Greetings! Let me start by thanking Lotfi Sayahi (Spanish) for serving as Chair of LLC for the last three years and Tim Sergay (Russian) who served as summer chair. The past three years have seen a lot of changes, and it’s inspiring to see the on-going commitment of colleagues and alumni to LLC, our programs and our students.

LLC has had a busy fall. I’ll highlight here just a few things and invite you to check out more details on the following pages. Ilka Kressner (Spanish) is on-leave this fall with a Drescher award continuing her book project on Latin American travel photography from the 1950s-1970s. In late October Carmen Serrano (Spanish) visited Oaxaca for their Day of the Dead celebration researching Mexican death rituals and bat-symbols in pre-Colombian indigenous cultures. Timothy Sergay (Russian) has been involved with SUNY efforts to expand Russian course offerings across the system. Cynthia Fox (French) is currently serving as Vice Chair of the University Senate and chairing the Senate Council on Governance. The Spanish Program is currently engaged in searches for a tenure-track specialist in Second/Heritage Language Acquisition and for a full-time lecturer in contemporary Spanish Peninsular literature. Karen Keegan defended in late November her French PhD dissertation “From Pamphlet to Melodrama: The Resacralization of the Queen in Dumas’ Marie Antoinette Romances,” with Professor Susan Blood as director.

We are constantly working to expand opportunities, both inside and outside the classroom, for students to improve their language skills and familiarize themselves better with the many literatures and cultures that fall under the purview of LLC. Each of the programs continues to be involved in discussions of curriculum and program changes as technology expands and our disciplines evolve. Our language clubs meet regularly and organize a variety of activities and events.

I came to the University at Albany from Ohio State University in 1991 with my PhD in Spanish linguistics from the University of Illinois. One of my personal goals as LLC Chair is to reach out to not only students who went through LLC but also to those who graduated from programs prior to LLC’s 1999 formation. I encourage you to either maintain or re-establish your connections with us; we are curious to know ‘what’s become of you.’ Send us an e-mail, talk about your accomplishments or simply tell us that you’re happy and doing well. Check out our upcoming events, consider participating, or simply like us on Facebook (www.facebook.com/UALLC). Finally, thanks to all those who whose generous support helped us better serve LLC students this past year. I wish you all the best for the new year.

LLC Mission Statement

The Department of Languages, Literatures and Cultures helps students to develop communication skills in foreign languages—speaking, listening, reading, and writing—and also to understand the linguistic phenomena, literatures, and cultures common to the speakers of those languages. The department regards proficiency in foreign languages as not only a professional and intellectual asset, but also as the key to effective citizenship in a globalized and multicultural world.
LLC’s Fall Open House on 10/10/14 hosted over 60 students interested in learning more about our languages: Arabic, French, German, Hebrew, Italian, Latin, Portuguese, Russian, and Spanish. Over 20 advisors, faculty and staff from LLC and Study Abroad Office answered questions about majors, minors, courses, research, study abroad opportunities, gave guidance, connected students to other faculty and students, and enjoyed visiting and sharing pizza with the students. LLC T-shirts, provided to all student attendees, were a hot commodity.

In October, Selma Cohen, Visiting Assistant Professor of Spanish presented a paper as part of the LLC Seminar Series entitled *Avatars of the I. Argentine Literature in the First Person since 1990*. She discussed the social and economic environment in Argentina during 2001 when job loss and economic hardship were dominant social issues. Looking for relief in the form of artistic expression, Santiago Vega, known as Washington Cucurto, and two colleagues established Eloísa Cartonera. They created an art form out of scavenging and recycling cardboard, turning this into literary works of art.

The purpose of the movement was to make books (picture below) available to everyone, especially those who could not afford to purchase books published by the big publishing houses. In addition to amateur novelists, Cucurto asked well-known writers to contribute. Most cartoneras contained short stories and random individuals were asked to paint the covers, making each cartonera unique. The books were very inexpensive, costing one to two Argentinian dollars each. Some of them are also reprinted by well-known publishers, ensuring their literary longevity. Eloísa Cartonera has established itself as a publishing house specializing in cardboard covered short stories that continue to be sold by street vendors in Argentina today.

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**Comments, Feedback and Updates**

LLC thanks everyone who has taken time to write to us.

