From the Chair

Early on this semester, Haiti, a country with which many of our students as well as our French Studies faculty have special bonds, was struck by a cataclysmic earthquake. On a flight between Paris and New York on January 16, I was seated next to a Haitian physician who was returning precipitously to his native country. He had just learned that his brother had been killed in the earthquake and that the clinic he had recently built in Port-au-Prince was flattened with an unknown number of victims inside. A few UAlbany students were in Haiti during the earthquake too. They escaped unhurt, but many of our Haitian and Haitian-American students lost friends and relatives. The University responded swiftly to show its solidarity with our students who were affected and with the Haitian people through vigils, fundraising events, a university aid fund for Haiti matching contributions from faculty, staff and students, creating a student hardship fund, collecting clothing and tents, etc. Faculty members from the French Studies Program also responded with various initiatives in support of Haiti. On February 3, Father Joseph Philippe, a Haitian Catholic priest and the founder of the University of Fondwa, a rural institution of learning near Jacmel that was almost completely destroyed, was a special guest speaker at the LLC-sponsored Haiti Forum. Professor Eloise Brière from French Studies will again offer her course on Haiti (AFRE 208) this fall with a new “post-earthquake” syllabus. The French Chorus is singing French Caribbean songs this semester, including one in Haitian Creole! We will continue supporting the Haitian people in their current struggle to rebuild their country both physically and politically.

On another sad note, we recently learned of the death of Professor Emeritus Carl Odenkirchen last year. Professor Odenkirchen taught French from 1950 to 1986. He was a specialist of medieval literature.

LLC has had a very busy spring semester. Here’s a look at what has been happening:

• In February, LLC held its annual “Evening of the Arts,” an evening of entertainment where departmental faculty and students showcase their special talents in a number of areas, including: poetry, music, dance, art, and cooking.
• In March, Professor David Graham (SUNY Clinton Community College) made an interesting presentation on the evolution of Quebecois music and Quebec nationalism through the decades.
• On Francophone Day (March 9) students from a dozen UHS schools and their foreign language teachers came to campus to participate in various activities including a competition in which they had to prepare and present (in French) a dessert from a French-speaking country. As the writer of these lines can attest, the desserts were truly delicious!
• The Olympiada of Spoken Russian was held April 20 and LLC welcomed nearly a hundred students from across the state competing in their knowledge of Russian language and culture.
• We’ve also had a group engaged in readings in medieval Latin this semester.
• As usual, LLC has offered foreign film festivals: one that is international in scope on the theme of “invisibility,” the other on German films.
• Our fourth annual research conference, “Writing in/as/on Exile,” organized by Professor Ilka Kressner, was held Friday April 16. Special guest, José Manuel Prieto, a leading Cuban

Continued on next page
On November 18, 2009, the Russian Learners Club hosted a very special lecture from an eyewitness to the Siege of Leningrad, Ms. Anna Isaakovna Sternina, a retired historian and an experienced lecturer on the Siege. Ms. Sternina, lecturing in her native Russian with pauses for interpretation into English by Professor Timothy Sergay, recounted many personal stories. She was a strong, healthy teenager starting her university education when the Siege began on September 8, 1941 (it lasted until January 27, 1944). She shared her experiences of having no heat, food or water in the middle of winter, scavenging deserted homes for furniture and books to make fires (books, particularly your own books, were burned, but only as a last resort), braving the harsh cold to get water for your family from the frozen Neva River only to slip on the ice, spill and abandon it because of gun shots, of a daring truck escape across the melting ice of Lake Ladoga in spring, of seeing men, including her father, starve to death faster and in greater numbers than women, a fact that doctors attributed to women’s thicker layer of subcutaneous fat. The event, an hour-long talk, followed by questions and answers, was well attended by students and faculty of various programs.

