Greetings from LLC! It has been a busy year. Our department continues to transform with two faculty retiring this year and two new hires. We extend our best wishes to Henryk Baran (Russian) and Mary Beth Winn (French) on their retirement and we look forward to their continued affiliation with LLC. Two new colleagues joined the Spanish Program: Carmen Serrano (Latin American literature) and Meredith Jeffers (Peninsular literature). We welcome both of them to the department and wish them a smooth transition. You can read more about them in the Faculty News section.

We are in the process of establishing our newly designed 1-year Spanish MA, developing new courses, revising current programs and courses to keep current with emerging needs. LLC has developed a good seminar series, hosting a variety of clubs and events that you are welcome to attend whenever you’re in the area—see our website for details (www.albany.edu/llc/). We recently held a well-attended open house for students showcasing our programs and with the help of the university’s media office developed a promotional video at www.albany.edu/llc/ (bottom right tab) for prospective students. Also, our Facebook presence has been growing steadily—join and see!

In an effort to become more timely, green, and reduce costs, this will be the last paper version of our newsletter. The newsletter will be available as usual on our website, posted on Facebook, and emailed to all who indicate they would like a copy, so please send us your current email so we can continue to share LLC News with all of you. Thanks to all our alumni and friends who support LLC in so many ways, contributing in addition to serving as contacts for graduates, and advocating for the languages. We are always delighted to hear success stories from alumni as they serve to inspire our current students, so keep them coming!

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.

In September LLC hosted seminar guest speaker Michel DeGraff, Associate Professor in the Department of Linguistics and Philosophy at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. Dr. DeGraff (center of picture) is a leading linguist in the study of Haitian Creole, of which he is a native speaker. His research primarily focuses on dispelling the belief that the formation of Creole languages is different from formation of other languages. His talk, “Some Notes on Faculty Values (or lack thereof) in Creole Studies” touched on the development of Creole from a spoken language to one that is written.

Undergraduate Haitian students Christian Adrien (right) and Judith C. Dolcé (left) were among those who attended. Dolcé remarked, “As a Haitian-American, I am all too familiar with the disregard and disdain that Haitian Creole is often treated with. It was very refreshing and reaffirming to hear Dr. DeGraff cogently defend the validity of Haitian Creole as a language. It is always pleasant to meet and connect with members of the Haitian-American community, but knowing that DeGraff has devoted his career and research to the recognition of our language made meeting him all the more enjoyable.”

DeGraff’s lecture was followed by a Q&A session with graduate students who also discussed their research topics, gaining expert advice and insight into life, post graduate studies.
Good afternoon friends, family, distinguished faculty of the Languages, Literatures and Cultures Department, and of course the 2013 graduates! Wow! It seemed like it was just yesterday that we were preparing for our freshman orientations and now we’re sitting here in our caps and gowns at graduation. To be honest, when we first entered this university, I would never have believed that four years later, I would be standing here as a graduating student of the LLC Department, let alone serving as the undergraduate speaker for it! It was definitely a journey finding my way to the humanities!

In my freshman year here at UAlbany, I came in with the initial goal of structuring my undergraduate career in preparation to one day be a medical doctor. As far as I could remember, science had always been my passion. I loved lab work and just about anything experimental. I couldn’t see myself loving or doing anything else and so I enrolled as a biology major with a combined chemistry minor on a pre-health track. My advisors said that I had my work cut out for me and apart from my general education requirements, I should really focus on building a strong scientific background if I truly wanted to be successful in medical school.

Since language was one of those general education requirements that we had to fill, I decided to take a French class that year. After all, I had been taking French since junior high school and there was just something about learning the language that I really enjoyed and so I decided to enroll as a biology major with a combined chemistry minor on a pre-health track. My advisors said that I had my work cut out for me and apart from my general education requirements, I should really focus on building a strong scientific background if I truly wanted to be successful in medical school.

At the end of that semester, I felt that all-familiar feeling once again: the one that wouldn’t allow me to let go of my language studies. Unfortunately at that time, however, the humanities were under the pressure of having some of the most treasured majors deactivated, with French being among them. With an already demanding 56-credit biology major and the possibility of not being able to further my studies in French, I had no idea how I would be able to do it! I just knew that, again, I couldn’t let go!

It was a Thursday afternoon after class that I finally decided to go see Dr. Fox and tell her how I was feeling. She had told me about a way that I could go about still adding a major that incorporated French Studies: a way that many of the new students at the university were pursuing, which was through Interdisciplinary Studies. It would allow me to combine two related disciplines into one general major if the university did not already have a program of that study available. Dr. Fox not only gave me really good advice, but had also offered me her amazing support through the pain-staking application process associated with the Interdisciplinary Studies Committee.

After a semester of uncertainty and taking a bunch of courses in French and linguistics that possibly could have been rejected in my proposed plan of study, I was finally granted acceptance to my new double major at the end of my junior
New University Freshman Seminar

Over the summer Assistant Professor Ilka Kressner planned a team-taught 1-credit seminar “World of Languages and Literatures” for freshmen studying French, Spanish, Italian, Russian, and German. LLC faculty and lecturers cooperatively taught the course which was designed to broadly expose freshmen to these cultures and languages. Students got to connect with fellow classmates interested in language acquisition and cultural studies, generating enthusiasm for further language study via cultural exposure in extracurricular language activities and study abroad opportunities. Fall 2013 topics were “Being Bilingual – Why is it Cool?” (Julio Torres), “The Italian American Experience” (Maria Keyes), “Language Contact” (Lotfi Sayahi), “Women Writers of the Renaissance” (Olimpia Pelosi), “French in Your Own Backyard” (Cynthia Fox), “Subversive Writing in the Renaissance” (Aída Torres-Horwitt), “What is Translation, What’s So Bad About Google Translate?” (Tim Sergay), “Francophone: What kind of Phone is This?” (Eloise Brière), “Language Change” (Maurice Westmoreland), “Poetics of Daily Life in Cuban Film” (David Lisenby), and “German Speaking Immigrants and Their Descendants in the US” (Undine Giguere).