*We always appreciate your feedback!*

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Find LLC on Facebook at:
www.facebook.com/UALLC
LLC co-sponsored two events with the New York State Writers Institute in September, the film screening of a fictionalized biopic on Sor Juana (I, The Worst of All/Yo la peor de todas) and the visit of Edith Grossman, one of the world’s most celebrated translators of Spanish literature into English. Her newest work is Sor Juana Inés de la Cruz (2014), a collection of poems by 17th century nun, poet, and feminist, Sister Juana, known to posterity as the “Tenth Muse.” Grossman’s acclaimed translations include several novels by Latin American Nobel Prize winners, Gabriel García Márquez and Mario Vargas Llosa. Her 2003 translation of Don Quixote is widely hailed as a masterpiece. During her visit at UAlbany, she participated in an open seminar on Spanish-English translation and gave an evening reading of her translation of Sor Juana poems, introduced by Ilka Kressner. LLC faculty Diana Aldrete and Ilka Kressner also participated as panelists during the seminar Q&A. For Aldrete, “Meeting Edith Grossman was an amazing experience as I had read some of her translations before on Gabriel García Márquez. Attending the seminar and reading also allowed me to think of the great work translators do and the contribution they give to the world. As she mentioned during her reading, the work of a translator is to make communities around the world connect with one another: ‘…it’s really important for us to have access to the world…we live in a world where countries are building walls around themselves, and we are building walls--there has to be a way over and through those walls, and one of the ways is by reading translated works.’ I am very fond of Sor Juana’s writing. My very first academic presentation was on her Respuesta a Sor Filotea de la Cruz. In fact, she was one of my options when deciding what my dissertation/area of expertise was. The paper I presented was done for a Women’s Studies Conference, ‘Women and Creativity 7’ at Marquette University, where the focus was on celebrating women and ingenuity.”

The UHS conference serves as an additional bridge to connect the UHS teachers and their courses with their UAlbany campus counterparts. In addition to keeping the teachers informed about changes and updates in the programs, it also creates a space for the different districts to come together to share their experiences. Some of the presentations held at the workshop focused on today’s new tendencies in language teaching with regards to the implementation of new materials and incorporating meaningful language teaching techniques and technology which our teachers can apply to their lessons. The conference ultimately advances our efforts to ensure that the UHS classes comply with the standards set by the department.
Clubs

A great way to practice a language skill is to talk, hablando, parler, parlare, sprechen, разговаривать! Students, faculty, staff and friends have the opportunity to develop their language skills by attending a language club or table. They all meet once a week for about an hour. Whether you’re a beginner or advanced speaker, come and talk about current events, special topics or just have fun conversing with fellow language lovers!

Visit http://www.albany.edu/lhc/news&events_clubs_tables.shtml for details about when and where the clubs and tables meet.

Deutsche Kaffeestunde (German Table)
Contact Undine Giguere
ugiguere@albany.edu

La Dolce Vita

Italian Club president Alexandra Bricault (center) shares how La Dolce Vita spent their fall semester. “The semester started with a great general interest meeting with over 20 new members! We have had multiple game nights, a movie and pizza night, as well as a potluck dinner. Our first game night was such a success that we had to bring it back by popular demand. We played Italian cards, Apples to Apples, and Uno. On our movie night we watched ‘Ciao Professore,’ a pick by our faculty advisor, Professor Keyes. Our first potluck dinner was great! We had members bring baked ziti, garlic bread, stuffed pizza and more. Potluck dinners will most definitely become a tradition for La Dolce Vita.

We have some great things planned for our upcoming spring semester. As the colder weather only gets colder, we plan to have a trip to the ice-skating rink downtown as well as many more potluck dinners because everyone needs some Italian comfort food! Our main event in spring will be our NYC trip, including visiting Ellis Island and having lunch at an authentic Italian restaurant. We always welcome new members and club collaborations, so please do not hesitate to come to our meetings! You can reach us at lavita10@albany.edu or contact our faculty sponsor, Profesoressa Maria Keyes mgkeyes@albany.edu.”
Russian Learners Club

