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). IMS helps coordinate the work of the Mesoamericanist 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. This report summarizes our recent activities.

IMS Board of Directors
Marilyn Masson, Director
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Robert Carmack
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Letter from the Director

Dear colleagues, supporters, alumni, and friends,

The IMS newsletter is officially reinitiated! Quite a few changes have occurred in the past few years, and we have been quite busy with our regular activities of promoting student and faculty research and publications in Mesoamerica, as well as developing new ways to foster and share Mesoamerican research. New plans include hosting the Northeast Mesoamerican Conference at UAlbany next year, writing proposals for new faculty hires to strengthen our Mesoamerican program, offering short cultural educational tours to Mesoamerica for students and the general public, and a dinner/lecture series. We are also working on plans to host a couple of art exhibits in coming years that will coincide with thematic conferences and our public lecture series.

We have had some turnover in IMS faculty, but we are pleased that this has resulted in new hires that will continue to build our program. During the past few years, we have also welcomed many new Mesoamerican graduates to UAlbany. All of these new faces have injected energy and ideas into shaping IMS – and highlights of our activities are offered in this issue of the newsletter.

Best Wishes,

Marilyn Masson

Visit the IMS website: http://www.albany.edu/ims/
Changes in Mesoamerican Faculty

Changes in the Mesoamerican faculty here at UAlbany are perhaps the biggest news. During the past two years, Dr. Robert Carmack retired, Dr. Liliana Goldin left for Florida International University and Dr. Michael Smith took a position at Arizona State University. Fortunately, Dr. Carmack has remained active in IMS and the department where he continues to perform his research, counsel students, and he is currently overseeing the Legacy of Mesoamerica textbook revision. Dr. Smith has become a faculty associate of IMS, and he is serving in an advisory capacity.

Three new Mesoamerican faculty members have joined us in the past three years - Dr. Walter Little, Dr. Jennifer Burrell, and Dr. Robert Rosenswig. They bring new direction and momentum to the program. Drs. Little and Burrell are sociocultural anthropologists who work in highland Guatemala and Dr. Rosenswig is an archaeologist specializing in the earliest societies of Mesoamerica.

Since 1992, Walter Little has studied the socio-economic and political lives of Kaqchikel and K'iche’ Maya handicraft vendors. His ethnographic research is based in Antigua, Guatemala, where vendors sell, as well as in their towns. Of particular interest to him is how Mayas use identity instrumentally for political and economic gain. His studies document how the community continues to be a powerful framework for Mayas to organize their economic, political, and social life. Dr. Little's recent book, Mayas in the Marketplace: Tourism, Globalization, and Cultural Identity, Austin: University of Texas Press (2004), won the Best Book of 2005 for New England Council for Latin American Studies.

Jennifer Burrell is a sociocultural anthropologist who holds a doctorate from the New School for Social Research in NYC. She has conducted 36-months of fieldwork in Todos Santos Cuchumatán in northwestern Guatemala, examining the political economy of the war-to-post-war period. Considering emerging forms like lynching and the formation of rural gangs in relation to the politics of transition, and to migration, Burrell's work builds on and extends the historical strengths of IMS in ethnographic approaches to regional political economy and violence. Burrell has worked as a consultant in the fields of forensic anthropology and human rights, and gender and development. She also holds a certificate in International Criminal Law, International Humanitarian Law and Human Rights Law from the University of Salzburg, Austria.

Dr. Little (center) with students Heather Brown (L) and Carolina Restrepo (R) visiting the archaeological site of Iximche, Guatemala.
Jennifer Burrell (center, foreground) and her friends Doña Lola (L) and Rosa (R) Ramirez and other todosaneras in the background; taken in highland Guatemala.

Dr. Robert Rosenswig received his doctorate from Yale in 2005. His research addresses the origins of agriculture, political complexity and ceramic use from the study of Early Formative villages in the Pacific coastal Soconusco region of Chiapas, Mexico. In this region, political complexity and agriculture developed in the context of inter-regional interaction with the Gulf Coast Olmec. A second project of Dr. Rosenswig’s examines the Archaic to Formative transition in northern Belize. The Soconusco was the earliest, and northern Belize the latest place in Mesoamerica where agricultural villages developed – thus they provide important comparisons. During the summer of 2005, Dr. Rosenswig taught the Archaeology Field School in Belize at the early Maya village site of San Estevan.

