burkhart may have reinvigorated Ray Fogelson’s concept of “ethno-ethnohistory” among Meso-americanists.

New research has been slowed by Dr. Burkhart’s service as chair of the Department of Anthropology, but she can highlight one current project. She is collaborating with Abelardo de la Cruz, a native speaker and Nahual teacher (and soon-to-be-doctoral student) from Chiconepec, Veracruz, to publish one of the colonial plays from her *Nahuatl Theater* set as a monolingual book in Nahual. They chose the play Barry Sell and I named *In Citlalmachiayotl* (“The Star Sign”), a lively reenactment of the Three Kings’ journey to Bethlehem and their meetings with King Herod and the Holy Family. Apparently first composed in Tlatelolco in the early 1600s (a lost manuscript once published by Francisco del Paso y Troncoso), the same play turned up in a slightly altered version dated 1724, from Metepec, in the State of Mexico—an example of how Nahua texts in genres banned from publication circulated and survived in a literary underground. This project will appear in a Nahua book series issued by the University of Warsaw and the Instituto de Docencia y Investigación Etnológica de Zacatecas. The goal of this series is to support language revitalization and native-language literacy among contemporary Nahua, using a standardized orthography (ACK) readable to all speakers and consistent with colonial documents. Their work will be the first of colonial-era Nahual literary art to be published in this format. Few contemporary Nahua have any sense of the rich textual corpus their literate forebears created while surviving Spanish rule; this book is one small step toward reuniting them with that heritage.
Dr. Burrell returned to Guatemala in June and July 2016 to finish her research “Securing Futures: Security, Democracy and the Limits of the State,” funded by the Gerda Henkel Foundation. Dr. Mounia El Kotni (PhD 2016, SUNY Albany), former IMS assistant, accompanied her as a postdoctoral research collaborator. Burrell and El Kotni researched the municipal sectors of health, education and development in this phase of the research, exploring interlinkages with security and the state. Burrell is currently analyzing the data from this 3-year project in anticipation of returning to her manuscript-in-progress. Among the many outcomes of this research season is the development of a new project on anti-corruption efforts in Guatemala and beyond.

Dr. Burrell and her long-time collaborator, Dr. Ellen Moodie (UIUC) embarked on a new project, Generation and Political Action in Central America. The preliminary results of this new collaboration will appear in the SFB 700, Governance in Areas of Limited Statehood Working Paper Series at the Free University, Berlin.

Burrell returned to the Free University in October for the workshop “Encountering Transnational Violence in Guatemala” which gathered researchers affiliated with the project in the past years. There, she presented the paper, Transnational Circulations of Security, Violence and the Limits of the State in Guatemala, based on her recent research. Burrell also gave papers at the annual meetings of the American Anthropological Association in Minneapolis in November and was invited to discuss panels on Violence in Central America (at LASA in NYC in May) and nationalism, gender and violence (at the AAAs in Minneapolis).


Burrell serves on the Committee for Human Rights of the American Anthropological Association through 2018. The committee has been especially active in advising the AAA Executive Committee and membership on human rights crises throughout the world, preparing responses to these crises and releasing statements on them, and advising members on how to contribute their expertise.
Robert Carmack

Dr. Robert Carmack (Professor Emeritus) has recently published a new book in Guatemala. The book, entitled *Los Mayas K’iche’s: Su Historia, Cultura, y Sociedades*, was published this year with the editorial “Maya Wuj.” Among many topics, the book discusses the ethnohistory of the K’iche Maya, as well as Maya politics, law, religion, and identities.

Dr. Carmack also looks forward to the forthcoming publication of a new book, *El Popol Vuj*, written with Teresa Carranza and James Mondloch. The volume will be published with the Universidad Mesoamericana and scheduled to be released in June 2017.

Lauren Clemens

Dr. Lauren Clemens has continued to work with speakers of Copala Triqui (Otomanguean) in the Capital region. Members of the Triqui working group, including Román Vidal López, Moni ca De Jesus Ramírez, and IMS associate Dr. Walter Little, are compiling pedagogical materials for the language. During the fall semester, Dr. Clemens taught UAlbany’s Linguistic Field Methods course with Copala Triqui as the language of instruction. The course culminated in a presentation of student work to the Triqui speaking community in December. In collaboration with Dr. George Aaron Broadwell (former IMS associate), Dr. Clemens will present work on Copala Triqui’s changing inflectional system at the Society for the Study of Indigenous Languages of the Americas in January 2017.