El Club de Español
Contact Cecily Corbett
corbett@albany.edu

Le Cercle français (French Club)
Contact Cynthia Fox
cfox@albany.edu

La Pause café (French Table)
Contact Cynthia Fox
cfox@albany.edu

El Club de Español

Russian Learners Club

UAlbany Tango Club

Tavola Italiana

Contact Olimpia Pelosi
opelosi@albany.edu

UAlbany Tango Club
Contact Thomas Sullivan
sunyalbanytango@gmail.com

Le Cercle français

Club Contacts!
Summer 2014 was the first time I had ever studied abroad. When I received my acceptance letter for this wonderful opportunity, I had to go! One of the most important aspects of this trip for me was that I was able to extend my Spanish vocabulary of psychological and medical terms. I loved the class because it helped me to relearn a few medical terms that I had forgotten. I also was better informed about falsos amigos which refers to words that have similar roots, but different meanings in both Spanish and English. I also got to visit the Institute of Experimental Medicine at the Academy of Sciences of the Czech Republic in Prague and took a short course on neuroscience methods.

Learning about Salamanca’s history was AMAZING! It is both medieval and modern, having been founded by the Romans in the 4th century. There were lots of cafes, tapas bars and a night life infused with a rich mix of locals, students, and European tourists. Students learn about Neuroscience and Spanish culture by emersion in a truly unique city.

Meeting the great faculty and walking the halls of the prestigious University of Salamanca which was founded in 1218 by King Alfonso IX of Leon was a memorable experience that I will not soon forget. The university is considered the oldest of the existing Spanish universities. I had a lot of great moments while there such as getting lost in Salamanca, riding on a bike to Plaza Mayor to eat ice cream and watching a flamenco tablao dance..... I loved it!

Participating in the "Neuroscience in Salamanca" program enabled me to accomplish several goals and has completely changed my outlook on life! I was able to gain cultural knowledge in psychology by taking an honors class called “Drugs and Behavior.” This neuro-psychology course enabled me to learn about the effect of drugs on chemical transmissions in the nervous system, with an emphasis on their behavioral/psychological effects. I dream of becoming a psychologist and this class left me feeling more empowered and knowledgeable about the psychology field.

If given the chance, I would absolutely do this again. I loved the people from there! I feel blessed for that opportunity; I now have a different perspective of the world. If there is anyone who has any doubt about studying abroad, I would share with them a quote by Augustine of Hippo, “The world is a book, and those who don't travel only read one page.”

Cecily Corbett
“A few weeks ago, I had the opportunity to present my paper ‘Sociophonetic Intraspeaker Variation: the case of a heritage speaker’ as a poster at the 43rd meeting of New Ways of Analyzing Variation in Chicago, IL. Participating in NWAV 43 was a fantastic experience – I attended workshops given by the leaders in my field, went to talks on the innovative ways that variationists are examining language, and got helpful feedback on my own work from experts in my specialty. An added bonus was certainly attending Dr. Sayahi’s talk with Shana Poplack, Nahed Mourad, and Nathalie Dion. I really enjoyed getting to see a member of my faculty present his work in such an important arena. It was an honor to represent the University at Albany at a conference that attracts students and faculty from all over the world, and I am very grateful to LLC for all of their support in getting me there!”

Left to right: John Singler (New York University), Almeida Jacqueline Toribio (University of Texas at Austin), Cecily Corbett, Jacqueline Sergios (University of Texas at Austin). Both Singler and Toribio have appeared as guest speakers for LLC’s Seminar Series!
Journalism, Women’s, Gender and Sexuality Studies and the Documentary Studies Departments sponsored “Blood Rising, Daughters of Mexico,” a documentary directed by Mark McLoughlin. Blood Rising follows Brian Maguire, an Irish artist who paints portraits of women factory workers who were murdered in Juarez, Mexico. LLC graduate student and teaching assistant Pamela Alvarado–McNamara interpreted for Marisela Ortiz Rivera, the mother of one of the murdered women and shares her thoughts about the experience.

“Live translating (interpreting really), is often a necessary experience of bilingual individuals in the United States. Many people, especially, bilingual children of immigrants, stand in as unofficial interpreters for their relatives for occasions such as medical appointments. No less important is the live translation done for outreach, such as the screening for the documentary Blood Rising here at the University at Albany.

