



Department of History

# THE OWL



Volume 7 Spring 2016

## Words of Welcome

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Welcome to the seventh issue of *The Owl*, the newsletter of the Department of History at Wilfrid Laurier University. Thank you to all those who have contacted us in response to our previous issues, and please keep those letters and e-mails coming in. We especially love to hear from our former students.

Did you know that some owl species have asymmetrical ears (different sizes and shapes on each side) so they can better hear and locate prey in the dark?

## Alumnus Update: History's Gone Digital

Laurier's History Department is home to the Faculty of Arts' new Applied Digital Option, which was launched in 2014. This 4-credit program includes courses from Computer Science, English, Communications Studies, Film Studies, Political Science, History, Geography and other major programs. At its core are three Digital Humanities courses taught out of the History Department: DH100 (Digital Creativity), DH200 (Digital Narratives), and DH300 (Digital Editing and Publishing).

Because the Digital program has only been available for two years, no one has graduated with this Option yet. But we already have a good sense of how students will benefit from this program based on the experiences of one of our former students, **Brendan O'Driscoll**, who received his Honours BA in History from Laurier in 2013.

As a History major concentrating on Canadian Military History, Brendan

was awarded a Cleghorn Canadian History Scholarship (\$2,205.79) in 2011, worked from 2011 to 2013 as a Research and Administrative Associate at the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies (LCMSDS), and presented papers at three Tri-University Undergraduate History Conferences (2011-13).

After graduating from Laurier, he continued his studies in the MA History program at McGill University, with the support of a Canada Graduate Scholarship (\$17,500) from the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada.

After he completed his MA at McGill, Brendan returned to resume his role as an Associate at the LCMSDS and also found employment with the City of Waterloo. He is currently pursuing a Certificate in Professional Writing from the University of Calgary.

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In the following account, Brendan shares his experiences at Laurier and his career development, which is especially relevant to digital humanities:

*It may appear odd at first, to find a history graduate at work in digital documentation, but the path from term paper to PDF is more straightforward than you might think. In a world that's becoming increasingly digital, the opportunities for history graduates to become involved in the creation, management and presentation of information are continually growing. Through programs like the Digital History Option at Laurier, students are encouraged to combine already-valuable research and communications skills with the technical know-how to make their degree all the more practical, transferable and appealing to future employers. Even beyond history-specific careers, "going digital" opens an expansive and exciting field of professional options that at the moment is difficult to fully quantify.*

*Although there was no formal digital program at Laurier back in 2012, my professors provided me and many of my fellow students with unique opportunities that highlight many of the benefits now available to students through the Applied Digital Option. For two years I supervised and participated in a project to digitize 130,000 aerial photographs taken during the Second World War at the LCMSDS. More than just a chance to gain hands-on experience with material*

*relevant to my research interests, the project opened a window onto the potential for combining history with digital media. The photographs are now part of an online collection freely available to the public and have been used by researchers and environmental agencies in Germany, Russia, France and the UK. The project also provided me with valuable work experience related to records management, archival preservation, and the curation of digital content. It has been paying me dividends ever since.*

*In 2015, I re-purposed my experience in handling digital records at Laurier to help develop an electronic database of residential building files for the City of Waterloo. It was the tangible experience in digitization that helped to kick-start my professional life with municipal government and the public sector. Building on that opportunity, I'm now working towards a career in technical writing, a position that combines the solid foundation of an arts education with the ability to communicate information digitally. I can only credit my beginnings at Laurier and the chance to study the past through contemporary mediums with the type of career*

*opportunities that I'm now beginning to build for myself.*

*I stumbled into digital history somewhat accidentally, but current students now have the chance to choose it for themselves. Familiarizing students with technical and digital resources only serves to enhance the flexibility of their education and the potential to customize their degree around skills that are both tangible and increasingly in demand. Given the emphasis on innovation and the start-up culture now present in Waterloo Region, it's never been a better time to intersect the fundamentals of an arts education with current technological development. Digitization, moreover, is only one potential option. The fields of videography, digital publishing, content management, and data analysis are ripe with opportunity. That's the beauty of digital history—it's open to creativity. Students can take it in any direction they want.*

Congratulations, Brendan, on all your achievements and best wishes for your continuing success in the future. And many thanks also for sharing your insights and experiences with readers of *The Owl!*



## Student Research Assistants in History

*The Department congratulates three of its faculty members who recently received an internal or major external research grant that enabled them to hire Laurier students as research assistants to help them with their projects.*

**Dr Amy Milne-Smith** received a SSHRC Insight Development Grant in 2015 (\$64,752) for her project “Ripper’s Whitechapel: the Digital Humanities and Perceptions of Space in late-Victorian England.” In the first year of this 2-year grant, two undergraduate students, **Ryan Orr** and **Darren Leung**, worked as research assistants on this project, collecting data on crime, poverty, and prostitution from Victorian newspapers.