LLC Open House

LLC held its annual Open House Friday afternoon 11/1/13 for students interested in foreign languages and cultures. The event was well attended, with over a hundred students interacting with faculty and alumni. Guest speakers Cathy Parker from UAlbany Career Services and alumni Ruth Scipione, Greg Jabaut and Olivia Krolik spoke to students about what they can do to prepare for their job search and interesting career areas that alumni have found. Alumni shared their personal journeys to the career path that embodies their individual skill sets and interests. See the alumni section for more details.

The Arab Spring Q&A on Journalism in Tunisia

On September 3, 2013 LLC co-hosted The Arab Spring Q&A on Journalism in Tunisia with the Department of English and the Program in Journalism, with LLC Chair Lotfi Sayahi serving as interpreter in French and Arabic. Guest speakers from the Institute of Press and Information Sciences (IPSI) at the University of Manouba, Tunisia shared with students the life of Tunisian journalists living in a country where public and private media were tightly controlled and journalists’ freedom of expression was limited by the government. Two and half years after Tunisia’s revolution which sparked the Arab Spring, the country is settling into a new, more democratic environment which has opened many doors of opportunity, including a more liberal approach to news reporting.

In the past, limited news outlets and directors of those outlets being chosen by government officials made it easier for the government to control the information being disseminated. Recent political changes have impacted news reporting, raising awareness of issues in communications and journalism. IPSI plans to provide training and education to instructors of journalism as well as new and experienced journalists.

Dr. Taoufik Yacoub (pictured at right), Director of IPSI stated, “Future plans include working closely with the BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation), University at Albany and other institutions around the world to help streamline and improve the education of instructors who teach students about journalism. It’s a strategic move for the future of the country. There is an air of excitement surrounding the IPSI Journalism Program as a new attitude develops among students after the revolution. A new horizon is in sight – the freedom to report the news.”

The long-term objective of IPSI is to develop Tunisian journalism to its full potential. Dr. Mocz Ben Messaoud (center), Director of the Communications Department, shared, “The political environment is not fully developed democratically. We will continue to face challenges, but journalists look forward to a structured, liberated means of journalistic expression through education. This will be a long process, a long-term objective to restructure journalism.”

As the country moves forward, educators are looking forward to the benefits a democratic environment provides, including the freedom to report the news. Dr. Hamlida El Bour (left), IPSI’s Director of the Journalism Program added, “Narrow horizons are now expanded. The young no longer want to leave the country; more are willing to stay as they see these changes taking root.”
New 1-Year SPN MA

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Help UAlbany GO GREEN!

This is our last paper newsletter - future newsletters will be at www.albany.edu/llc/ under News and Events. Thanks to all of you who have asked to receive the newsletter via email! Not getting it by email? Send us your email and we’ll add you. Email: jmacmillan@albany.edu

Fall 2013 Assistant Professor Julio Torres taught Business Spanish, SPN407, a course designed to help students develop their business vocabulary and improve understanding of intercultural practices, linguistic, economic, historical and sociopolitical factors that play a pivotal role when engaging in business in the Spanish-speaking world. The course began by examining a case study of the failure of McDonalds in Bolivia. The development of the course was a joint collaboration with colleague Dr. Ellen J. Serafini at George Mason University. The curriculum followed the tenets of task and content-based language learning approaches. In spring 2013 Torres conducted a needs analysis to elicit information through questionnaires from professors and majors/minors from the Business School at UAlbany creating course tasks based on the findings. UAlbany and George Mason University students got to interact and interview students in Spanish through telecollaborations to gather data to design a marketing pitch. For fall students interacted with a local Albany Latino business owner who gave a twenty minute presentation after which students asked prepared questions. The point of the discussion was to have students interact on a professional level with a business owner in Spanish. For the final course assignment students had to promote an authentic American product or service in a Spanish-speaking country taking into account best business practices in the Spanish-speaking world. ¡A negociar!
Happy New Year

from your LLC staff,
Janna, Amber and Joane

Vincent O’Leary Professorship

LLC congratulates Eloise Brière, Mary Beth Winn, Jean François Brière (pictured left to right) and Henryk Baran on being granted Vincent O’Leary Professorships which allow retired faculty to continue to carry out research, teach and otherwise actively contribute to the university.

Henryk Baran, who retired in December, will continue with his research here in the US and in Europe. He has taken on writing obligations and will continue to consult with colleagues and students as needed.

Eloise Brière has been busy teaching courses on the Culture and Customs of Senegal, taking students on a study abroad to Senegal and providing direction on post-trip projects, writing and reviewing articles, making presentations, and working on dissertation committees. She is actively involved in the Albany chapter of the United University Professions (UUP) union, was elected its Assistant Vice President for Academics, is on the UUP Globalization and Privatization Committee, co-chairs the chapter’s Membership Committee and serves as LLC’s department representative. She also continues to work on new aspects of colonial ventriloquism, most recently on the 18th century text Le Philosophe Négro where the French author writes in ‘blackface’ adopting an African voice.

Jean-François Brière continues his scholarly work at invited talks such as one at Rice University in November on French-Haitian relations in the 19th century. He has been appointed a member of the Boucher and Heggy book prizes committee by the French Colonial Historical Association and is preparing a revised edition of his culture textbook Les Français (Prentice Hall) for intermediate and advanced students of French.