I now consider live translation a bridge-building activity, but this wasn’t always the case. My first few experiences were interpreting for families during appointments with doctors or immigration officers. My role in these instances was necessary, not only to make dialogue happen, but also because these meetings were essential to the immigrant’s life in the United States. However, this view shifted when I began interpreting for a church group made of a mix of English and Spanish speakers. In this case, their meetings weren’t a chore, they were a choice and they compromised by running half the meetings in English and half in Spanish.

This highlighted the comradery among the group and showed me that interpreting could also build bridges, a reason I wanted to do the live translation for this film screening.

Violence against women has been a sad part of Mexico’s history and, specifically in Ciudad Juarez, drug cartels have amplified it. Unfortunately, it is often met with impunity and silence as shown by the fact that I hadn’t heard of the abductions in Juarez until after I moved to the United States.

In addition to the inaction by government forces, many people who try to speak against these crimes in Mexico are met with threats and are victims of retaliatory violence themselves. The result is that very few people actively speak openly against the murders of these women. Marisela Ortiz Rivera as well as Mark McLoughlin, the director of the film and Brian Maguire, renowned artist, embarked on this project to raise international awareness of the violence against women in Juarez and to highlight organizations like Nuestras Hijas de Regreso a Casa (May Our Daughters Return Home). I approached the live translation as a bridge-building between Marisela and the students at University at Albany.

Mentally, this experience was challenging, because it wasn’t just a matter of conveying what Marisela was saying, but it was also a matter of choosing the words that best conveyed the emotions behind her efforts. What struck me most about this event, is the compassion with which this film was made. Mark is aware of the dangers facing the families of the abducted girls and has worked very hard to ensure the mothers remain anonymous. Because Marisela, Mark and Brian know of the difficulties of speaking out in Mexico itself, they urge all of us living outside of Mexico to contact Mexico’s ambassador regarding these crimes to put international pressure on the Mexican government to elicit action. You can help too. The Mexican embassy contact information can be found here: http://embamex.sre.gob.mx/eua. For information about the disappearances, you can do a web search using the term ‘the disappeared of Juárez, Mexico,’ which yields articles and stories about this endemic situation.”
Congratulations to French graduate student Karen Keegan for successfully defending her dissertation “From Pamphlet to Melodrama: the Resacralization of the Queen in Dumas’ Marie Antoinette Romances.” in November.

Grad student Jaime Mundo’s abstract was accepted for the Hostos Scholar Colloquium sponsored by Hostos Community College, CUNY as part of the activities celebrating 175 years of the birth of the Puerto Rican educator and writer Eugenio María de Hostos. The title of his presentation was “La función del juego imaginativo y la fantasía 'En barco de papel'.”

This year’s final LLC’s Fall Seminar series speaker was our very own Professor Timothy Sergay of Russian. His topic, “The Conventions of Editing Academic and Other Formal Documents in English” was an enthusiastic discourse on what constitutes a well-constructed text in English. Sergay stressed the importance of being your own editor, functioning as the first line of defense against poor English grammar and usage when submitting anything for publication. He reviewed a list of common mistakes found in submitted, even published materials, some of which include the overuse of quotation marks and capitalization. Sergay stated, “Writing cannot be improved by knowing grammar rules and their mechanical restrictions. These do not make one an expert. Studying structure and words are key.” As a final note, Sergay recommended the use of journals and magazines such as Rolling Stone, The New Yorker, The Economist and the NY Review of Books to help provide a sense for writing style as each of these publications displays a wide range of stylistic prose.
This past summer Angela Commito was involved in three archaeological field projects: geophysical and architectural surveys at the ancient Greek port city of Notion on the Aegean coast of Turkey, excavation of a Hellenistic fountain house at the religious sanctuary of Zeus Labraundos in southwest Turkey and artifact documentation for an up-coming publication of a regional survey around the site of Vani in the western Republic of Georgia (ancient Colchis), the legendary “Land of the Golden Fleece.” She and a colleague will publish the results of the fountain house excavation (Brown University Labraunda Project) in the journal Anatolia Antiqua early next year and will launch a new, three-year project at the site next summer. This fall she will present her earlier research on ancient aqueducts at the Greco-Roman town of Aphrodisias (southwest Turkey) at the Classical Association of the Empire State meeting in Albany and at the “Cura Aquarum” conference in Antalya, Turkey.