**Dr Chris Nighman** was awarded a WLU Category A Research Grant in 2015 (\$10,830) for the “Digital *Liber pharetrae* Project,” which was

primarily used to pay an undergraduate Medieval Studies major, **Veronica Parkes**, and an MA History student, **Aaron Bolarinho**, who worked on his Open Access revised edition of the Pseudo-Bonaventure *Liber pharetrae*, a 13th-century collection of authoritative Latin quotations (<http://web.wlu.ca/history/cnighman/LP/index.html>).

**Dr David Monod’s** SSHRC Insight Grant, “Vaudeville modernism: popular entertainment and cultural transformation” (\$143,917), employed eleven student research assistants in the first year of this major four-year grant (2015-19). The research funding is to be primarily used to develop a database of reviews of vaudeville performances drawn from contemporary newspapers and archival sources for an Open Access website: <http://vaudevilleamerica.org>.

The MA students employed in 2015-16 were **Taylor Surnam**, **Eliza Richardson**, **Caitlin Mulrone**, and **Billy Armstrong**. The undergraduate research assistants included **Jordan Roberts**, **Hannah Hancock**, **Erica Parnis**, **Madeleine Howard**, **Ellie Smith**, **Jon Kim**, and **Theodora Tsigas**.

During the 2015 Fall term Reading Week, seven of these students visited New York City with Dr. Monod for a week of archival research, though there was also plenty of time for historical and cultural tourism, as they visited museums, art galleries and even took in a Broadway show! This research trip included five History majors who were taking Prof Monod’s third-year course, HI380: “American Culture and Society, 1890-1950,” one of the courses in Laurier’s cross-faculty Music and Cultural History Option.

## Promotions, An Arrival, & Departures

Since the last issue of *The Owl*, four History faculty members have received tenure and promotion to the rank of Associate Professor, including **Dr Mark Humphries**, **Dr Amy Milne-Smith**, **Dr. David Smith**, and **Dr Dana Weiner**. We are also pleased to announce that two History Department faculty members have been promoted to the rank of Full Professor since *The Owl* last appeared: **Dr Judith Fletcher** and **Dr Darren Mulloy**.

Congratulations to all!

We have also welcomed **Dr Karljürgen Feuerherm** to the History Department. An expert in ancient Near Eastern civilizations, Prof Feuerherm transferred from the Department of Archeology & Classics to join Dr. Judith Fletcher in developing the History Department’s new Ancient Studies program. He has also been instrumental in developing and delivering the Department’s new Applied Digital Option, having taught the introductory course DH100 (“Digital Creativity”) over the past two years.

The department also had to bid fond farewells to two long-serving faculty colleagues who have retired since the last issue of *The Owl*: **Dr John Laband** and **Dr Erich Haberer**, both of whom are continuing their affiliation with the department as Professors Emeriti.

Finally, we will all miss **Cindi Wieg** as she begins her well-deserved retirement, having served as History’s Senior Administrative Assistant since 2011. Best wishes for the future and many thanks, Cindi!

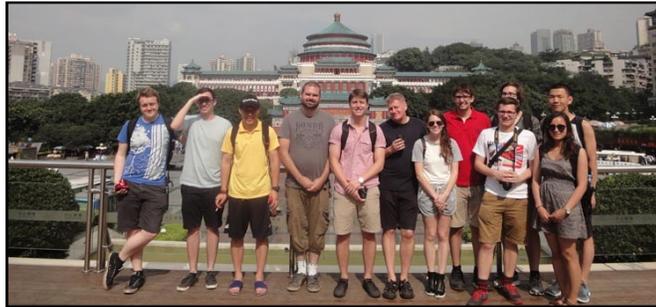
## History Travel Courses

In recent years Laurier History students have enjoyed increasing opportunities to enhance their study of the past through experiential learning via travel.

For well over a decade, hundreds of History students and alumni have gone to France and Belgium on War and Memory Battlefield Tours hosted by the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies (LCMSDS), led by **Prof Terry Copp** (retired), **Dr Roger Sarty**, and affiliated faculty from the University of Waterloo, the Royal Military College, and elsewhere.