Dr. Clemens remains active in Mayan linguistics as well. During 2016, Dr. Clemens and Dr. Jessica Coon (McGill) presented their work on Mayan word order at the Workshop on Structure and Constituency in Languages of the Americas. Dr. Clemens and Dr. Coon also presented a widescale study of focus encoding in Ch’ol with Carol-Rose Little (Cornell University) and Morelia Vázquez Martínez (Instituto Tecnológico Superior De Macuspana) at Form and Analysis in Mayan Linguistics. In September, Dr. Clemens gave an invited talk at Stanford University, where she presented her work on Ch’ol prosody.

This year, Carmack released a new book in Guatemala, entitled *Los Mayas K’iches: Su Historia, Cultura, y Sociedades*.
IMS welcomes our new faculty associate and board member, Joanna Dreby. Dr. Dreby is an ethnographer in the Department of Sociology at UAlbany working with migration.

Joanna Dreby is a new IMS faculty associate and board member who has been in the Department of Sociology at UAlbany since 2011. Dr. Dreby is an ethnographer whose most recent publications have focused on the impact of legal status on children in Mexican migrant families, including Everyday Illegal (University of California Press 2015) [which received an Honorable mention for the 2016 Mirra Komarovsky Book Award from the Eastern Sociological Society]. Over the past year, Dr. Dreby has been busy speaking about this work at invited presentations at a variety of college campuses [including John Jay College, the University of California, Irvine, Amherst College, and Framingham State University] as well as at a number of conference presentations. She is currently on the advisory board for the “Developing a 21st Century US Immigration Project,” led by the Center for Migration Studies and was a member of the organizing committee for a 2016 NIMHD funded conference “Undocumented, Unaccompanied, and Citizen: Charting Research Directions for Children of Immigration” at the University of Texas, Austin.

Dr. Dreby’s work on the consequences of immigration enforcement for children and families took her back to Oaxaca, Mexico in the summer of 2014 for a pilot study on the children of return migration, where previously she had spent a year interviewing children in transnational families. Dr. Dreby is currently seeking funding to further explore the impacts of return on children whose parents move back to urban and rural contexts in Chiapas, Mexico. She continues to write about the children of Mexican migration with colleague Esperanza Tuñón-Pablos of El Colegio de la Frontera Sur (ECOSUR), specifically on changes to diet and exercise post-migration.

Over the past two years, Dr. Dreby has also been pursuing her research interest in the nexus between policy and family with a focus on a new population: farm families. Dr. Dreby has learned about the various economic hardships farm families in upstate New York face due to international trade policies, constraints which ironically have made them more dependent on migrant farmworkers from Mexico and Guatemala to stay competitive. Her first research article on farm families is due out at the end of 2016 in the Journal of Rural Studies. During 2017, Dr. Dreby plans to further explore this topic through comparative research with farm families in Costa Rica who, unlike farmers in New York State, often cater to an export-oriented market. Dr. Dreby has an affiliation with the University of Costa Rica and hopes to secure the funding necessary to add this global dimension to her current research.

Dr. Dreby often has taken her children with her into the field.
Over the last year, Walter Little has explored the politics and aesthetics of tangible and intangible heritage in Guatemala, the consumption of hand-woven Guatemalan Maya textiles in Mexico, and Triqui language and culture. As book series editor, he continues to work on behalf of the IMS publications. With editors at the University of Colorado Press, IMS’s next publications will include a dramatically revised edition of James Mondloch’s, *K’iche’ Grammar*, and Sarah Taylor’s book, *On Being Maya and Getting By: Heritage Politics and Community Development in Yucatán*. At the American Anthropological Association annual meeting in Milan in July, the Segunda Encuentro de Textiles Mesoamericanos in Oaxaca in October, and the American Anthropological Association annual meeting in November, he discussed various aspects of Maya textile production in Guatemala and transnational sales and consumption in Oaxaca and Chiapas. He shared his Triqui community-engagement research at the Northeast Anthropological Association annual meeting in April at Skidmore College and, then, at the Simposio Internacional de Estudios Oaxaqueños annual meeting in October.