Survey archeology, which entails walking across a landscape and documenting ancient artifacts that are visible on the surface – masonry, pottery, glass, etc., is a type of archaeology that has become more popular in recent decades because it is less expensive than excavation and usually yields interesting and useful results. She is also interested in ancient landscapes and the study of ancient pollen, seeds, charcoal, etc., to determine how those landscapes looked and what natural resources people were using during different periods.

In your work how valuable is knowing and using other languages?
“Knowing both ancient and modern languages is necessary. Sometimes during survey around Greco-Roman towns in Turkey we find Greek inscriptions, usually on sarcophagi lids, and it is useful to know how to translate them, since we want to document them and use them to learn more about the people who lived there in antiquity. Longer and more important inscriptions can be more difficult to translate, and usually a specialist (an epigrapher) is called in to help. It is also important to be able to translate previously published inscriptions and texts yourself, since you may come to a different conclusion about the translation that sheds new light on an aspect of research. I am familiar with ancient Greek and Latin, and know enough German, French, and Italian to read modern scholarship. I am in the process of learning Turkish, since we work closely with Turkish archaeologists, workmen, government officials, farmers, local residents, etc., during our projects. I never learned Georgian – very difficult – but I wish I had!”

What was it like visiting these ancient cities?
“It’s very moving, visiting these ancient cities, walking the same pathways as ancient citizens. You are literally walking on the same stones or routes as people did thousands of years ago. I can’t even imagine what it feels like to excavate a grave from, say, the Early Bronze Age! It makes you feel small, and also part of something bigger: the long sweep of time, maybe. It puts daily annoyances into perspective. But it also makes you think about the daily annoyances and worries and joys and celebrations that ancient people dealt with, too, as they went about their daily lives. It’s fulfilling to feel like you’re part of something much bigger and older than yourself – kind of like a religion, I guess.”

Did you translate any ancient texts?
“I have not, but there are certainly people still trying to figure out how to translate scripts and decipher symbols that are currently undecipherable. It’s exciting to think that there is still so much to learn about this world we live in. I have a friend who teaches a class on ancient scripts, and for one assignment, students have to develop their own, original script.

Continued on next page
They love it! Sometimes on buildings there are mason’s marks, essentially either letters of the alphabet or symbols that show the masons how to put the building together, for example, or indicate which group of masons completed certain parts of the building. I’ve seen examples of those, but have never discovered new ones myself.”

**What are you duties on archeological field projects?**

“It really depends on the project. I carry out surveys, excavate, document certain remains that I specialize in (such as water-related structures like aqueducts and cisterns, or charred plant remains), analyze pottery, take photographs, do a little bit of drawing, and create and manage databases. Usually I do a little bit of everything to help out the project as a whole, but at the same time, I’ll also be running a specialized project tailored to my particular research interests. What is most amazing about excavation is seeing these structures that have survived for centuries. Many of them are made out of huge blocks of stone that weigh over a ton each and required elaborate scaffolding and cranes to maneuver into place – all using only man- and animal-power. Labraunda in particular has buildings with walls that still stand to 9 meters – very unusual and impressive.”

**Have you ever felt the essence/spirit of the past when on these sites?**

“As someone who does a lot of survey archaeology, I feel the past especially through the landscape, and by imagining people in antiquity living, working, using, traveling through that landscape. I have indeed felt the energy of generations of inhabitants combined with the energy of nature. I think some kind of residual energy, as you poetically put it, must remain, because these people literally altered the landscape and put their marks on it in various ways. When you walk inside someone’s tomb, or find little bronze bracelets that someone had used to adorn herself, you can feel it. This summer during the fountain house excavation we found a terracotta tile with a dog print on it. It immediately made us imagine the tiles lying out on the ground, waiting to be put in a kiln, and a dog – maybe the tile-maker’s pet – running across them chasing a rabbit or something. You often find fingerprints and other fingermarks on tiles and pottery, and it’s always thrilling to place your fingers on them.”

**Cynthia Fox** was invited by the US Department of Education to serve as a peer reviewer for the Title VI National Resource Centers (NRC) and Foreign Language and Area Studies Fellowships (FLAS) field reading in Washington, DC this summer. A paper she co-authored with Louis Stelling (French PhD, 2008), *Language Variation and Change? Gender Agreement in Franco-American Descriptive Adjectives*, appears in the current issue of the Canadian Journal of Applied Linguistics.