Mary Beth Winn will pursue her research on early French printing, especially on editions by Vérard, with related issues of patronage, text/image relations, transitions between manuscript and print, and collections of poetry, and continue her work on doctoral dissertation committees.

Language Clubs & Tables

Those wanting to strengthen language skills, learn more about other cultures, or be part of a club with others who share their passion for languages, have a variety of choices in LLC: Le Cercle français, La Pause Café, Deutsche Kaffee stunde, Tavola Italiana, La Dolce Vita, Russian Learner’s Club, El Club de Español and the UAlbany Tango Club.

For current information on meeting times and contacts, see www.albany.edu/llc/news&events_clubs_tables.shtml.
Undergraduate Student News

Olympiada of Spoken Russian

The 2013 Olympiada of Spoken and Written Russian for New York State Colleges and Universities (an annual competition established in 2001) was held at West Point Academy. Up to five students per institution are allowed to participate in first and second year Russian language categories that include grammar usage, poetry recital, speaking on a list of prepared topics and reading a text in Russian. Participants reviewed grammar and vocabulary and memorized specially selected classic Russian poems distributed to them prior to the competition.

Undergraduate UAlbany student Eduardo de Barros Ferreira won third place for first-year Russian. Also present was Russian minor, Angelica Reynolds who competed in the category for second-year Russian. Associate Professor Tim Sergay was extremely pleased with Eduardo’s win and with Angelica’s decision to compete and hopes their example will inspire other UAlbany students to strive for excellence in communicative proficiency in Russian. Sergay plans to continue to recruit participants for the annual meets and looks forward to hosting the event at UAlbany in the future.

Summer in Spain

For summer 2013 double major (Spanish/English) Marcelo Maeda (pictured before the Plaza Mayor in Madrid) studied Spanish in Madrid. “Without a doubt, this was one of the most rewarding and exciting trips I’ve ever made. Not only was I able to better my Spanish, but I also dove into the Spanish culture.” After spending some time in Madrid, Marcelo would highly recommend it to any student. “Whether you’re a language major/minor or not, Madrid is safe and welcoming to anyone interested in learning about their enriched culture.”

La Dolce Vita, UAlbany’s Italian Club, won the UAlbany Student Association’s Best Cultural Awareness Program Award this past summer for club-hosted programs that helped to spread cultural awareness around the campus community. The club volunteered to teach some Italian language basics to high school students planning a trip to Italy, helping familiarize them with phrases they would need for their visit. Students found it very insightful. The club also made their now annual expedition to New York City’s Little Italy in November.

My Semester in Madrid

Julianne Landon is very glad she decided to study abroad in Madrid. “My semester in Spain went very well. I really enjoyed taking classes, meeting my professors and had a wonderful internship with the Centro de Acogida a Refugiados (Refugee Reception Centre). While there, I conducted entrance interviews with new residents, helped them register with Town Hall, requested records and attended doctor appointments to help translate. I also set up and attended various meetings with other Non-governmental organizations (NGOs) that worked with refugees. Most residents were from Syria or Palestine and I learned a lot about their cultures. I also attended a conference, read articles and books about Syria’s current situation. What I liked most about Spain and Europe was the architecture. The buildings are so beautiful and historical. There is so much to do there. I absolutely loved Madrid and I didn’t want to leave.”

From L to R- Back: Associate Professor Timothy Sergay of UAlbany; Professor Charles H. Arndt III of Vassar and Professor Marina Zaleskii of SUNY-Binghamton. Front: Eduardo de Barros Ferreira of UAlbany (third place for first year Russian), Jeremy Burke of Vassar (second place for first year Russian), Sean Keller of Vassar (first place for first year Russian), Kenneth Law of SUNY Binghamton (third place for second year Russian), Lisa Kruse of SUNY-Binghamton (second place for second year Russian), Henry Hollithron of Vassar (second place for second year Russian).
An Inside Look at Data Collection

During the months of June and July Ashley LaBoda had the opportunity to travel to Limón, Costa Rica in order to collect data for her dissertation regarding language contact between Limonese English and Spanish. “Costa Rica is well known as an eco-tourism hot spot however Limón is a blue-collar, working-class city where economic success is gained from truckloads of bananas, not busloads of tourists. To say I ‘stuck out’ as a researcher is an understatement and being an outsider proved to be the biggest challenge of my data collection.

My goal was to collect recordings of bilingual speakers of Spanish and Limonese English in order to study how Spanish has influenced the Limonese vernacular. However, because I am not a speaker of Limonese English, people were hesitant to speak to me in anything other than Spanish or Standard English. From coursework in Research Methods, Contact Linguistics and Sociolinguistics I had learned to expect this and tried to use the techniques that we had studied in order to lessen the so-called ‘observer’s paradox.’ Getting the data I was hoping for still proved to be difficult despite using different methods. ‘Observer’s Paradox,’ a term created by William Labov, is a well-documented occurrence researchers come across when in the process of collecting linguistic data. Participants’ vernacular and patterns of speech change, becoming more formal in the presence of the researcher, thereby making the collection of authentic linguistic data difficult.

The province of Limón has been desegregated since 1948, however, the dichotomy between the Afro-Costa Rican and Panamanian (Spanish Costa Rican) culture is still very much ingrained in the society. In the past, for many Afro-Costa Ricans, speaking Limonese English was all but prohibited and if used in schools, students were punished. So the idea of an American researcher recording Limonese English was met with some confusion. Speakers are very aware of the different varieties of both English and Spanish spoken in the region and there are fairly strict social norms as to how each variety is used.