We have also offered a number of summer travel courses for credit. For example, in 2011 **Dr Len Friesen** took 15 students in his senior seminar (HI411) to Russia, and in 2014 **Dr Blaine Chiasson** led 10 students in his third-year course (HI399) to China and Taiwan (*see photo above*). As this issue of *The Owl* goes to press, we have two travel courses currently underway: **Dr Mark Humphries** is leading 12 students in HI288 to key sites for Canadian military history in Belgium and France; and **Dr Gavin Brockett** is taking 12 students to Israel/Palestine for a second-year course.

Looking ahead to Spring and Summer of 2017, **Dr Eva Plach** is developing a new travel course entitled “Poland, World War II, and the Holocaust,” with visits planned to Auschwitz and the Schindler Museum in Krakow, among other sites. **Dr Chris Nighman** is preparing a new travel course on War and Memory in Medieval England that will focus on the Wars of the



Dr. Chiasson's class in Chongqing, China, 2014

Roses (1454-85), including visits to various battlefield sites, memorials, and museums.

Another mode of student travel courses is available through Laurier's Residence Learning Community (RLC) program. This year the History Department hosted its second RLC, on the subject of the history of piracy. Under this program, 25 first-year History majors lived in a common dormitory during the year and participated in various social events organized around the theme of piracy (nothing illegal or violent, of course!), and then took HI127: “Pirates! A World History” with **Dr Jeff Grischow** in Winter term. The conclusion of this year's History RLC program is a second-year travel course (HI299) to Puerto Rico on the History of Piracy and Slavery in the Caribbean, taught by Dr Grischow with the assistance of **Dr Dana Weiner**, an expert on the history of slavery. This course is already underway during the current 6-week Intersession term (May to mid-June), and the travel portion of the course will take place soon. While they are in Puerto Rico the 18 students who are enrolled in this travel course (plus the RLC residence don) will visit historical sites and

museums in San Juan and elsewhere on the island that are relevant to piracy and the slave economy during the age of the Spanish Empire.

This year's RLC has proved to be so popular with our students and faculty that we are planning to repeat the History of Piracy theme for our RLC in 2016/17. For the following year, however, it is expected that the History Department's Ancient Studies Program will be teaming up with the Medieval and Medievalism Studies Program to offer an RLC on Ancient Rome and Early Medieval England, culminating in a travel course to England that will include Roman sites like Bath and Hadrian's Wall, and Anglo-Saxon sites such as Sutton Hoo and Offa's Dyke, as well as the British Museum in London and several regional museums.

Of course, there have also been History travel opportunities available in Canada and the US, such as **Dr David Monod's** research trip to New York (*see the “Student Research Assistants” story on pg. 3*). The History Students' Association (HSA) has also organized trips to Quebec City, Chicago and Washington DC in recent years.

## 2016 History Teachers' Conference

This year's annual History Teachers' Conference was held on Friday, April 22, in the Senate and Board Chamber. The conference opened with welcoming remarks offered by **Dr Richard Nemesvari**, Dean of Laurier's Faculty of Arts.

While the audience enjoyed a light luncheon, they heard excellent presentations on Digital History from two PhD students in the History Department: **Trevor Ford**, Manager of the Laurier Centre for Military, Strategic and Disarmament Studies (LCMSDS), and **Matt Wiseman**, Website and Outreach Manager at the LCMSDS.

The first faculty talk, entitled "The Truth and Reconciliation Commission and Teaching Indigenous History," was presented by **Dr Susan Neylan**, a Canadianist in the History Department specializing in the history of indigenous peoples in British Columbia. Her presentation treated the difficulties and opportunities involved in teaching students

about the tragic history of the Canadian residential schools of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century.

The second faculty presentation, entitled "New Directions in the First World War," was delivered by **Dr Mark Humphries**, director of the LCMSDS, who explained his current research on those Canadian and British soldiers in the First World War who intentionally wounded themselves in order to escape the dangers of the front lines.

Following a coffee break, award-winning public historian **Sarah Wise** delivered the Keynote Address: "A Disgrace to the Christian World?": Annie Macpherson and the British 'Home Child.'"

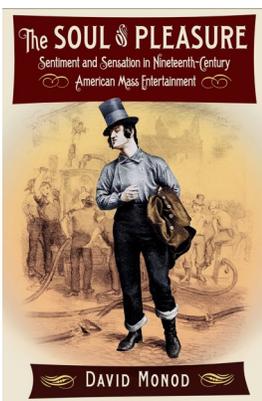
Sarah's books include *The Italian Boy: Murder and Grave Robbery in 1830s London*, (Metropolitan, 2004) which was shortlisted for the 2005 Samuel Johnson Prize for Non-Fiction and won the Crime Writers' Association Gold Dagger Award for Non-Fiction; *The Blackest Streets: The Life and Death of a Victorian Slum* (Vintage, 2009),

which was shortlisted for the Royal Society of Literature's Ondaatje Prize; and most recently, *Inconvenient People: Lunacy, Liberty and the Mad-Doctors in Victorian England* (Vintage, 2012).