Credit for arranging the event is due to a native Russian-speaking member of the Russian Learners Club, Damir Bik-mukhametov, graduate student in Epidemiology from Kazan, the capital of the Republic of Tatarstan, Russia. One day he was jogging near B’nai Brith apartment buildings in Albany when he passed an elderly woman leaning for support on a car, evidently in momentary distress. He sensed instantly that she was Russian and without hesitation asked her in Russian whether she needed assistance. Charmed and reassured by this, she began talking and very soon told him her life story. Damir thought of inviting her to give a lecture on the Siege of Leningrad at LLC. The event proved to be a rare opportunity for UAlbany students to meet and interact with a participant in a critical episode of European history.
When the earthquake hit Haiti in January, LLC was devastated by the flood of shocking images and painful stories. LLC has many connections to Haiti, faculty who teach Francophone studies and have taken student groups to Haiti, students from Haiti who’ve graduated from or are in LLC programs, and other Haitian students, faculty and staff on campus, including our own Joane MacMillan in the LLC Office whose family is from Haiti. In the days that followed, multiple faculty, staff and student-initiated projects were started at UAlbany to help the people of Haiti.

In LLC several faculty members, led by Eloise Brière, coordinated a Haiti Forum on February 3 with an audience that overflowed the PAC Recital Hall. The event started with Haitian drumming followed by a variety of speakers presenting at a podium draped with the Haitian flag. Topics included Haiti’s history, culture and religion, a beautiful photographic presentation of Haitian culture, a socio-political analysis of misperceptions of Haiti, ongoing projects in Haiti (e.g. The Pazapa Rehabilitation Center for disabled children), an eyewitness account of the quake and an update on how Haiti was coping from special guest, Father Joseph Phillipe, a priest of the Spiritan Order and founder of the University of Fondwa. Opening his talk with a wrenching, hauntingly beautiful acappella song for the dead, Father Phillipe called for a moment of silence before sharing the frightening details of the quake and the repeated trauma of receiving so many overwhelming reports, saying he’d felt like Job from the Bible. The event concluded with a five-panelist question and answer session with questions ranging from frustration at politics and delayed relief supplies to more in-depth explorations of Haiti’s current economic status and relationships with neighboring nations. Such a memorable event is likely to remain with all who attended. LLC thanks all who made this excellent community event possible.

LLC Responds to the Crisis in Haiti

LLC Responds to the Crisis in Haiti

Comments, Feedback, and Updates

LLC thanks everyone who has taken time to write us. We always appreciate your feedback!

Contact us at:
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We look forward to hearing from you!

Language Learning in Action

Professor Mary Beth Winn’s Women in Medieval France course visited UAlbany’s Special Collections, located in the Science Library as part of their course assignment. They viewed facsimiles of medieval manuscripts that portray women, examples of early printed books from the 16th century, and a variety of books dealing with Joan of Arc. The university’s superb collection of children’s books contains several items relating to this 15th century French heroine.
Nouvelles d’Haiti

Haiti, January 12, 2010 at 4:30pm... the sun is shining, kids are playing and Port-au-Prince exudes an air of calm as the last hours of daylight linger. No rain, no predicted storms, new houses are being built and everyone goes about their daily activities without worry, without fear...4:50pm... while others see crowded streets, dirty roads, the hustle and bustle of poor families trying to make a living, our eyes, Haitian eyes, see paradise! It’s where we grew up... where some of us have left our childhood memories, our homes...our family...our hearts. In the four years that I have been away, Haiti has never left me; even with distance we are connected. 4:53pm... within seconds, Port-au-Prince as I have known it to be all my life, is destroyed. I am in denial and as I try to grasp the ugly truth of what the media flashes on the television, I can hear the voices of children singing... “ti zwa zo kote ou prale, mwen prale kay fiyet lalo....” (“Where are you going little bird, I am going to fiyet lalo’s house...”). I automatically reach for the telephone...oh no... the phone lines are not working? Wait... could I be seeing on CNN be the truth? I try to call anyway, hoping to reach my friends, but no one is answering!!! Papi kotek ye konsa Hein? Manmi...(Daddy, where are you? <as in to say, oh gosh...where are you, someone please tell me!>?? Mother...). Please pick up your phone! I left Haiti four years ago to get an education, always with the thought that I would have time to return. But what now...will my family home still be there waiting for me? Will my parents and siblings still be there to welcome me when I return... if I can return? 3:35am the phone finally rang!!! Mommy!!! “How are you?” she said. “Fafaye, we’re alive, oui, Cherie! We’re ok! How are you? Did you eat? Don’t worry honey, we are fine ...the house is gone, we’re outside in the car but we are alive. God kept us alive, don’t worry baby go get some sleep...it’s late. I love you.” In my head I’m thinking, did she really tell me to go to sleep and not to worry? Did she really ask me if I ate? “Mom it is YOU that I am worried about! You’re sleeping in the car! How can I eat, Mom? What are YOU guys going to eat? What is my little brother going to eat? My Granma? My sister? Our neighbors? Our friends? Our COUNTRY!!! I miss you all... I love you, I love you... ma’ do you hear me? I love you!” But the communication was dropped...I could not stop the tears from coming as I listened to the dial tone, the severed connection leaving me feeling empty. My heart was in pain, my country was destroyed.