After establishing relationships and connections with people in the community, I was able to listen in on and eventually record people speaking Limonese English in a natural environment. If it weren’t for the wonderful people of Limón, especially those at the Biblioteca Pública, I would not have been able to gather the information and data necessary for my dissertation. All in all my fieldwork was successful. I am grateful for the support I received from LLC as they provided the recorder I used to collect the data making it easier to record conversations outdoors and in noisy environments resulting in high quality recordings. I look forward to analyzing the recordings to see how the languages interact and influence each other. What I took away from this experience is that working with different cultures and languages requires different hands-on and different reading from the ones you are used to. You have to embrace the experience one hundred percent!”

LC grad student Yaima Centeno collected data in Cuba this summer interviewing people, many of whom were of Afro-Caribbean ancestry. She gathered information about cultural programs and activities taking place in Guantanamo City to promote its Afro-Caribbean cultural heritage. Her research is a sociolinguistic study about the sounds of r and l in Guantanamo City, primarily examining certain sociolinguistic variables (age and educational level) in various usages of r and l in the speech of the participants.

Centeno shared, “The people there were willing to share their stories and many of them invited their relatives, friends and neighbors to come talk to me. I learned that the more open I was about myself, the more the participants showed interest in my research. I recall being at the home of a married couple who were friends of a friend. The wife had planned to visit her sister so initially did not agree to be interviewed. It was about 7pm and her husband and I were conversing socially before the interview began. We discovered that their daughter and I were in a local choir together when we were little girls. I began to share more about myself and my parents and soon his wife joined in the conversation. We enjoyed the pre-interview conversation so much that the wife decided to stay to be interviewed as well! Being in Cuba again made me realize how privacy has always been seen as a foreign concept there. The majority of homes have curtains instead of doors. Time is also an abstract concept for Cubans. People would come to talk to me from early in the morning until late at night. I must say the research was very enjoyable. People felt important when I told them I came to Cuba all the way from the US to write my dissertation about Guantanamo City. Many of them told me they would do it again and that next time I go, I have to stop by their houses to share meals or spend time with them and their families.”

Ashley LaBoda taking a walk after heavy rains flooded the road outside of her home stay in Colina (just outside Limón)

Yaima Centeno enjoying a stroll in Havana Cuba, in front of The National Capitol Building.
The state that runs different housing and economic development programs. So I keep all these wonderful people who help us with funding: all the good things we do happy by making sure that we comply with all the rules and use their gifts as they request.”

Doctoral student in French Studies, UHS Liaison and LLC Lecturer, Véronique Martin (pictured at right) successfully defended her dissertation on “Mediation Effects of Desktop-Videoconferencing: Telecollaborative Exchanges on The Intercultural Communicative Competence of Students of French as a Foreign Language” on September 13, 2013. Committee chair Cynthia Fox (pictured at left) and committee members Robert Summers and Lotfi Sayahi presided, with Summers participating via teleconference.
During her spring 2013 sabbatical Susan Blood worked on her book project: *Retelling Modernism: Old Genres and New Technologies from the Second Empire to the Second World War*. Currently working on the chapter, “Scandal and Scapegoating in Renoir’s La Règle du jeu,” she has taken the theoretical frame from the work of her former professor, René Girard, who recently was elected to L’Académie française. Girard is noted for his study of scapegoating mechanisms and their relationship to the social order. La Règle du jeu created a scandal in 1939 because Renoir’s depiction of scapegoating in polite society pointed to the Holocaust on the horizon. Blood is also working on a new project on the work of Arab women writers and filmmakers and will co-chair a panel at the January 2014 MLA convention, Unveiling Herself: Women in the Work of Arab Women Filmmakers, with LLC graduate student and lecturer, Nabila El-Guennouni.


Undine Giguere was invited to be an AP scorer in summer 2013 (the fifth year in a row), to serve as a reader at the College Board’s annual AP Reading, and to score AP exams in German. Giguere shared, “Being a scorer for the national comprehensive AP exams is a very intense and rewarding professional experience and provides excellent opportunities to meet other German higher education instructors and high school teachers from across the nation.” The meeting also provides 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.

LLC welcomes Meredith Jeffers who earned her PhD from the University of Colorado at Boulder. She specializes in 20th and 21st Century Peninsular Narrative. Her current research project evaluates transcription as a rhetorical figure in six works of fiction published since 2000, specifically, how transcription co-opts and interrogates the conventions of historiography in order to critique Spain’s current obsession with the recovery of historical memory related to the Spanish Civil War and the ensuing Franco dictatorship. She has a chapter forthcoming in an edited anthology entitled *Collapse, Catastrophe, and Reconstruction: Spain’s Cultural Panorama in the XXI Century*. In the 2013-2014 academic year, she will be teaching ASPN 312: Representative Spanish Authors, ASPN 319: 20th Century Spanish Literature, and ASPN 301z: Advanced Conversation & Composition.


Ilka Kressner is co-editing a volume of the journal *Annals of Scholarship*, with Alexander Gelley (UC Irvine) and Michael Levine (Rutgers) focusing on Walter Benjamin’s writings. The essays are based on last fall’s Critical Speculations Conference, co-hosted by LLC. This semester she is a Visiting Scholar in the Comparative Literature Department at Harvard University; her research project is dedicated to the study of contemporary interarts poetry from Spanish America. She also participated in the experimental fall 2013 conference of the American Comparative Literature Association held at Pennsylvania State University in late September. While there she presented in a panel discussion on the “Ideas of the Decade,” where colleagues discussed what they believed to be the best ideas in the last ten years relevant to Comparative Literature.

David Lisenby recently traveled to Cuba with the support of a UAlbany FRAP research award to continue research for his book project on issues of race and history in Cuban literature and culture. The project explores how 19th century literary figures have been strategically deployed in recent decades in Cuban novels, theatre, and film that negotiate racial inequalities in contemporary Cuban society. Among the many writers and critics with whom Lisenby met during his time in Cuba is renowned playwright Abelardo Estorino, whose work is a secondary research focus of Lisenby’s. His interview with Estorino will be published in the Spring 2014 issue of the Latin American Theatre Review, and he will also be presenting on haunting presences in Estorino’s plays at the MLA convention in January 2014.