**Victoria Kelly** returned to LLC as a French lecturer. She received her MA from UAlbany in 1989. She says, "I was DEEPLY impressed and inspired by Dr. Jean-François Brière to become the best French teacher I could be." She is a native of Cohoes, having attended the bilingual French parochial school of École Staint Marie and grew up speaking French. She also is of Canadian heritage, her mother coming from the Province of New Brunswick. An aunt is a retired professor of French at St. Thomas University in Fredericton, New Brunswick, Canada. Kelly has taught college French for 10 years, most recently with the College of Saint Rose for six years where she directed the faculty-led program to Montreal. She studied and lived in Paris, Tours and Besançon. She is also an accomplished singer, pianist and speaks German.
Mary Kressner was awarded a paid leave from the Nuala McGann Drescher Affirmative Action/Diversity Leave Program, co-sponsored by New York State and the United University Professionals union. She is working on a book project about Latin American travel photography and writings by Jewish émigré photographers Ellen Auerbach and Fritz Neugass from the 1950s–70s and analyzing their children’s portraits as emblems of contact zones beyond cultures. UAlbany’s library has an archived collection of photos taken by Neugass and holds the copyright. To view the photos search “Neugass” at http://luna.albany.edu/luna/servlet/allCollections.

In addition, one of her essays, “Topo-Grapho-Mania: Space-Texts and Text-Spaces in Topographie idéale pour une agression caractérisée (Rachid Boudjedra) and Paisajes después de la batalla (Juan Goytisolo) was accepted for publication by Routledge and will be published in an anthology on intermediality in art, edited by Asun López Valera.

María Keyes is now a certified AP Italian Language and Culture consultant for the Educational Policy Improvement Center (EPIC). She will review Italian course syllabi from across New York State ensuring that syllabi are in compliance with the College Board curricular requirements.

Veronique Martin had a busy year co-presenting a panel at the annual SUNY Language PACT: The World and the Classroom Conference in June at the SUNY Global Center in NYC. Her topic, Telecollaboration as a Means of Developing Intercultural Communicative Competence is part of her ongoing research on using technology in the classroom. Martin also participated in Eurocall 2014, a conference that was held at the University of Groningen in the Netherlands. She presented her investigative research findings on the Intercultural Communicative Competence (ICC) development in one of her students who communicated, learned and socialized in French with a native French speaker online. She ended summer attending Francais sur Objectif Specifique (FOS), a week-long workshop in France organized by the Paris Chamber of Commerce. It is designed to train instructors who wish to teach French for business. From this training she will develop a course, AFRE 270Y, Beginning French for Business, designed to prepare students to take the Diplôme de français professionnel – niveau A2 (DFP A2) exam. The DFP A2 is a professional credential recognized by the French business community showing students have specialized training in French business practices, including oral and written fluency in French.
As part of her paper “Whose Voice is it? Colonial Ventriloquism and Senegalese Literature,” Eloise Brière gave a presentation at the Emeritus Center titled “Black Venus: Ventriloquizing the Hottentot, Early 19th Century Human Zoos of Europe.” Using the film, Venus Noire as a backdrop, Eloise discussed the life of Saartjies Baartman, known by the stage name of Black Venus. Directed by Abdellatif Kechiche, the film explores why Saartjies was the most written about woman in her time. Born in East Cape, Africa in about 1780, she knowingly played the role of “Hottentot Venus” a seemingly savage indigenous animal that performed in freak shows, entertaining European audiences for a short period of time. According to Brière, the film director effectively condemned scientific progress that justified racism by bringing focus to the theories outlined by George Cuvier’s research findings on Saartjies Baartman.