One of the highlights of Dr. Little's research occurred in Oaxaca while interviewing a Triqui street vendor couple next to the Templo de Santo Domingo. He was interrupted by another vendor who declared that she knew him. While he could not recall having met her, she remembered that it was through the Triquis sin Fronteras Facebook page that she had recognized him. Triquis sin Fronteras is a faculty, student, and Triqui immigrant community-based organization that promotes Triqui language, culture, and businesses in the Albany Region. Several other times, when meeting Triqui vendors who sold Guatemalan textiles in Oaxaca, Dr. Little was identified as a member of Triquis Sin Fronteras. One such vendor connection will lead to a transnational collaboration to develop digital language materials that can be used by Triquis in Oaxaca but, also, here in Albany and other communities in Mexico and the United States.

For the third annual Day of Triqui Culture, celebrated on April 10 at Saint Basil’s Center, Dr. Little had the pleasure sharing the event’s emcee duties with Monica De Jesús Ramírez. The event featured a presentation by Dr. Edilberto Hernández Cárdenas, speeches in Triqui, Spanish, and English, a number of traditional dances, a Triqui textile exhibit, and a variety of delicious foods. Collaborating with the Triqui community is one of the most enriching experiences in which he participates, because it brings together faculty, students, and community members together.
Dr. Pérez Rodríguez has continued her work directing the Cerro Jazmín Archaeological Project (CJAP). Since concluding the fieldwork and field analysis last summer the CJAP team has been focused on analyzing data, completing and submitting reports to the National Science Foundation and INAH, as well as publishing research results. Recent publications include a 2016 piece on “Skeletal health and the abandonment of a Late Terminal Formative urban center in the Mixteca Alta: a bioarchaeological analysis of human remains from Cerro Jazmín” in the Journal of Archaeological Science and forthcoming articles on “Terrace Agriculture in the Mixteca Alta Region, Oaxaca, Mexico: Ethnographic and Archaeological Insights on Terrace Construction and Labor Organization.” This piece is featured in a 2016 issue of Culture, Agriculture, Food and Environment.

Data generated by the Cerro Jazmín Archaeological Project is currently being integrated into larger research projects that include the compilation of XRF results that source obsidian artifacts from across the state of Oaxaca, a project which is currently spearheaded by Gary Feinman and Linda Nicholas at the Field Museum.

Bioarchaeological data of human remains from Cerro Jazmín are also being integrated into a macroregional database that will be the basis of Ricardo Higelin Ponce de Leon’s doctoral dissertation project at the University of Indiana.

In addition, Dr. Pérez Rodríguez recently published the results of an ethnoarchaeological study conducted prior to joining the Anthropology Department at the University at Albany. This publication is called “Terrace Agriculture in the Mixteca Alta Region, Oaxaca, Mexico: Ethnographic and Archaeological Insights on Terrace Construction and Labor Organization.”

CJAP results were presented at the 81st Annual Meeting of the Society for American Archaeology, which was held in April of 2016 in Orlando. Dr. Pérez Rodríguez will also present on the information gained from excavations at the western mound of the Tres Cerros sector of Cerro Jazmín at the up-coming Society for American Archaeology conference, which will be held in Oaxaca in 2017. A broader discussion of community outreach efforts and public education work conducted by the Cerro Jazmín Archaeological project was presented at the World Archaeological Congress 8, which was held in September of 2016 in Kyoto.

Finally, Dr. Pérez Rodríguez continues to work with members of the local community of Santa María Tiltepec to share with them the full scope of project results, prepare educational materials in Spanish, and give talks at the town’s public meetings. The CJAP team is finalizing the preparation of a series of posters that will be printed in laminated form to be given to the community to be showcased in their government building in the center of town.
As he writes this entry, Dr. Rosenswig is preparing to run an archaeological field school at the site Las Mercedes in Costa Rica for 6 weeks beginning January 15, 2017. This is the third season that Dr. Rosenswig will collaborate with Dr. Ricardo Vazquez of the National Museum of Costa Rica (and UAlbany Ph.D.) on this project. This year they will be joined by Dr. Alexander Buyantuev from UAlbany’s Department of Geography and Planning who will come to Costa Rica for a week with two drones and field school students will help collect LiDAR and multi-spectral data with him. These data will then be analyzed as part of a class once students return to Albany. Las Mercedes was the center of a chiefdom that lasted from ~AD 1000-1500 and the drone work will map the monumental architecture at the site including the two 1.5 km-long stone-paved causeways that were the formalized routes for procession into the site’s center to pay tribute. Assuming the methodology of combining LiDAR and multi-spectral data is successful at Las Mercedes, we will submit a grant proposal to NSF to document the central architecture and causeways at the dozen secondary centers within the chiefdom. Polity-wide architectural data will reconstruct labor expenditures and the dating of causeway construction will be used to infer the organization and coordination of power as the Las Mercedes chiefdom coalesced.