Robert Rosenswig (L) and Keith Newman (R) performing excavations at San Estevan, Belize, summer 2005.

New Guatemalan Field Schools in Ethnology and Linguistics

Dr. Little runs ethnographic field methods and language classes in Guatemala. For students who are interested in gaining basic ethnographic research skills and learning about Guatemala life, he conducts a short three-week class in Antigua. For more experienced students, he co-directs Tulane University’s Kaqchikel Maya language and culture class in Guatemala each summer.

UAlbany students Heather Brown (L) and Molley Biechelle (R) with weaver Bertilia Lopez (center) during the 2005 Guatemalan field school.
Archaeological Field School in Belize

UAlbany sponsored the seventh archaeological field school in Belize during 2005. This year, students worked with Robert Rosenswig on one of the earliest Maya villages ever documented, San Estevan. Undergrads Sara Crannell, Shauna McKown, Katherine Andolina, Tiffany Redman, and Ryan Shumaker joined graduate students Jerry Ek, Josalyn Ferguson, Robert Hutchinson, Juliana Novic, and Elizabeth Paris as members of the UAlbany component of the team that also consisted of twenty excellent students from other institutions, including the University of Oregon, Yale, Florida State, and Queens College. Dr. Douglas Kennett of UOregon helped co-direct the project. This team documented some of the earliest domestic remains in the Maya area that may represent the transition from a foraging/gardening to an agricultural way of life. Once analyses are complete, they will know just how early their deposits were. The group also found a dedicatory offering of six vessels in front of the site’s later temple.

Field school students at the northern Belizean archaeological site of Cuello.

Second Edition of Mesoamerican Textbook

The Legacy of Mesoamerica book is one of the most popular textbooks for regional classes in Mesoamerica. First published in 1996 as a collaborative edition by members of the IMS faculty, it uniquely treats Mesoamerican society holistically by providing a long view from the earliest archaeological villages to the modern day. There is no other book like this on the market, and as of February, we have completed our revisions of the second edition and submitted it to the press (Prentice Hall). The royalties from the Legacy of Mesoamerica support our other publication projects and student and faculty activities. We thank IMS student associates Edgar Martin del Campo, Bradley Russell, and Jason Paling for their supreme work on the technical side of the production!

2nd edition goes to press in March 2006!!!!
In the Field – Updates from Faculty and Students

Thomson Publishing Co. has offered Robert Carmack a contract for his book, Sociocultural Anthropology: A World History Approach. Also, he just returned from a research visit to study the recent presidential elections in Costa Rica. He interviewed Indians in the six Chibchan reserves relative to their electoral preferences. It turns out that the national election results were the second closest in Costa Rican history (Oscar Arias and PLN came out victorious by about 18,000 votes).

Marilyn Masson completed five years of research into the political economy of Mayapan, Yucatan, Mexico in 2005, funded by the National Science Foundation and FAMSI, Inc. – her team tested 119 domestic contexts within the city and she has been busy analyzing data for her book manuscript, Kukulkan’s Realm, due to the Univ. of Colorado Press in December 2006 (to be published with her collaborator, Carlos Peraza Lope of INAH-Yucatan). She plans to return to fieldwork at Mayapan in 2007. Josalyn Ferguson is working on her dissertation on populations movements and economic transformations associated with communities in northern Belize around the time of the southern Classic Period collapse. Jerry Ek just completed his third season of fieldwork on the political and economic transformations of Classic to Postclassci Maya Gulf Coast communities of Campeche, Mexico. Robert Hutchinson and Elizabeth Paris worked with Carlos Peraza on INAH’s Mayapan project last summer, and they also served as staff supervisors on the San Estevan field school in Belize. Robert is doing his dissertation on mortuary patterns at Mayapan, and Elizabeth is completing her thesis on copper bell technology and trading from the same site. Justin Lowry, Jason Paling, and Jared Latimer joined the graduate program in September – they are all interested in Maya archaeology and are making plans to work in either Mexico or Belize this summer that will pave the way for future thesis projects at Mayapan. Archaeology doctoral student Bradley Russell conducted a survey of the area outside of the city walls of the Postclassic Maya city of Mayapan. Over the past four years he has mapped 350 structures located within a kilometer of the city wall, identifying residential, farming, and lime plaster production zones. This work increases the population estimate of the city by 30% (to 13,000). Perhaps the most exciting discovery was an elite administrative colonnaded hall compound located outside of the city’s far east gate – the first hall ever to be found outside the city wall. This find raises new questions about the administrative organization of the city.