Maria Keyes was recognized for her support of the La Dolce Vita, UAlbany’s Italian Club this past November. Maria oversees club activities and provides guidance to club members.
This summer Timothy Sergay contributed video-recorded remarks in Russian to an international Internet conference held in Perm (in the Urals), located in Russian near the border of Kazakhstan. The conference, “The Russian Language between Europe and Asia” addressed long-term demographic and political challenges to the international prestige of Russian. He also delivered two lectures on “Sound and Sense: Interrelations of Russian Music and Russian Literature” at the Catskill Mountain Foundation High Peaks Music Festival in August. He was the invited “scholar in residence” for this annual educational gathering of advanced young classical musicians from across the US and around the world, including several from Russia. His talks framed the problem of Russian music and literature in the broader context of the opposition between program music (music that conveys certain extramusical “content,” often narrative in nature) and absolute (or textless, “formalist”) music.

LLC welcomes Carmen Serrano (PhD in Spanish with a specialization in Latin American literature from the University of California, Irvine). Prior to joining LLC she was a Visiting Assistant Professor at Colgate University in Hamilton, New York and at Bates College in Lewiston, Maine. Her book project Monsters, Vampires and Doppelgängers: Innovation and Transformation of Gothic Forms in Latin American Narratives is broadly situated within the interdisciplinary field of cultural studies framed in a transatlantic context. She explores the ways in which Augusto Roa Bastos in Yo El Supremo (1973), Carlos Fuentes in Aura (1962) and Juan Rulfo in Pedro Páramo (1955) mobilize Gothic discursive practices and imagery to create alternative versions of the past that question national historical narratives. At the same time, she discusses how the use of fear and the monstrous serve to articulate contemporary anxieties in a specific Latin American social-political crossroads. In addition to working on themes of the supernatural in literature and historical fiction, she has also written papers on the Novel of the Mexican Revolution and film. She has presented conference papers at the Mexican Conference, The International Gothic Association, Latin American Studies Association Conference, MESEA and the Latina/o Literary Theory & Criticism Conference.

This past summer, Aida Torres-Horwitt was honored by UAlbany’s Honors College for mentoring LLC Spanish major Laura Colaneri who received both the Outstanding Senior Award (which recognizes seniors who have contributed greatly to the University as undergraduates) and the Ada Craig Walker Award (given to a graduating senior woman who “in judgment of the faculty best typifies the ideals of the University”).

During the summer Julio Torres spent a week at the 7th Annual Heritage Language Research Institute sponsored by the University at Illinois in Chicago where he presented an ongoing study on examining the interaction between simultaneous heritage bilingualism and cognitive control. He was also invited to speak on a future research project with heritage bilinguals in a panel of junior faculty at the institute. He is collaborating with the Heritage Language Resource Center at UCLA on the design of a future website (www.nhlrc.ucla.edu/data/) that will host a number of research instruments including questionnaires, proficiency assessments and experimental tasks. He encourages graduate students to use the instruments on the website for their own research and/or dissertation projects. Last semester, he published a review on the textbook, El bilingüismo en el mundo hispanohablante by Silvina Montrul. Recently, he submitted two manuscripts for review; one to Studies in Second Language Acquisition and a co-authored manuscript to the Heritage Language Journal. In fall he presented papers at two conferences, Task-based Language Teaching (TBLT) and Second Language Research Forum (SLRF) and plans to attend the mini-conference, Improving Quantitative Reasoning in Second Language Research at Georgetown University. He also mentored an undergraduate Linguistics student on her senior honors thesis on the use of prepositions in Spanish heritage language speakers, a project that was a product of a course he taught last semester, Heritage Language Acquisition.
Faculty Retirement

Professor Henryk Baran began his forty year teaching career at UAlbany in September 1973 as a lecturer. By September 1995 he was promoted to full professor, serving on many committees, also functioning as Slavic and LLC chair. Most recently, Baran was main editor for a book titled *The Avant-garde and Everything Else: A Volume of Articles for the 75th Birthday of Alexander Efinovich Parnis*. The book is a collection of articles, commentary and recollection by friends and colleagues of Parnis, a leading researcher in verbal and visual heritage of early Russian history. Included in the publication is an article written by Baran titled, “Was Khlebnikov a Cassandra? Concerning a Prediction by the Head of the Cubo-Futurist Group.” Colleagues share their thoughts on his career and years of service below.

From Emerita Sophie Lubensky, Slavic and Eurasian Studies:

“It is hard to believe that you are retiring. When I came to the Slavic Department more years ago than I care to remember, I heard my new colleagues referring to you, the youngest among us, as “a departmental baby.” They teased you about your “Polish Harvard accent” (which I secretly envied—it sounded much better to my ear than my Russian non-Harvard one). And you were spoken of as a most promising scholar—a rising star.

As a scholar, you were becoming better known and appreciated with every publication. I am not going to compete here with your multi-page CV—I just want to say that I have always admired your ability to give the reader a bird’s-eye view of any problem you research before plumbing the depths. The star has risen: you have published widely in English and Russian, you are well known in both the US and Russia, and every accolade bestowed on you in either country is richly deserved. (In fact, I even suspect that your Russian has become better than mine.)

You are retiring (or rather, shall we say, have to retire) too early, but this is not necessarily bad. There is pleasure to be had in retirement. You know everything there is to know about technology, and you can write in different genres—I hope you will! You wear multiple hats—please find time to wear each one of them in retirement.