Now, every time I try to eat I see their faces, my mind haunted by fear based images of my little brothers starving. How can I sleep in the comfort of this room, knowing that my family sleeps in a car? I did not know what to say to my cousin when he told me his 4 year old sister died. I did not know what to do when I saw my old classmates’ names listed as missing. I couldn’t take it anymore, so I turned the TV OFF! January 12, 2010 was more than just a natural disaster... years of hard work were gone in a matter of seconds! There are children who will be unable to attend school for a long time, so many people died, so many lost their family members, their homes. The media reports corruption has taken over the streets of Port-au-Prince as people fight for food and water and it seems as though the aid being sent to Haiti is NOT getting to the people, but I am hopeful. I believe in a newer, better Haiti because united, we have always stood before natural disasters and united we will stand in the future to build a better Haiti!

Books for Haiti

Last fall LLC donated over 100 books to the planned Vilbrun Library. We’ve been told that plans are still underway for the library and that organization president, Mr. Ferere Vilbrun met with Mayor Ivon Jerome of Carrefour to discuss acquiring a building for the library.
Spanish for Bilinguals

Gabriel Guadalupe, currently pursuing a PhD in Spanish Linguistics with LLC and a heritage speaker himself, has taught Spanish for Bilinguals several semesters. Here are some of his insights into the learning experience of second and third generation bilingual speakers of Spanish. Because heritage speakers come with a wide range of abilities, deficiencies and dialects, placing them in traditional Spanish classes can be challenging to both the students and the instructors. There can be times these students are bored, knowing all the material and times they are lost, not having learned essential building blocks. Understanding this, LLC created a class specifically to address the needs peculiar to heritage speakers and to help strengthen necessary skills so they can continue their studies in the language. Heritage speakers, who learn Spanish from their families and primarily or only use the language at home, tend to have an advanced oral competence and ease in their heritage language, but they face certain difficulties in applying their knowledge to using and writing a standard form of Spanish. While they bring rich and diverse dialectical elements into the classroom, they can lack literacy in Spanish as reflected in a reduced usage of accents, a simplified syntax or frequent lexical borrowing from English. False cognates (words that resemble each other in sound and spelling, but do not have the same meaning) can also be a difficulty for heritage speakers. Asistir a, which you might assume means to assist or help someone, actually means to attend an event or to go somewhere. If it is used as a transitive verb, it then takes on the meaning of assisting or helping. These mistakes more often occur in instances of formal writing assignments and translation tasks, but rarely occur in verbal interaction. Traditional students often have received instruction and have more experience on the most common of these pitfalls. When writing, students consult dictionaries and sometimes take the meaning of the word they are looking for at face value, not always considering context, something a more confident heritage speaker might be prone to do more than the traditional student. Teaching Spanish for Bilinguals is a complex task, requiring sensitivity and careful attention to sometimes unusual situations, but the rewards of knowing you’ve helped these students grow in their family’s heritage and given them the background to further study Spanish makes all the effort a very satisfying experience.

Congratulations to Spanish major Betsaida Reyes who has been awarded the Frank Carrino Memorial Award for Excellence in academic performance in Spanish and to French Honors major John R. Teevan III who has been awarded the Guy A. Enfanto Memorial Award for Excellence in academic performance.