Dr. Rosenswig spent time in Chiapas, Mexico this past July and August wrapping up the current phase his NSF-funded Izapa Regional Settlement Project. The Izapa research combines nearly 600 sq km of LiDAR data with pedestrian survey and excavations to document the entire early kingdom during its apogee from 700-100 BC. While in Chiapas, he visited Dr. Marx Navarro-Castillo, a UAlbany Ph.D. and previous DeCormier recipient, at his new job teaching at UNICACH (Chiapas State University).

In November, Dr. Rosenswig gave an invited lecture at the University of Texas, San Antonio on the results from his documentation of the Izapa kingdom. In the spring, a paper on the work at Izapa will be presented at the annual meeting of the Society for American Archaeology in Vancouver and then an invited lecture delivered at Yale University in April 2017.

Dr. Rosenswig has had five peer-reviewed journal articles published during the past year and a new book, *Modes of Production in Archaeology*, is set for release by the University Press of Florida in the new year. With co-editor Dr. Jeramy Cunningham, they argue that historical materialism remains relevant to archaeological discourse in the twenty-first century. Modes of production describe how labor is organized to create surplus which is then used for political purposes. This type of analysis allows archaeologists to compare and contrast peoples across distant continents and eras, from hunter-gatherer groups to early agriculturalists to nation-states. A dozen chapters provide case studies from around the world.
This fall, Dr. Schwaller was elected to the International Order of Carlos V, for support of Hispanic culture. He was also recognized with the Tibesar Award for Lifetime Achievement from the Academy of American Franciscan History.

John Schwaller

During 2016, John Schwaller has been active in research and presentation on the Aztecs and early colonial Mexico. Among the highlights, he was elected to the International Order of Carlos V, for support of Hispanic culture. The ceremony was held in the historic Alcázar of Segovia, Spain, on November 19, 2016. With fellow members in full dress, under the portraits of the kings of Spain he was formally installed in the Order. Earlier in the year, in October, Academy of American Franciscan History recognized him with the Tibesar Award for Lifetime Achievement. After receiving the award, Schwaller presented a formal lecture, entitled, “Fr. Agustin de Vetancurt and the ‘Via crucis’ in Nahuaatl.”

Schwaller’s current research project is a detailed study of the rituals and ceremonies of the Aztec celebrations of the month of Panquetzalizti, which falls in late November and early December in the European calendar. He has presented a series of a papers related to this research, including “A Comparison of the Depiction of Panquetzalizti in Sahagún’s Primeros memoriales and the Florentine Codex” presented for the Northeastern Group of Nahua Scholars, Annual Meeting, Yale, May, 2016, a piece called “Translating the Sacred: Sahagún’s Narrative of the Panquetzalizti Festival,” at The Fourth Early Americanist Summit, with a theme of Translation and Transmission in the Early Americas at the University of Maryland, College Park, in June, 2016, and “The Past as Reinterpreted through the Panquetzalizti Rituals of the Tenochca Mexica,” presented in November at the American Society of Ethnohistory Annual Meeting.

He has finished work on the study and manuscript has been submitted to the University of Oklahoma Press for consideration.

In August, Schwaller organized a panel at the annual meeting of the Sixteenth Century Society, that focused on revisiting the Spanish struggle for justice, the decades long effort lead by Bartolome de las Casas to institute legislation to protect native rights in early colonial Spanish America. He also presented a paper: “The Spanish Struggle for Justice Revisited: The Bureaucrats Take Over,” focusing on the efforts of the viceroy of Mexico, don Luis de Velasco, in the late sixteenth century.

In conjunction with the opening of a new exhibit called “In the Shadow of Cortés: From Veracruz to Mexico City,” at the Spencer Research Library, of the University of Kansas, in September, 2016. Schwaller was invited to give the inaugural lecture. His presentation was entitled, “The Men of the Cortés Expedition: The First Conquerors of Mexico.”

At the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Ethnohistory, Schwaller was elected to serve as the Latin American area editor of the society’s Journal, Ethnohistory. The journal publishes work dealing with the history of native groups of the Americas, and has two content editors, one of whom focuses on native peoples of Canada and the United States, the other on Mexico and South and Central America.