You and I had worked together for 30 years, and over those years I came to appreciate deeply not only your erudition, professionalism, and the diversity of your interests, but many of your personal qualities: tolerance, loyalty, readiness to help out, and most of all your ethical standards—the highest possible. We have become close friends. Your support has been unwavering: you

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Professor Mary Beth Winn graduated from Yale University with a PhD in 1974 and shortly thereafter was hired as an Assistant Professor in UAlbany’s Department of French Studies (which later merged with other languages to form LLC). She retired at the end of August after 39 years of commitment and service to the university. In that time she received over twenty awards and honors for her research in French Chansons. She has served as LLC chair, served on many committees across the university, served as chapter moderator for Pi Delta Phi, the French Honor Society, and Phi Beta Kappa, an honor society that, “…embrac(es) the principles of freedom of inquiry and liberty of thought and expression.” Winn’s dedication to the academy and to students has enriched many lives. Following are some fond recollections from those years.

From Eloise Brière, O’Leary Professor, French Studies:

“If you go to ‘Mary Beth Winn’ on Rate my Professor, you will note that she is considered to be a ‘hot’ professor and if you listen to her speech on YouTube: “SUNY Under Siege, Mary Beth Winn” you will understand that she is not only hot, but fiery. As a matter of fact she is so fiery that she burned her way to some very prestigious grants, including three from the NEH, no small feat in the field of letters! She burned so much midnight oil that she produced the massive seven-volume edition of chansons by the Renaissance composer Thomas Crecquillon which won the 2012 American Musicology Award. But to me some of the most memorable fiery moments were her fierce defense of the French major and her colleagues when she dared to publicly demand accountability from those who would destroy it.”

From Jean-François Brière, O’Leary Professor, French Studies:

Professor Mary Beth Winn has received many grants during her distinguished academic career but there is one unique distinction for which she is not likely to earn proper recognition. It has to do with her well-known gargantuan appetite for books. You should know that books currently on the shelves of our library are those that have not been loaned to Prof. Winn. If you see long empty stacks on the second and third floors of the library, it is because Prof. Winn, an avid reader, has taken home their contents in a special highly resistant Swiss-made suitcase with reinforced wheels. For years, the interlibrary loan office had to beef up its staff to satisfy requests from Prof. Winn. When Prof. Winn went on
Baran’s Retirement, continued from page 11

have always been there for me in times of trouble. We all usually shy away from lofty words—perhaps this is my best chance to tell you that I cherish our friendship. Have a creative, rewarding, and enjoyable retirement, with very best wishes!”

From Professor Emeritus Charlie Rougle, Slavic and Eurasian Studies:

“Henryk has always shown the kind of generosity and collegiality one would like to see more frequently in the academic context. In the almost three decades we have worked together, I have never known him to place his own personal opinions or convenience or comfort above what he believed to be the best interest of the whole. He was therefore a voice of rationality and civility on many occasions when equanimity was not the reigning atmosphere. This was certainly true back in the days when Slavic was a separate department, and he has contributed more than his share to the admirably smooth operation of LLC. I have also personally often been amazed at his ability to maintain his grueling schedule. The logistics alone—I have known him to commute to Albany from New Jersey as many as four or even five days a week, not to mention several trips to Russia and elsewhere every year that sometimes meant driving here while still jet-lagged—would exhaust many much younger colleagues. And has he ever declined a service assignment or even a heavier teaching load if it was really necessary? Not to my knowledge. Set his extensive CV against this background and it becomes even more impressive. We have every reason to believe that he will keep doing it all for many years to come. Here’s wishing you all the best, Henryk.”

From Assistant Professor of Russian Timothy Sergay, Slavic and Eurasian Studies:

“My first acquaintance with Henryk Baran’s extraordinarily wide-ranging scholarship was the article he wrote in 1982 about the great Russian Symbolist poet Aleksandr Blok and vampirism, “Some Reminiscences in Blok: Vampirism and Its Antecedents” (in Vickery, ed., Aleksandr Blok Centennial Conference [Columbus, OH: Slavica, 1984], 43-60). Naturally, I had no inkling in the late 1990s that I would eventually be working in the same Russian program as the author. In the spring of 2005, while walking across the Dutch Quad parking lot, Henryk explained his scholarly methodology to me with a modest and sly grin, “I find things.” This is exactly what he does and has done, with great energy, and in very lively collaboration with others, in literary and cultural scholarship for many years. His efforts over many decades at this institution as a citizen of the University, as an advocate of liberal education, would be impossible to measure adequately. As my senior colleague prepares for his retirement, I congratulate him wholeheartedly, and wish him many more years of finding things and many more publications and lectures in which to share those findings with his admiring colleagues in Slavic studies.”

From LLC Secretary Amber Stephens (MA Russian, 1991)

“Henryk Baran was my graduate advisor when I came to UAlbany to start my Russian MA. I walked into his office for my first advising appointment and was greeted by the sight of papers and books all over his desk. I remember thinking “How does he manage like that?” He rummaged a minute and to my surprise, pulled out my file from the pile on his desk. We then spent more than half an hour going over my courses and plans for the degree. That was my introduction to the program. Henryk always had a pretty good idea where things were and always spent whatever time was necessary to advise his students.”

Winn’s Retirement, continued from page 11

sabbatical, they hired external consultants to learn how to deal with the increased flood of requests. Ever wondered why you saw those enormous trucks full of books heading to the library every week? That’s no longer a mystery: delivery of interlibrary loan material to Prof. Winn. Now that Prof. Winn is retiring, the big question that worries the library circulation staff and keeps them awake at night is: will Prof. Winn ever return all the books she has borrowed? If so, structural reinforcements would need to be made right away to the library building so that it can hold the additional weight. Or, will Prof. Winn intensify her borrowing, emptying the library of all books? We will let you know the answer. In the meantime, my best wishes for happy reading in retirement to Prof. Winn!”