The CLIC is bringing the world within reach to high schools from around the Capital Region. A group of 16 students enrolled in UAlbany’s University in the High School program from Hudson High School visited with the CLIC in April 2010 as part of a language learning expedition. The group consisted of Spanish learners who got to experience the language hands-on via a demo created by CLIC coordinator, Fred Méni. Students were taught how to use iMovie to create future recordings of themselves in order to reflect on their pronunciation and fluency. They were also given a brief presentation on the Language Podcasts section created by the CLIC, which gives students audio exposure to language in everyday contexts.

Thanks to all of you who have opted to receive the newsletter via e-mail, helping LLC participate in our campus wide Go Green Initiative!

We look forward to hearing from more of you.

Email jmacmillan@albany.edu
Writing in/as/on Exile: LLC’s Fourth Annual Research Conference

With the worrisome NYS fiscal climate, going to conferences and hosting them is becoming more and more difficult, but LLC is committed to the academic excellence engendered in such settings and so hosted its Fourth Annual Research Conference April 16 entitled, “Writing in/as/on Exile.” Recognizing others are facing the same concerns, LLC has been reaching out to include faculty participation from local colleges and universities resulting in 6 different schools represented at the conference this year. Panels were conducted in Spanish, French and English. Special guest, writer and historian José Manuel Prieto (a Cuban by birth who has studied French and Russian, and is perhaps best known for his book, Livadia-translated into 7 languages) read from his work and participated in the lively repartee of the closing round table discussions with Ilka Kressner, Glyne Griffith (LACS) and Timothy Sergay. We very much appreciate all of Ilka Kressner’s work in coordinating this wonderful conference and her coup in finding a guest presenter who could speak so easily to so many of the programs and in so many languages. (See www.albany.edu/llc/conference_program2010.pdf for the conference program).

Olympiada of Spoken Russian 2010

“I think I got all the answers right!” “The judge was really nice and I knew the verbs!” These are just a couple of the enthusiastic outbursts that could be heard in the Campus Center Assembly Hall during the regional competition of the Olympiada of Spoken Russian, hosted for the 15th year in a row by LLC’s Slavic and East European Studies program on April 6. The American Council of Teachers of Russian (ACTR) sponsored competition for junior and senior high school students has been held around the country since the 1960’s.

Every year LLC students, faculty, Russian speaking staff from other departments and international students volunteer to judge the event and score the participants in three categories: Spoken Russian, Culture (area studies) and Reading (prose and poetry). The students answer questions about their schools, favorite Russian authors, geography, music and much more. This year 5 area schools participated, Shaker Jr. and Sr. High School, Staten Island Technical High School, Tamarac High School, Watervliet High School and West Babylon Sr. High School, bringing 66 students to the competition. Tami Hartshorn of Shaker HS and Sheina Godovich (Heritage speaker category) of Staten Island Technical HS were the top winners of the 2010 competition.

Each year, the top regional winners are invited to take part in summer study in Vladimir, Russia, where they focus on language training, history, literature and culture. Every third or fourth year, the finalists from the regional contests who have gone on to win top honors in the national contests for their respective countries are invited to compete in an International Olympiada in Moscow, Russia.
Congratulations to French majors Michael Kuss, Megan Redfern, and Thomas Sherrow for being awarded scholarships from the Société des Professeurs Français et Francophones d’Amérique, which will allow them to study in Quebec this summer.

M any thanks to UHS liaisons Veronique Martin and Susan Cumings for another resoundingly successful Francophone Day showcasing UAlbany’s French Program to NY high school students in the University in the High Schools program. UHS provides UAlbany college credit for advanced coursework offered in the high schools—liaisons provide support to the high school teachers and ensure syllabi and curricula are college level. 85 participants from six schools around the state came with their French teachers March 9 for this mini-immersion experience. Students enjoyed a treasure hunt in small groups using their French skills in different offices to ask for information and got a tour of the campus in French. Regrouping in the Campus Center, students enjoyed a lively Québécois music and dance workshop. The square dance caller (a GER alumnus), with fiddle and guitar accompaniment, taught traditional dances to the students (some teachers even joined in!) and provided some Québécois music and dance history. He shared that originally square dances were held in the largest room in the home, the kitchen, and furniture (sometimes even the stove!) had to be moved to make room and the caller would sit on the kitchen table, out of the way. Such tight spaces required dances in close formation. The varied dances were met with enthusiasm, silliness and much laughter as stragglers raced to catch up. Students enjoyed lunch followed by a dessert contest for which each school brought an excellent entry. Judges included LLC’s Chair Jean-François Brière, CAS Associate Dean John Pipkin, University in the High Schools Representative Patricia Lanotte, Associate Director for International Education Joan Savitt and a graduate student from France, Fred Méni who is also the coordinator of our Center for Language and International Communication. Congratulations to Scotia-Glenville Senior High School for the winning entry, pain patate, a traditional dessert from Haiti. The event concluded with an intensive workshop of 10 rotations including puzzles and games, tongue twister challenges and opportunities to have discussions with native speakers from three Francophone nations, Haiti, Togo and France.