Finally, Schwaller had a book accepted for publication. Working for over forty years on the project, Schwaller and Stafford Poole have transcribed and translated a manual to assist Catholic priests in administering the sacrament of confession. The original was written in 1585 under a mandate of the Third Provincial Council of Mexico. The council was a meeting of all bishops and leaders of religious orders in the region to bring local canon law in line with the Council of Trent. One of the products of the council was this manual for confession call the Directorio. The University of Oklahoma Press will publish the translation and analysis in Spring, 2018.

At this year’s the Annual Meeting of the American Society of Ethnohistory Schwaller was also elected to serve as the Latin American area editor of the society’s Journal, Ethnohistory.
IMS Student Associates

Jeff Bryant

This year Jeff was named a Mamont Scholar and awarded a research grant by the Explorers Club. Under this support he collaborated with geoarchaeologist Dr. Tim Beach on sediment coring in northwestern Belize. Jeff’s objective is to study the introduction of cattle and deforestation using fungal spore and pollen data as ecological indicators. Afterwards, Jeff assisted tree ecologist Dr. Nick Brokaw, in conducting a tree census. Jeff has recently advanced to doctoral candidacy in the Anthropology Department at SUNY Albany, and will be endeavoring in the coming year to secure funding, and commence dissertation fieldwork. His dissertation will investigate the timing and intensity of erosion during the colonial introduction of sheep in Mexico through the study of sediment cores in both lakes and watering holes near colonial sheep ranches. He was also selected for the California State University Chancellor’s doctoral incentive program last year, which is facilitating a partnership with the Advanced Laboratory for Visual Anthropology to offer support for directing an anthropological film as a companion to his research. Initial filming was conducted during the summer field season in Belize.

Beyond his dissertation research he has been engaged in another area of paleoenvironmental research with Bob Feranec the New York State Museum, where Jeff is thin-sectioning and interpreting seasonal rings on marine fish ear bones (otoliths) from the inland Postclassic Maya city of Mayapan. The data may reveal information on seasonality of the marine fish trade. During the summer, Jeff traveled to various estuaries in the Yucatan, to collect modern reference samples for stable isotope studies to establish from where Mayapan was importing their fish. Jeff will be presenting preliminary findings on this research at the Society for American Archaeology annual meeting in Vancouver this spring.

Morgan Marx

Morgan Marx is a Masters student in the Department of Anthropology with an emphasis in Mesoamerican Archaeology. After pursuing archaeology of the Northwest Coast in the United States, she now focuses on Formative period Mesoamerica—particularly in the Soconusco region of Chiapas, Mexico. Morgan’s general interests include figurine production and use—notably in regards to household ritual—and household archaeology more generally, especially pertaining to the archaeology of childhood and processes of societal incultation. Her recent research has focused on providing an anthropometric analysis of ambiguously-sexed figurines. In the summer of 2015, Morgan participated in a survey field season in the Soconusco with Dr. Robert Rosenswig (UAlbany) as part of the Izapa Regional Settlement Project. In the summer of 2016, under the direction of Dr. Richard Lesure (UCLA), she contributed to the ongoing Soconusco Archaeological Database (SOCAD) project, which organized and analyzed collected figurine artifacts from across the Soconusco region into an accessible online resource. In addition, Morgan looks forward to serving as an excavation supervisor for the 2017 UAlbany Las Mercedes field school in Costa Rica.

Former DeCormier recipient Jeff Bryant was selected for the California State University Chancellor’s doctoral incentive program.
Rebecca Mendelsohn

Rebecca began 2016 in Washington, DC finishing up her Junior Fellowship at Harvard University’s Dumbarton Oaks Research Library and Collection. She developed close bonds with her colleagues in Pre-Columbian Studies, and enjoyed the opportunity to discuss her research across disciplines with fellows in the fields of Byzantine Studies and Garden and Landscape Studies. Taking her first summer off from fieldwork in eight years, Rebecca then returned to UAlbany, where she taught “Introduction to Archaeology.” The short course was intense, but she found the experience rewarding; she was impressed with how much the students learned in such a brief period. This fall Rebecca returned to her former position as the IMS graduate assistant.

Rebecca recently submitted her dissertation, “Resilience and Interregional Interaction at the Early Mesoamerican City of Izapa: The Formative to Classic Period Transition,” to her doctoral committee for review, with the goal of graduating in May 2017. The project combines economic data recovered from household excavations in 2014 with settlement and religious data to explain why Izapa survived at a time (AD 100) when many early cities struggled or collapsed. She argues that Izapa’s location along a central trade corridor, its role as an important religious center, and its residents’ shifting alliances with neighboring urban centers all contributed to the long-term success of Izapa’s population. This project was generously funded by a DeCormier award, as well as by national granting agencies.