Brad began this work with seed money provided by the Decormier Scholarship in 2003. Edgar Martin del Campo is a cultural anthropologist focusing on the Nahua and Otomí societies of Mexico. The DeCormier award helped finance his research season of 2004-05 among the rural Nahua and Otomí communities of Chicontepec and Ixhuatlán de Madero, Veracruz. His research focuses on the nagual, a shape-shifting creature from Pre-Columbian religion that persists in contemporary folklore. He considers the impact of colonial evangelization on the vilification of this being along with the impact of mass media and new evangelical movements on the concept of naguales and related beliefs such as the tonalli "spirit".
The 2005 DeCormier Scholarship afforded Maria Diaz Montejo the opportunity to return to Jakaltenango, Huehuetenango, Guatemala to conduct her dissertation pilot study on the community as a place of identity last summer. She is studying traditional dance and Maya identity and collected photographic and testimonial information on the Baile del Torito (Dance of the Bull). She made all of the preparations for her year-long dissertation field research to be conducted in 2006-2007. Claudia Dary also performed dissertation field research with the support of a 2005 DeCormier award – she is focusing on community organization and ethnic identity in the context of changing economic factors (such as land ownership) in eastern Guatemala. She performed preliminary interviews of secondary school youth in the town of Los Izotes and their parents about their views on local secular and religious organizations - and she is also is doing archival research with information from the National Institute of Statistics and local media outlets. Miguel Aguilera, a recent alumni, graduated from UAlbany in 2004, and took a position in the Department of Religious Studies at Arizona State University where he is continuing his research on traditional Mesoamerican religion, past and present. Timothy Hare graduated from UAlbany in 2000, and is now a professor in the Geography Department at Morehead State University – he remains linked to UAlbany in his role as co-director of archaeological research at Mayapan.

Kaqchikel Maya Language Training at UAlbany – Fall 2005

IMS and Dr. Walter Little sponsored Artemio Hernandez also known as Tohil, to spend the Fall 2005 semester here at UAlbany to offer language training to linguistic students. Tohil has been a teacher associated with the longstanding Kaqchikel Maya Language field school class in Guatemala that is co-directed by Walter Little (sponsored by Tulane). Tohil offered weekly classes in Kaqchikel and also shared his knowledge of Maya daykeeping with our anthropology students.

Recent Guest Speakers

Annabeth Headrick, A Masterplan for Success: Another Look at the Tepantitla Murals of Teotihuacan. Asst. Professor of Art History and Anthropology at Vanderbilt University. Sep 10, 2004

Martín Antonio Mondragón, Talk on the Mexican site of Teotenango. Archaeologist at the Instituto Mexiquense de Cultura in Toluca, Mexico. Oct 5, 2004


Paul Kockelman, Inalienable Possessions and Personhood among the Q'eqchi’-Maya. Asst. Professor of Anthropology at Barnard College. April 15, 2005.

Prudence Rice, Maya Calendars: More than just Chronological Records. Professor of Anthropology at Southern Illinois University. Sept 9, 2005
Current Research by IMS faculty
A Profile of Louise Burkhart’s Recent Project

Louise M. Burkhart’s four-volume collaborative project on colonial Nahuatl theater, co-edited with Barry D. Sell and published by the University of Oklahoma Press, is progressing well, with one volume published, one in production, and one under review. The project aims to produce a reference collection of all known Nahuatl-language dramas that have original scripts surviving from the colonial period, with precise transcriptions, readable English translations, and supporting notes and commentary. The second volume features the only known colonial dramatizations of the story of Our Lady of Guadalupe’s apparitions to Juan Diego, which provide vital insight into the propagation of this devotion among indigenous people in the early eighteenth century. Volume Three presents the complete dramatic works of don Bartolomé de Alva, a seventeenth-century priest of mixed Spanish and Nahua ancestry, descended from the famous Tetzococan kings Nezahualcoyotl and Nezahualpilli. His plays will be presented side by side with transcriptions and translations of the Spanish Baroque masterworks that he ingeniously relocates in Nahua social and cultural settings. Alva’s plays are the only known Native American adaptations of Spanish Golden-Age theater and are the most dramatically and linguistically complex Nahuatl dramas. Volume Four returns to the genre of one-act religious and morality plays performed in Nahua community theater. To the seven such works in Volume One we add another seven, including three previously unstudied plays from Mexico’s national anthropology library and a recently discovered passion play from Tlaxcala.