Carmen Serrano traveled to Oaxaca, Mexico on November 1 and 2 to take part in el Dia de los muertos (Day of the Dead) festivities and to get permission to use images for an upcoming project. In a section of the book she is currently writing, Serrano talks about death rituals and bereavement in Mexican society. The visit to Oaxaca helped her to experience this time-honored celebration first-hand, “In Oaxaca el Dia de los muertos seems to maintain a stronger connection with indigenous traditions and is unlike the celebrations that I have experienced in other parts of Mexico or even in the US. On this day, many in Mexico gather to remember and celebrate the lives of deceased family and friends. Many create elaborate altars decorated with candles, pan de muerto (day of the dead bread), cempasúchil flowers, and photos of the departed. Many also hold all-night vigils at the cemeteries, such as in the Xoxocotlan village cemetery. During my visit to this cemetery, a band played festive music as families gathered around the tombs decorated with flowers and candles. The colorful scenes and lively atmosphere were a reminder that this celebration is an affirmation of life by remembering the dead. I was also in Oaxaca because I wanted to see images of pre-Columbian bat symbols as found at the ruins of Monte Albán and in the museum at the Centro Cultural Santo Domingo in Oaxaca. For some indigenous cultures the bat was considered an essential animal for farming since bats helped control plagues and they were indispensable pollinators. At the same time, the bat seemed to have other sacred roles in society, which I will explore more fully in my book project.”

Lotfi Sayahi gave an invited talk, "Spanish in North Africa: an uninterrupted presence," on October 3, 2014 as part of a seminar titled: Spanish Language in Four Borders. The seminar included presentations by two other scholars and was held at the Instituto Cervantes' Observatory of the Spanish Language and Hispanic Cultures at Harvard University.
According to Ray Ortali, there is no direct career path that determines your vocation. Instead, there are a series of unexpected events and circumstances that influence your direction in life. As an example, from a law degree in Dijon to his work as an advertising executive for Gillette razors in Paris, he had no idea that he would come to love teaching. After completing his law degree, he graduated from l’Institut d’Etudes Politiques, known as Sciences Po, in Paris with a degree in Political Science. “That’s when the word ‘communication’ began to resonate with me. First as Assistant Chief Editor for a large weekly magazine located on the Champs Elysees and called Jour de France. Then at Denoel, a French publishing house, where I worked as ‘lecteur de manuscrits,’” only to discover that literature was another form of communication! And what a privilege it was to have two young writers published upon my personal strong recommendation. Especially after reading the following sentence, written on the first page of the book: "A Raymond Ortali, à qui je dois de n’avoir pas désespéré. To Raymond Ortali, who kept me from losing faith." I have no words in English to translate the deep impression this had on me back then, and still has on me each time I reopen the book.”

Then came his “American adventure.” After working a few months in Texas, he was hired by the Army Language School in Monterey, California. That’s where he developed his passion for experimenting with new approaches to teaching French. Communication skill again! He already had a Diplome de Sciences Po, but he also wanted a PhD in Romance Languages with a concentration in 16th Century French poetry, which he got from the University of Michigan. He was then appointed Assistant Professor at Yale, teaching French poetry at the graduate level at the same time as being Managing Editor of the scholarly journal Yale French Studies. He was then awarded a Morse Fellowship, which afforded him the opportunity to return to Paris for a year-long sabbatical to write a scholarly text as well as a book on how to teach French. He is especially proud of his critical edition of the Oeuvres Poétiques of the 17th century poet Claude Malleville, because it was awarded the prestigious Prix LaGrange by the French Academic des Inscriptions et Belles Lettres for the best edition of the year for a Renaissance /17th century text. With those publications under his belt, he ventured over to the east coast, taking a position with UAlbany first as Associate Professor in the French Department, then full Professor and Department Chair. His long career at UAlbany yielded not only the career in teaching he wanted, but also the opportunity to meet and work with an esteemed list of important figures in French culture: “The first time I met French playwright and dramatist Eugène Ionesco (whom the Department had brought from France for a series of high-level workshops), I was bold enough to welcome him by saying: “Monsieur Ionesco, if I’ve ever learned anything in watching your plays, it’s that questions are more important than answers. He looked at me, took my hands, and simply said: “We are friends!” That could also summarize my life as a teacher: Try to present the right questions, but always carefully listen to the questions of the students even more than to their answers. Provide some answers of course, but be aware that those are not final and will never be. My life, and yours, are the answers.” Also, for Ortali, one of his proudest moments while at UAlbany was the creation of the minor and major in Medieval and Renaissance Studies, at the time the only type of such programs in the SUNY system.