L LC’s 2nd Evening of the Arts on February 18 was another excellent display of the broad talents encapsulated in LLC’s many fine faculty and students. Charles Rougle shared some of his superb woodworking pieces, excellent snacks were provided by those with culinary expertise like Alice Krause and Ashley Whipple, there were poetry readings by Aida Torres-Horwitt and Sarah Carman who shared her own poems in public for the first time, there was a Charleston dance performance by Christina Marzello and Joanna Brumley, several photographers shared their work including Diana Aldrete, Elise Bouhct and Janna Harton, and musicians came out in numbers this year. The French Chorus (faculty & students) shared several French songs, Jack Ishman serenaded the group with Spanish songs including the traditional Mexican "La llorona" and the event concluded with Amy Savage and Karina Walker offering a stunning duet in the stairwell as onlookers lined the stairs and echoes chased around the open space. Many stayed on to chat and sing together with Jack and Karina leading with their guitars. Thanks once again to Amy Savage for coordinating such a wonderful evening!

Dessert contest judges in action

Karina Walker, Aïda Torres-Horwitt and Jack Ishman.

Did you know...

LLC faculty are multilingual, but combined, they know 17 languages (Aramaic, Catalan, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Haitian Creole, Ancient Greek, Hebrew, Italian, Latin, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Spanish, Swedish and Ukrainian) and one faculty knows 10 (H.P. Salomon)!
A Spring of Conferences

Kathryn Ringer-Hilfinger, an LLC teaching assistant pursuing a PhD in Spanish Linguistics, presented her research this spring at the 55th Annual Conference of the International Linguistic Association (ILS), American Dialect Society-Northeast at SUNY New Paltz and at the 5th International Workshop for Spanish Sociolinguistics at NC State University. She spoke on Attitudes towards dialect and its acquisition by immersion students in Madrid and Attitudes towards the Spanish /θ/ and its acquisition by immersion students in Madrid. Findings were based upon research for her doctoral dissertation pilot study. Data was collected from UAlbany second language learners prior to, during and after attending their study abroad program in Madrid. The goal was to study learner awareness of the vernacular employed in the speech community abroad and, in particular, their perception of the Spanish phoneme /θ/, characteristic of Madrid speech. Results revealed that learners’ attitudes toward native speaker use of dialect variants can ultimately affect their own ability to choose an appropriate dialect variant among several possible variants. For her excellent research she also received a $1000 CAS Dissertation Research Fellowship Award. In addition, she was selected as a LANCHART Centre Fellow and will be attending a summer program in sociolinguistics at the University at Copenhagen, Denmark this June where she will participate in plenary lectures with world-renowned international sociolinguists. She was chosen from an international pool of candidates for the quality of her abstracts and the relevance of her projects. LLC congratulates her for her achievements!

On March 13, before an audience of esteemed African Literature and Studies faculty gathered for the 36th Annual Conference of African Literature Association (ALA) in Tucson, Arizona, PhD candidate in French Studies and current LLC lecturer Anoumou Amekudji presented a paper on the theme of “Migrations in the New Senegalese Cinema.” He said it was a challenge to share the panel with professors like Kenneth Harrow of Michigan State University, Alexie Tcheuyap of University of Toronto, and the Cameroonian filmmaker Jean-Marie Teno. His paper explored the differences and similarities between the new generation of Senegalese filmmakers who prefer documentaries and the older generations who made fictional films. Later in March he presented a paper at the University of Michigan in Ann Arbor (his first home in the US) on “Crises politiques et identitaires dans La Noire de...Chando, et Dieu a-t-il quitté l’Afrique” at the 17th Annual Charles F. Fraker Conference. He met with other graduate students to exchange research ideas and discuss a future in academia. Finally, on April 16 he presented at LLC’s 4th Annual Research Conference on “La représentation de l’exil et de l’exilé(e) chez les romancières Fatou Diome et Ndack Kane.”