Sarah detailed the story of the approximately 100,000 young people sent from the UK to Canada from the 19th century to the late 1930s to work in rural areas desperate for labour. These orphaned, or simply very poor children, were sent by churches and philanthropic organizations to the colonies in the hope of a better life. However, the benevolent mission work meant a life of hard farm labour and domestic service at best, and at worse, a life of abuse and neglect.

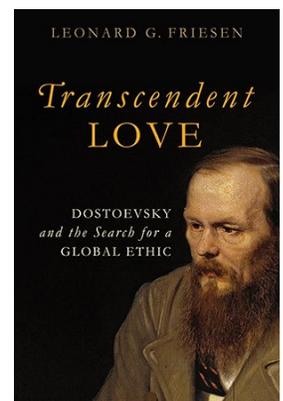
With a highly engaged and appreciative audience of about 70 visiting high school History teachers as well as Laurier students, faculty and staff, this year's Conference was a great success, thanks to the speakers and the organizers: **Dr. Mark Humphries**, **Matt Baker** of the LCMSDS, and **Cindi Wieg**.

## New Books Hot off the Press!



Laurier's History Department faculty are highly productive scholars, collectively publishing dozens of journal articles, book chapters, online academic resources, scholarly editions, and book reviews every year, as well as academic books.

Just as this issue of *The Owl* was nearing completion, we learned that two members of the Department have just had new books published with prestigious university presses. The Department offers its congratulations to **Dr Len Friesen** and **Dr David Monod** on their latest contributions to their respective fields!



## The HSA 2015/16 Executive



Back Row (left to right): Brad Mclean, Braeden Suggitt, Victoria Rutherford, Brenden Noble & Cameron Baer

Front Row (left to right): Michael Tepper, Eric Vero, Stephanie Plante & Rishi Shringi

# The History Students' Association

*Report from the 2015/16  
President of the HSA, Eric Vero:*

I've been with the History Students' Association for the past five years. I've had the pleasure of being the President for two years now. The executive and I created engaging events for the History undergrad community. These events relate to our academic interests in both fun and intellectually stimulating ways. In our minds, a rich extra-curricular student life enriches one's overall university experience. We aim to provide something that benefits the entire undergrad History community.

Our first event was a general members meeting, in which we held elections for our year reps. It was one of our most popular events. We filled an entire room of general members and interested newcomers. Students from all disciplines, and not just History, were present. Here, we introduced the executive and

what our plans were for the year. Two first-years, one second-year, and one upper-year rep were elected. Overall, it was a successful event that reached out to the university community.

Throughout the fall semester, we held events of a social and academic nature. In September, we hosted our annual Meet the Profs night in Wilf's, our on-campus restaurant. Students got a chance to talk with professors in an informal setting. Many first-years came out to the event, and built a rapport with their new professors. Late in October, we held a trivia night that posed general history questions to enthusiastic players.

As per tradition, we hosted a Remembrance Day ceremony in the campus' concourse. **Dr. Mark Humphries** from the History Department and the Laurier Centre for Military Strategic and Disarmament Studies spoke on behalf of the Department. Towards the end of

the semester we hosted a Vietnam themed movie night, and a general member social night at Wilf's.

We began the winter semester with a board game night in conjunction with the on-campus gaming club, Kult of Gaming. Both of the clubs worked to bring together our two extra-curricular communities. At the end of February, we hosted a *Braveheart* screening.

**Professor Alicia McKenzie** gave a lecture concerning the film's historicity and legacy.

In March, we hosted our annual Tri-University Undergraduate History Conference. Students presented their upper-year papers on panels with a moderator. This gave presenters valuable academic experience for future academic conferences. The keynote speaker was **Professor McKenzie**, who responded to current political commentators who incorrectly

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compare today's migrant crisis with that of Ancient Rome in the 4th and 5th centuries. Towards the end of February, we hosted a dinner where students were able to sit down for a meal with their professors, allowing them to engage at a more personal level.

It's been a very busy semester, and we have been pleased to provide events that engage our peers. In providing a rich extra-curricular community for

History students, we hope to have extended and deepened their university experience.