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Diana Aldrete graduated from LLC with a PhD in Hispanic Literature in 2014. After working in Connecticut for several years as a Lecturer of Spanish at Goodwin College, she has returned to LLC as a visiting assistant professor, teaching Spanish literature. Aldrete discusses her upcoming conference presentation at the annual Northeast Modern Language Association (NeMLA) convention which will be held in Toronto, Canada in 2015: “The responsibilities of the chair of the panel go beyond setting the tone during the panel discussion. Much of the work happens prior to this event. After proposing and getting accepted on a topic you would like to chair at a particular conference, you usually have to publicize and attract proposal submissions, decide what type of session you would like (i.e. panel of 3-4 people, seminar or round table), review abstract submissions and finalize your session by acknowledging those submissions you have accepted or declined as well asking for confirmation to the session. I co-chaired a panel entitled ‘You’ve Got She-Mail:’ Drag and Discursive Limits in RuPaul’s Drag Race,’ during the 2012 NeMLA convention in Rochester, NY. This was an off-topic panel from my usual research interests although it still revolved around issues of gender and the body in a more pop-culture setting. I find that the benefit to being chair of a session is that it allows you to connect and collaborate with other scholars who are interested and working on the same topics as you are. In order to prepare for a presentation, you have to know what you want to present. I usually check to see if a panel has been presented before. In essence it should be thought of as your contribution to the field. If it has been presented before, think about what other ideas you could offer. You also have to research the topic you would like to present or go with something you have researched before and is in your research/teaching interests. For my upcoming panel on ‘Human Rights Narratives in a Globalized Latin America’ for the NeMLA convention in 2015, this is specifically a research interest of mine and goes hand in hand with my upcoming film course on Topics in Hispanic Film: Violence, Human Rights/Social Movements, and Gender Identity in Latin American Films (ASPN 318).”

Kristen Bini (French MA, 2006) works for a small French graduate school of engineering, heading their language department in Paris. She is also a full-time permanent staff member, teaching English and is responsible for deciding curriculum, hiring teachers, coordinating the program and problem solving. “All in all it’s a fun position and it gives me a lot of creative freedom which I really enjoy.”

Nicole Nelson (French MA, 2010) is the Translation Manager at Autotask Corporation, managing Autotask software, including user interface, online help and translating materials into all Autotask languages (Chinese, French, German, Italian, Japanese and Spanish). She is responsible for project management as well as managing internal and external translation resources. This position is the central caretaker for all change requests for existing translations. She is responsible for recruiting, training and mentoring a team of internal translators and is the central point of contact for external translation partners for the management of deliverables and timelines for outsourced translation activities. She has been with the company since 2012. When not managing translations, Nelson is also a Personal Leadership Expert and Live a Fulfilled Life mentor, helping professional women with their careers.
Ray Ortali continued

Faculty from various departments on campus collaboratively taught courses, allowing for an interdisciplinary curriculum. Interdisciplinary is another word which he is fond of. In 1996, he took advantage of early retirement, leaving UAlbany to start Prime Technologies, a high tech company that manufactured CD-ROMs, DVDs and websites for local businesses in the Capital Region. But ten years later, tired of being a company president, he discovered the UAlbany Emeritus Center, newly created by then President Kermit Hall, an organization designed to encourage retirees (emeriti) to continue pursuing the University’s mission of teaching, research, and service. He became the Emeritus Center’s Program and Communications Director, sponsoring a rich variety of speakers and ambitious series of educational and cultural programs, free and open to the public. “I love music, but I never had a chance to study and even less to teach opera before. Here, I had a chance to create several exciting series that showed excerpts of various operas, explain how an opera works, and discuss its historical evolution. That was a great success!” Last June, he resigned his dual position at the Emeritus Center, where he still continues as a board member. He has recently taken a new challenge: “Just like at the beginning of my career, I have come back to books and have become a publisher, this time of an e-magazine (an online magazine) called We Love Books and Company. It’s a publication that is attempting to do something that has never been done before: bringing together readers, writers, publishers and distributors. It’s high-tech. It’s multi-faceted, it’s interdisciplinary, it’s international, and it’s fun.” And Ortali adds: “At this specific time, I believe that all my energy is best used by working on the e-magazine. Ask me again the question in ten years, and I might have a different answer!” You can reach Ray Ortali at ray@indieadvisor.com.

CALLING ALL ALUMNI! LLC loves to hear from you and to share with fellow alumni, current students and friends how you’re using your language skills!
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