An angel helps a soul out of purgatory, from the open chapel at Actopan, Hidalgo.

IMS Publication Series

Our publication series has a new distributor, the David Brown Book Company, an affiliate of Oxbox Books. We encourage you to browse the IMS website (http://www.albany.edu/ims/pubs.html) which lists all of the books currently available. This summer, Michael Smith’s new book, Tlahuica Ceramics: The Aztec-Period Ceramics of Morelos, Mexico will go to press. The Tlahuica were an Aztec ethnic group who lived just south of the Valley of Mexico in what is now the Mexican state of Morelos. This monograph the first published description of a regional variant of the central Mexican Aztec ceramic style. It includes discussion of the roles of commercial exchange and ethnicity in shaping the distribution of ceramics throughout Morelos. Other recent books published by IMS include: Classic Period Mixtequilla, Veracruz, Mexico: Diachronic Inferences from Residential Investigations (edited by Barbara L. Stark), Before Guadalupe: The Virgin Mary in Early Colonial Nahuatl Literature (by Louise M Burkhart), Postclassic Soconusco Society: The Late Prehistory of the Coast of Chiapas, Mexico (by Barbara Voorhies and Janine Gasco) and Beware the Great Horned Serpent! : Chiapas under the Threat of Napoleon (by Robert M. Laughlin).
**Cultural Tours**

IMS board members are discussing the idea of offering cultural and archaeological tours to Mesoamerica. The tours will last for a week or two and allow students and members of the interested public to travel with a faculty expert to see and learn about sites of interest in a chosen region. The purpose of such tours will be to raise additional funds for graduate student research sponsored by the DeCormier Scholarship. The first tours that will be offered during 2007 will focus on the archaeology of Oaxaca and Yucatan – these will be offered under the auspices of the Maya Exploration Center (MEC) by Marilyn Masson and her colleague from graduate school, Ed Barnhart. Ed is the Director of the MEC, and received his Ph.D. from the University of Texas in 2001 – he has conducted extensive research at the site of Palenque. Ed and Marilyn will supervise the tour to Yucatan, and along with art historian Heather Orr (Western State College of Colorado), they will also offer the tour to Oaxaca. For more information about these tours, which we are currently scheduling, please contact Ed Barnhart: edbarnhart@mayaexploration.org.

**Guatemala Emergency Relief Fund**

Dr. Walter Little has helped found a humanitarian organization to assist Guatemalan Mayas who were the survivors of Hurricane Stan. The organization, Guatemalan Emergency Relief Fund, continues in this endeavor, but has expanded its energies to provide potable water, scholarships for junior high students, and other activities to help reduce poverty among Maya communities in Guatemala. Information about the relief fund can be obtained by contacting Dr. Little at: wlittle@albany.edu.

The *Baile del Torito* in Jakaltenango, Huehuetenango, Guatemala, 2005. Photo contributed by Maria Diaz Montejo from her research last summer.

A *tlatektli* or cut paper effigy representing indigenous divinities: this one depicts the Nahuatl maize kernel deity Chikomexochitl, "Seven Flower." Photo by Edgar Martin del Campo.
A Brief History of IMS
by Robert Carmack

Founding of IMS in 1975

One of the primary reasons for founding IMS was because Mesoamerican affairs were consuming the Anthropology department meetings. Our proposed institute was approved that year by the VP of Research, and we were given office space and a small amount of funding. We had hoped that IMS would be elevated to priority status within the set of university research centers and thereby receive sufficient funding to finance research projects and obtain release time for faculty members. I should also add that we expected the Institute to be primarily oriented to carrying out research projects, and that there would be close collaboration between the different members of the Institute in each project. The first Executive Board consisted of Robert Carmack as Director, Peter Furst as Assistant Director, and Dean Snow as "Comptroller" (as we called the position in those days). The other founding board members were Dwight Wallace, Lyle Campbell, Will Norman, Florence Sloane. The original list of Research Associates included such well-known Mesoamerican scholars as Ken Brown, James Mondloch, Marcus Winter, Ronald Spores, Nancy Troike, Ellen Messer, and Mary Elizabeth Smith.