Being French in America

PhD student and LLC French lecturer, Elise Bouhet, a French native, has studied in the US for the last 4½ years. Although she returns to France regularly, living and learning in the US has influenced her cultural identity. On returning to France, there is always a period of transition in which she is faced with the challenge of redefining her Americanized French culture. She notes her reaction to everyday situations is different now and that her family and friends notice. An example of this is patience with food preparation and consumption. America is well known for its fast food culture and multitasking. Too busy to cook? Get take out and work while you eat! In French culture, food preparation is an artistic endeavor and the meal is to be savored. Preparation can be lengthy and sometimes 4-5 courses comprise the meal. Imagine the surprise of family and friends as she sat down to dinner one of her first nights home and said, “Well, I’m just gonna eat now.” Her statement was met with shocked silence as everyone found her declaration unusual and individualistic! French extended family gatherings at meals are collective, interactive, obligatory and positive. Four years in America and she’s come to expect dinner time as time to catch up on her undone tasks. Awkward moments aside, she feels she has embraced the American culture and enjoys her life here in the US.
Faculty News

Brett C. Bowles just received a Franklin Research Grant from the American Philosophical Society for his book project on the documentary films of Marcel Ophuls. It will be used this summer to collect materials in France and Germany. Bowles will also appear as a talking head in the French language version of “Love, Hate & Propaganda: World War II for a New Generation,” a six-part documentary being produced by the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation. He was interviewed in Montreal in February for the first part, which deals with the rise of fascism in Europe during the 1930s. The program is scheduled to air on CBC on April 30.

LLC is honored to announce Eloise Brière won a University Award for Excellence in Teaching and a Chancellor’s Award for Excellence in Teaching. These prestigious awards, which showcase exemplary achievement in teaching over a sustained period, are based on recommendations from a review committee and testimonials from faculty and students. Congratulations for the well-deserved recognition!

In November, Elizabeth Lansing worked on the Spanish UExcel ® exam (in partnership with Pearson Education) at Excelsior College. The exam measures student competence and will help colleges determine whether students should receive 3-6 credits for high school Spanish. Lansing’s work focused on scoring the exam items for which she had to determine how many A-, B- and C- students out of 100 would get a particular exam item correct. Curriculum experts from Iowa, Texas and other parts of New York State also participated.

Jack Ishman gave a performance talk about “Juan del Encina y sus Villancicos” at the historic Pruyn House in Loudonville, NY on Feb 3, 2010 for the Hudson-Mohawk chapter of the American Recorder Society. His talk consisted of tracing the origins of poetic and musical Spanish Folk music form, Villancico, which was practiced during the Middle Ages. Looking at it through its major creator, Juan del Encina, a composer, poet and playwright from 15th century Spain, Ishman directed the group in playing several of Encina’s Villancicos, using recorders, crumhorns and other early instruments.

Undine Giguere was invited to be an AP scorer in summer 2010, to serve as a reader at the College Board’s annual AP Reading, and to score AP exams in German this June in Cincinnati, OH. Giguere shared, “Being a scorer for the national comprehensive AP exams is always a very intense and rewarding professional experience and provides exciting opportunities to meet other German college/university instructors and high school teachers from all over the US.” As our University in the High Schools liaison for German language, her work at the national level makes her even more valuable in her coordination role with the high schools. The meeting also provides excellent opportunities for professional exchange and facilitates transparency and curricular insight across the college/university and high school curricula in German for the benefit and growth of all German language programs.