From Ray Ortali, Professor Emeritus, French Studies:

“C’était il y a bien des années, au temps lointain où la Section de Français pouvait se payer le luxe (mais était-ce un luxe?) d’avoir non pas un, mais DEUX instructeurs pour enseigner un cours de français au niveau intermédiaire. Un cours où chacun apportait son savoir mais aussi sa personnalité, un cours où Mary Beth et moi avions une tâche difficile: persuader nos étudiants que la poésie pouvait être une belle chose, même en français! Expliquer les règles du poème du quinzième siècle que nous présentions ce jour-là et en faire sentir la beauté étaient deux choses bien différentes. Heureusement, Mary Beth avait apporté sa viole de gambe, un instrument dont elle jouait à merveille. Accompagnés par la musique qu’un compositeur du quinzième siècle avait mis sur eux, les vers du poème se mirent à chanter, et nos étudiants se mirent à applaudir. Ce jour-là, grâce à Mary Beth, nous avons probablement amené trois ou quatre étudiants de plus à la cause de la langue et de la poésie française. Deux instructeurs au lieu d’un, de la poésie, mais aussi de la musique: de l’argent bien dépensé!”
Benjamin Mielenz (BA Spanish, BA Africana Studies, 2013) was awarded a Fulbright Scholarship to work as an English teaching assistant at University of La Guajira in Colombia through May 2014. “I’m living in the city of Riohacha, the capital of La Guajira. Despite being one of the poorest areas in the nation, the people here love to dance and sing and are united in solidarity. I am impressed by the number of motivated students earning degrees in programs like Social Welfare and Environmental Engineering who are building careers in commitment to their communities, an inspiring dynamic to soak up. I spend half my week on campus conducting English workshops for English teachers, beginner and intermediate students, university staff and workers, graduate students and researchers. The other half is spent participating in a social project collaborating with a local NGO called Aguayuda (www.aguayuda.org) whose objective is to design educational workshops about the health risks associated with contaminated water and unsafe sanitation practices and will start conducting workshops soon. I am excited to participate in this project, assisting in a cultural context which is entirely new to me. I hope to set up an event where I can invite aspiring musicians, writers, and artists to participate in an “open mic night” focused on cultural exchange and second language acquisition.” Following the Fulbright, Mielenz intends to enroll in a Spanish graduate studies program.

Megan Ollendyke (MA French Studies, 2010) “Post-graduation I wanted to do something other than teach, what everyone assumes you do with a language degree. I had applied to “French speaking” positions all over the country, filling out over a dozen government job applications when I was selected to work with the Air Force Research Institute. Remarkably I never interviewed for my position as Editorial Assistant for the Air & Space Power Journal – Africa & Francophonie edition. To expedite hiring I was chosen based on my LinkedIn profile and online presence. Within a week I accepted the position and with my boyfriend, moved from Albany to Montgomery, AL. My advice for today’s language majors would be to focus on your online presence, be persistent, and never stop learning. There were times when I felt defeated, like nothing was going my way professionally, but I kept pushing, knowing that persistence pays off. I have adjusted nicely to the south with its warm weather and warm people and recently became engaged to the boyfriend who took this risk with me. We will be married this spring.”

Commencement 2013 continued from page 2

year. Although I knew that maintaining my biology major along with my interdisciplinary major in French and linguistics studies would be tough, I was determined to do it! For most of my undergraduate career, I could never really pinpoint the exact reason why I had loved learning French and just about learning languages in general. My passion had always been in the sciences and finding my way into the humanities was something that I would never have expected at the beginning of my studies. But after having added my double major, I soon came to realize how scientific language truly is. The cognitive processes that are taking place right now just for me to formulate a meaningful thought composed in a meaningful sentence using proper grammatical rules AND the cognitive processes involved in you understanding my formulation and to perhaps make your own response is immensely complex, especially given the speed at which all of these processes are occurring. In a world where the humanities often go underappreciated and where majors in the classics and a set of defined languages are programmed for deactivation in a public liberal arts university setting, I can definitely stand here and say that without a doubt, I would not be who I am today if it were not for the humanities. Education in languages, literatures, and cultures has the powerful ability to open up doors for us all over the world. They allow us to communicate and share ideas with individuals in our vastly growing global economy and they broaden our perspectives on the real world, while giving us a sense of the diversity that exists among humanity. The degree that we have earned here today only attests to that. And while I stand here on both ends of the science and humanities spectrum, I extend to my colleagues the humble advice to never underestimate the education that we’ve been blessed here with today, to never doubt in your abilities, and to always pursue what you love, even if it just doesn’t make any sense to you at the moment. President Barack Obama once said “The future belongs to young people with an education and the imagination to create.” So go out there, use your education and creative imagination, and let the future be yours! Thank you.
Olivia Krolik (BA Spanish/Criminal Justice, 2012) tells how her study abroad experience enriched her life after graduation. “Travel makes you see life from a different perspective and allows you to truly find yourself.” I began my studies at SUNY Albany in 2008. Back then I had no idea where I wanted to end up in life, what major I wanted to pursue, or who I wanted to become. Five years ago, I never would have imagined that I would be living in Spain, studying in Valencia, and it was by far the best decision I had made not only in college, but also in my life! I lived with a host family who only spoke Spanish which forced me to practice the language on a daily basis and I had the opportunity to experience the Spanish culture and way of life. I also did a great deal of traveling in the four months of being abroad.