The Utatlan Project in the 1970s

This project gave considerable impetus to IMS, especially when NSF provided $132,000 for the project (which was a lot of money in those days). Most importantly, the funds were channeled through IMS, and there was extensive collaboration between the cultural, archaeological (especially Wallace and Brown), and linguistic (Campbell and Mondloch) specialists in the Institute. It also gave rise to the first monograph of our long and prestigious publication list, and opened up an area of important tasks for IMS that we had not much contemplated in the beginning.

The Chris DeCormier Scholarship, 1978

As most of you know this scholarship was created by Louise and Bob DeCormier to honor their son Christopher, who had been an undergraduate student at SUNY Albany. It was their idea, they raised the funds for it, and asked IMS to administer it. The original "Memorandum of Understanding" with the SUNY Research Foundation stated that the purpose of the fund was "to provide annual scholarship awards to undergraduate, or graduate students studying the Maya language and/or culture under the direction of IMS" (later we expanded this to include all Mesoamerican studies). Chris had represented the University and IMS when he carried out independent fieldwork on Mayan language and culture in Chichicastenango, Guatemala, and later assisted members of IMS in advising the American Embassy in Guatemala on how to provide aid to the Mayas of Guatemala at the time of the tragic earthquake of 1976. Chris's promising academic and personal life were cut short due to cancer in November of 1977.

Expansion of IMS in the 1980s

The 1980s brought in several new board members, whose Mesoamerican credentials greatly enhanced the prestige of the Institute and provided new leadership and direction. The new members included Jill Furst, Gary Gossen, Richard Leventhal, Jorge Klor de Alva, Liliana Goldin, Brenda Rosenbaum, and James Wessman. Klor de Alva soon became director and Leventhal assistant director (apprtently the comptroller position sort of disappeared), until Jorge left for Princeton in 1989 (which turned out to be only a "whistle stop" on his journey westward), and Richard left for UCLA the following year. This was a period of expansion of IMS research projects (in Belize, Chiapas, Central Mexico), as well as the publication of several new IMS volumes (now being distributed through the David Brown Book Company). In a letter to the DeCormiers at mid-decade, IMS director Gary Gossen could argue that despite the financial hard times the institute had become "one of a handful of high quality research centers in MA studies in the US".
Changing generations within IMS in the 1990s

One of the key developments for IMS during this period was the transfer of administrative jurisdiction over it from the Research Office to the Dean's office in the College of Social Sciences. Dean Webb became the best patron of IMS within the University that we have ever had. Besides providing funding for our operational costs, the Dean made it possible for us to create the position of Director of Research, and fill that position with Jan Gasco; as well as to replace departing board members with a new generation of young Mesoamerican scholars: Louise Burkhart, Michael Smith, John Justeson, Marilyn Masson. Among other things, this enabled us to achieve a better Affirmative Action balance on the board (from the original 6 white males to four females and five male board members). During the 90s, under the directorship of Gossen, Burkhart, and Smith we reorganized our internal structure, got our finances in order, and expanded the number and quality of our publications. More importantly, we launched new, highly professional, and well-financed research projects in Morelos Mexico, Central Mexico, Belize, Costa Rica, Nicaragua, Guatemala, and the Mixe-Zoque area of Mexico.

Throughout all these years of change, growth, and struggle, the most important constant and symbol of IMS perhaps has been the DeCormier scholarship. Year after year, without fail, the award has been given to the best of our Mesoamerican graduate students. And Bob and Louise have personally handed out the awards at every one of those ceremonies. Their commitment to Chris's memory and to the goals of IMS has been unfailing, and we have been touched at each year's ceremony by their words, poetry, singing and at times tears. Truly, they epitomize the intellectual and humanistic qualities that defined their son Chris, and for that we members of IMS will always be grateful.

Please consider sending a tax-deductible contribution to the DeCormier fund – 100% of your gift will be applied directly to student research grants. With your help, we can continue to support exciting and important student research.

Checks can be made payable to: The University at Albany Foundation, and sent to:

The Christopher DeCormier Scholarship Fund, Institute for Mesoamerican Studies, AS 237, University at Albany – SUNY, Albany, NY 12222.