In addition to her dissertation, Rebecca has been working toward disseminating her findings through presentations and publications. At the Society for American Archaeology conference in April, held this year in Orlando, Florida, Rebecca presented discoveries from recent archival work at the National Anthropological Archives and her re-discovery of the archaeological site of Los Toros in Chiapas, Mexico. Rebecca co-authored an article titled “Izapa and the Soconusco Region, Mexico, in the First Millennium AD,” with IMS director Robert Rosenswig that was published in the September issue of Latin American Antiquity.

Among other things, the paper presents the recent discovery of a causeway at Izapa, linking the site’s “new” ceremonial center (100 BC-AD 1000) to its “old” ceremonial core (900 BC-AD 100). Rebecca has begun submitting grant proposals for a new series of excavations along this causeway in the hopes of documenting public ceremonial activity over the final 1000 years of the site’s history.

Crystal Sheedy

In December 2016, Crystal will have completed her dissertation fieldwork in the Yucatán Peninsula that was graciously funded by the Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Abroad Fellowship and the Firebird Fellowship. Her work continues to concentrate on changes and continuities within work patterns and cultural linguistic practices of Mayas from the Yucatán Peninsula, with a particular focus on the language surrounding Maya women’s identities and socio-economic positions in the community where she works. However, after a challenging and rewarding year of ethnographic fieldwork, her focus has broadened to include what she learned through her daily interaction with her female participants in her field site. Through fieldwork and an understanding of the (Yucatec) Maya language, she was able to witness Maya women’s resistance to cultural change through their everyday discourse genres.
Crystal’s work demonstrates that despite previous ethnographic claims of Mayas losing their past cultural practices and ideologies as a consequence to globalization and modernization projects put forth by the government, it is in women’s everyday discourse genres where it is found that Maya women are actively maintaining and preserving their past cultural ideologies and practices as they and their daughters obtain jobs and pursue an education. For the upcoming year, Crystal plans to conduct the analysis of her data, as well as begin to write her dissertation. She also hopes to work towards the publication of a paper, entitled “‘Chismes is the Curse of Small Villages’: Situating Two Maya Women’s Moral Identities in a Changing World,” that she submitted to the Society for Linguistic Anthropology’s Annual Student Essay Competition. This essay received honorable mention. She was then invited to present a shortened version of this paper at the annual meeting for the American Anthropological Association held on November 16-20, 2016 in Minneapolis, Minnesota.

Mounia El Kotni

Mounia El Kotni graduated with her PhD in May 2016. Her dissertation, *Porque Tienen Mucho Derecho: Parteras, Capacitación and the Vernacularization of Human Rights in Chiapas*, was awarded the University at Albany’s Distinguished Dissertation Award. As an IMS Alumni, Dr. El Kotni continues her long-standing commitment to research in Mesoamerica and is now a postdoctoral research associate with the UAlbany Anthropology Department. In the summer of 2016, she collaborated on Dr. Burrell’s research project “Securing Futures: Security, Democracy and the Limits of the State” in Guatemala. Recently, she presented two papers related to her dissertation research with indigenous midwives in Chiapas, during an invited talk at the University of Notre Dame, IN, and during a panel she co-organized at the American Anthropological Association Annual Meeting in Minneapolis.

Dr. El Kotni is committed to disseminating her research results to a wide audience. In 2015, she actively participated in the platform Anthropology-News, co-editing a series on Childbirth in the Americas, and publishing an essay about collaborative research. She also wrote a piece for ROAR magazine on health reforms in Chiapas. All these articles are available on her website. In the academic sphere, Dr. El Kotni is currently collaborating on several peer-reviewed articles. Her essay “The Hospital is Where Women Die” was awarded the 2016 IMS David Scotchmer Essay Award and is currently under review for publication.

In parallel to her research activities, Dr. El Kotni provides her anthropological input as a consultant in Paris, France, on several entrepreneurial projects related to gender and participatory action research.

Former DeCormier recipient Crystal Sheedy spent 2016 completing her dissertation fieldwork in the Yucatán Peninsula. This research was funded by a Fulbright-Hays Doctoral Dissertation Abroad Fellowship and a Firebird Fellowship.

Mounia with Dr. Jennifer Burrell, graduation 2016

“*We will wait three years before another pregnancy.*” Family planning poster in a public hospital, Chiapas, Mexico, August 2016
The Institute of Mesoamerican Studies

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


The Institute for 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.