I cannot describe what exactly made me enjoy Spain so much; whether it was the people, my friends, my teachers, the language, the atmosphere, the culture or the travel. I fell in love with Spain. When I returned to the United States all I wanted to do was go back. It was all I ever thought about. I quickly changed my major to Spanish (another great decision). I had always questioned who I wanted to become and what I wanted to do after college. I never figured it out, but I knew I could not let this language go to waste: I had to keep studying it and practicing. I knew I could put it to great use, whether it was as a teacher or working for a company using the language.

I applied to various programs to teach English or study in Spain and, with the help of various teachers and per the suggestion of Professor Lotfi Sayahi, I got accepted into the Instituto Franklin Teach and Learn Program at the University of Alcala in Spain, a scholarship offered by the University of Alcala in Madrid exclusively for North American graduates to work on a one-year Master’s Degree. In addition to completing an MA (I am studying the Learning and Teaching of Spanish as a Foreign Language), you are placed in an elementary school in Madrid, where you teach English and receive a stipend for living expenses.

I had to find my own apartment, set up bank accounts, pay my bills, find my way around the city and commute over 2 hours a day to work and then go to class. These are typical everyday activities, however having to accomplish them on your own, in another language and in another country can be challenging. I am excited to see what this year has in store for me. The MA program and having to teach English (which is something new to me) will be challenging. Although every day is a new challenge, it is one I know I can overcome, especially since I am living my dream!”

Michael Wilk (BA French, 2007) is living and working in Washington, DC as an Immigration Coordinator for a large immigration law practice. Dealing primarily with employment-based immigration (H1B, L-1, TN, and E visas) and permanent employment cases, he also works with family-based cases, asylum cases, and does pro bono work. “I’ve been working in immigration law for over three years now. I don’t speak too much French here as the majority of my clients these days are from India, but one client has a large French presence, so I still deal heavily in French documents and I often translate documents for myself and colleagues in preparation for submission to US Citizenship & Immigration Services (formerly INS). I’ve picked up more Spanish proficiency over the past few years and I speak and write in Spanish fairly often as well. My colleagues are fluent in Russian, Korean, Mandarin, and German, to name a few. We are frequently called upon by attorneys from other practice groups to lend our language skills to cases in corporate law, wealth management, trusts and estates, family law, real estate. The job can be stressful at times and the hours are LONG, but the ability to help people (especially pro bono and asylum cases) is encouraging and rewarding. As a field, immigration law is vast and constantly changing; every day presents a new challenge.”
As a Linguistics major, Crystal Tapia (Linguistics and Theater BA, 2010) took classes in LLC and got to know our Spanish faculty with whom she has kept in touch with since graduating. While studying abroad and teaching English in Istanbul, Turkey (2009, 2011) she quickly discovered that she was happiest working in an international setting. Since graduation she has pursued a career in international education and successfully found work with the EF International Language Schools (2010-2011). She helped establish the English summer language program and the New York City campus of LAL Language Centers, USA (2011-2012). She is currently working at Rennert International in New York City where she coordinates information between the school and the US Citizenship and Immigration Services office. She also helps to maintain government records of students who come to the US on an F-1 visa. “I meet people from all over the world everyday while working in the heart of New York City! I’m very grateful for this opportunity and for the preparation I received at UAlbany. I look forward to staying in this field and moving into the university setting where I can help students and encourage others to study abroad and see the world.”

Deanna Cote (BA Spanish and Linguistics, 2011) was unsure if she wanted to continue studying for her master’s or try finding a job with her bachelor’s degree, she took a short break from academia working odd jobs. She had previously studied abroad in Spain and had always wanted to go back. With the help and advice of Professor Sayahi as well as friends who had previously participated in the program, she found the Ambassador’s Program funded by the government of Spain and returned to Spain. The program brings native English speakers to Spain to help students in the classroom with pronunciation and understanding the culture. It seemed like the perfect opportunity for someone considering teaching English as a career. “I worked in a school that is a combination primary and secondary school. This program helped me to see that I enjoy teaching and might like to pursue it in the future. I became very attached to many of the children there. I would recommend this program to anyone. It was a great experience.”

Betsaida Reyes (MA Spanish, 2011) is the new assistant librarian for Spanish, Portuguese, Latin American and Caribbean Studies at the University of Kansas in Lawrence. She is responsible for the existing collection and for the acquisition of new materials. She teaches information literacy classes in related subjects, creates library guides and assists faculty and students with their research.

Since finishing his master’s in Spanish at UAlbany (2007) Greg Jabaut has worked in a variety of different roles in education. Initially he continued to lecture in LLC after graduation, teaching intermediate and Business and Legal Spanish while also becoming a full time middle school Spanish teacher at the Brown School, a small, progressive independent school in Schenectady, NY. In January of 2010, he was promoted to Assistant Head of School, and for nearly three years worked to secure statewide accreditation, develop curriculum, and grow student enrollment at Brown. Last summer, he transitioned back into the world of higher education and now works as the Assistant Director of International Programs at Siena College. “At Siena, I advise students on exciting study abroad offerings in more than 50 countries on six continents, develop new study abroad sites and partnerships around the world, and help to facilitate new international exchange programs. My time as a student in LLC was truly invaluable; the linguistic, intercultural, writing and speaking skills I cultivated at UAlbany have served me incredibly well in my career.”

Students who study other languages and cultures, in an environment as collegial and collaborative as LLC, are at a distinct advantage after graduation. They have the interpersonal/intercultural skills that translate into success in almost any field in any corner of the globe!”

- Greg Jabaut

Calling all alumni!

We love hearing from you - where you are now, what you’re doing with your language degree, if your work has taken you abroad, if you’re in a position to help new language graduates find jobs, etc. And, if you’re in touch with other alumni, encourage them to email us too. If they don’t get the newsletter and would like to, we would be happy to send it to them. Email us at language@albany.edu
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