Maurice Westmoreland returned in January from a ten day trip to Santiago, Chile where he reviewed the Spanish language immersion program established by Escuela Fronteras and to which UAlbany sent 19 students during the winter intersession. Santiago, a modern dynamic city of more than five million residents, is located just a few hours from the Pacific coast in a valley surrounded by the Andes. The diversity of Chile’s natural environment, its political stability and rapidly expanding economy, and cultural richness make it an attractive study abroad option for students with a variety of academic interests. During Westmoreland’s visit he met with faculty, staff, and students, attended classes, and participated in a panel organized to discuss the application of immersion methodologies in a study abroad context. Westmoreland was impressed with the teaching methods used by faculty there, the individual attention given to students (classes are limited to six students), the wide range of extracurricular cultural activities organized by the school, and the warm reception he received from his hosts, the Fontera students and faculty, and the people of Santiago. Students, who ranged in abilities from beginning to advanced, were placed in carefully screened homes to maximize language exposure and practice and took morning and early afternoon classes five days a week. Students or alumni interested in learning more about the program are encouraged to contact Westmoreland or the Office of International Studies, and to visit the Escuela Fronteras website (www.wfronteras.com).
LLC bids farewell to Professor Emeritus of French, Carl J. Odenkirchen who passed away July 2009. He taught in the former Department of Comparative Literature and then in the French Department at the University at Albany. A native of Germany, he earned his PhD at the University of North Carolina where he first published “A preliminary chrestomathy of old Catalan” (1949). He is best known for two editions, with English translations, published in the series Medieval Classics: Texts and Studies (Brookline, Mass.), in 1976 and 1978 respectively: the 12th century “Play of Adam (Ordo representationis Ade),” the oldest religious play in French, and the 11th century “Life of St. Alexius in the Old French Version of the Hildesheim Manuscript.” Professor Odenkirchen was also an enthusiastic classical musician who played viola in the university Orchestra.

Bridget Almas (BA French and Chinese, 1991) moved to New York City after graduation and, through a somewhat circuitous route, diverged from her study of world languages into that of computers by becoming a software programmer. Her language skills were essential to landing her first job in the software industry managing software localization projects. She worked in localization until 1997 on French, German, Spanish, Italian, Chinese and Japanese products. She subsequently held various positions in the field of software development, eventually becoming a programmer in 1999. Around the same time, she also returned to the Albany area with her husband to begin raising a family. In 2007, she was given a wonderful opportunity to bring her love of languages back into her work as a senior programmer on a software project designed for reading and learning languages.

Using inventive teaching techniques in the classroom, Robert Bermingham (BA/MA Spanish, concentration in Secondary Education, 2009) likes to find inspiring ways to teach his students Spanish. Recently he incorporated interdisciplinary instruction into his classes, where student projects count in more than one class. With his 6th graders he embarked on a “create your own classroom project” when they finished a unit on school materials and school supplies. Students had to answering some leading questions that were tweaked to match their individual levels of proficiency. Then they had to choose what materials they wanted in the classroom, such as floor coverings (hardwood, tile or carpet), which helped them think about appropriateness and preferences. Next they had to build the classroom in a cardboard box and label the whole project in Spanish. To tie it into their English courses, students wrote a paper about why they set up their classrooms the way they did and finally got to give a very basic presentation.

While studying at UAlbany Bermingham participated in a study abroad in Madrid, Spain. He feels that study abroad was crucial to developing his language skills and provided him with cultural opportunities he would not have been exposed to in the US. It was while studying abroad that he realized he only needed electives to complete his degree, so he decided to start his MA early in the Spanish Program’s BA/MA track. By working closely with his Spanish advisor, he was able to design a curriculum that ensured the courses he took matched the Department of Education’s requirements and thus was able to finish sooner than on the traditional MA track. He feels his additional 30 credits in Spanish really expanded his education and knowledge base.

His’s teaching philosophy is if students are put in a situation where they need to use Spanish, he wants them to be able to use it well, consequently his curriculum focuses on real life experiences. Wanting to ensure that his students’ performance on upcoming oral exams was up to par, he arranged for each student to have an authentic phone conversation in Spanish with his host mother in Madrid. According to Bermingham, “There is a speaking part in the proficiency exam where the students have to have 10 different conversations with the instructor, so I wanted to get the students familiar with and accustomed to speaking with a native speaker, to see what it’s like, to get them into the swing of things.” It’s clear Bermingham’s study abroad experiences greatly enrich his daily teaching routine. When asked what advice he would give to future alumni who wish to teach in secondary schools, he said, “Get certified!” He found his lack of certification made job hunting more difficult. He also shared that employers seemed to prefer degrees in a specialized content area as opposed to a general education as this shows depth of study in a particular area. He currently teaches part time at Saint Anne’s Institute in the morning and at Blessed Sacrament Catholic School in the afternoons.
As a student who knew in high school that he wanted to teach language, Paul Rosenberg (BA German, ’75) planned to major in Spanish and minor in French so that he could teach high school language and be a track and cross country coach. Although he excelled in his language courses in high school, like many students he found classes at the university much more challenging. According to Paul, “I just had not realized that to major in foreign languages was basically like being an English major. Most of the required courses were literature,” unlike high school where language and culture were the primary focus. He later learned that he had ADD, the reason the readings had been difficult for him.

During his schooling at UAlbany Paul also studied Italian, Russian, Hebrew and German, enjoying German so much that he majored in it, sharing, “It was a more logical language to me than Spanish or French and my mother and grandparents often spoke Yiddish, which was very similar to German. The difficult part of the switch to German was that it was just 25 years after the Nazis tried to wipe out all of my culture, so it was a bit weird telling my family, relatives and friends that I was majoring in German!”

After student teaching Paul decided he was not a morning person and wanted more flexibility in when he could vacation so took a job with NY State where he worked for 24 years. It was during that time that he learned that work was available as a teaching artist in schools and started going into elementary, middle and high schools to teach traditional dance from around the world with his group, Peter, Paul and George, under the business name of Homespun Community Dancing. Today, as then, Paul says “The students love the live music and the dances are fun and easy to learn.” This is now his primary profession sprinkled with other jobs leading dances at private parties and public events.

While the majority of their work is in elementary schools, in recent years Homespun Occasions (the current business name) has found that high school French and Spanish language classes are interested in their programs of dances from France, Spain, Quebec and Latin America. One of the perks of teaching the dances is the opportunity to practice speaking some of the foreign languages he studied. “Life sure does take some twists and turns. While I was a student at UAlbany, being dance phobic, I avoided most dance situations, but loved studying foreign languages. I never would have imagined that I’d make a living working in high school foreign language classes teaching dance!”

While at UAlbany, Meghan Chance (MA French, 2005) was a TA for two years and had the opportunity to teach the beginner and intermediate levels offered by LLC. According to Meghan, “Those two years were so important in shaping my future career choice as well as expanding my knowledge of the French language and culture.” Since graduating from UAlbany, she completed a second master’s program in teaching (MAT French grades 7-12) at Union College, and taught as a substitute for a year before finding her current position at Queensbury High School where she teaches a variety of levels, including University in the High School courses and a Regents level French course. She is also a co-advisor for her former high school’s French Club and for the French & Spanish Language Program at Queensbury’s intermediate school (4th and 5th grade). Last summer she returned to UAlbany to obtain her certification extension for Elementary French, grades 1-6.

She is currently teaching French History to seniors and is able to pull information from her French history classes at the university. “I tell my students about Dr. (J-F) Brière and what a great teacher he was -- I loved taking his courses -- they were always so interesting! (All my professors were wonderful, I just happen to really love history!).” Meghan has a 2 1/2 year old son (and a sibling for him on the way) to whom she speaks French every day. “I think back to my linguistics courses with Dr. Fox and can see how my son is forming his words and it is really amazing to see! I can’t say enough how wonderful and knowledgeable the professors in the French Program are, and I would love to go back one day and take some more courses!”

OOPS! A quick correction to the last newsletter:

Some of you caught a grammatical goof in our crêpe story last issue. Thanks and keep up the good work! It tells us we taught you well and you’re remembering your *cahier d’exercices* lessons. Perhaps we’ll slip a few more in future issues to test you. Stay in touch!
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Thank You!  ¡Gracias!  Merci!  Grazie!  Danke!  Spasibo!  Shukran!  Obrigado!  Gratus!