*Braeden Suggitt, incoming HSA President for 2016/17, added a few words to Eric's report:*

When I arrived at Laurier, I never expected to be president of the HSA only two years later. I value the experiences I have had and will push myself and my exec team achieve the goals we set for next year. We have many experienced members on the

HSA executive and have big plans for the coming year. We plan to continue with events that were successful in the past, and also introduce new events and campaigns, such as co-hosting events with other clubs.

I am looking forward to a great year and I hope that my fellow students in the History department will continue their involvement with the HSA, and that faculty will continue to give their support.

## 2015 and 2016 Teaching Award Winners in History!

On the nomination of the History Department and the Medieval Studies Program, **Professor Alicia McKenzie** has won this year's Teaching Excellence Award in Innovation for Contract Academic Faculty. Specializing in Late Antiquity and Early Medieval Europe, Alicia has taught many different courses for Medieval Studies and History since 2009, including courses in the new Ancient Studies program and the new Digital Studies Option. This year's Faculty of Arts Teaching Scholar Award was **Dr Kevin Spooner**, a expert in Canadian foreign policy in the 20th century, especially with regards to Africa, who is cross-appointed between History and North American Studies. In 2015 **Dr David Smith**, our Early Modern British historian who focuses on law and economic thought, won the Faculty of Arts Teaching Scholar Award, and **Dr Gavin Brockett**, a historian of the late Ottoman Empire and Modern Turkey who is cross-appointed to Religion and Culture, was named as one of three Laurier Teaching Fellows. Congratulations to Alicia, Kevin, David and Gavin for these well-deserved awards in recognition of their commitment to excellent teaching!

## History Alumni on Staff at Laurier

A number of Laurier graduates have built upon the skills and knowledge they gained from studying History to develop careers as administrative and support staff at Laurier. Here's an update on two former History students currently working here:

**Dillon Moore** earned an Honours BA in History and English from Laurier in 2004, and then taught English in Japan for two years before going on to the University of Western Ontario to pursue a Master of Library and Information Science degree, completed in 2008. He then returned to Waterloo where

he worked as Collections Librarian and Acting Manager of Library Services for one year at the Centre for International Governance Innovation (CIGI). An expert in Digital Information Technology, Dillon was hired in 2011 by the Laurier University Library to the position of Web Initiatives Librarian, and in 2014 he was promoted to Head of Library Digital Initiatives.

After completing her Honours BA in History and Native Studies at Trent University in 2009, **Meghan Horton** came to Laurier to pursue an MA in the Tri-University History

Graduate Program. Specializing in US history, she took seminars from **Dr Darren Mulloy**, **Dr Dana Weiner**, **Dr Cindy Comacchio**, and two historians at the University of Waterloo. She also worked as a Teaching Assistant in courses on German History, the Impact of World War II, and Canadian History. After graduating in 2011, Meghan worked for a year as a Program Assistant at Conestoga College before returning to Laurier in 2012 when she was hired as the Admissions and Administrative Assistant in the Office of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies.

## Current Full-Time Faculty

*The History Department (including the Ancient Studies Program) currently has 20 full-time permanent professors, and three who are cross-appointed to other departments or programs:*

**Dr Gavin Brockett**, Associate Professor & Associate Dean of Arts for Student Affairs (cross-appointed to Religion & Culture): Middle East & Islamic History, Modern Turkey

**Dr Blaine Chiasson**, Associate Professor: Modern China, Sino-Russian relations

**Dr Cynthia Comacchio**, Professor: Canadian History; Gender, Family & Class; Health Care

**Dr Adam Crerar**, Associate Professor & Director of the Tri-University Graduate Program: 20th-Century Canada, Rural Ontario

**Dr Darryl Dee**, Associate Professor: Early Modern France, Early Modern Europe

**Dr Judith Fletcher**, Professor: Ancient Greece & Rome; Gender, Law & Culture

**Dr Leonard Friesen**, Associate Professor: Russia & the Soviet Union, Global Ethics

**Dr Karljürgen Feuerherm**, Associate Professor: Ancient Near East, Digital Humanities

**Dr Jeff Grischow**, Associate Professor & History Undergraduate Advisor: Africa (especially Ghana), World History, Comparative Development

**Dr Mark Humphries**, Associate Professor & Director of the LCMSDS: Canadian Military History

**Dr Amy Milne-Smith**, Associate Professor: 19th-century British Social History, British Empire

**Dr David Monod**, Professor, Modern American Cultural & Social History

**Dr Darren Mulloy**, Professor & Chair of History: Post-1945 U.S. history, Political Extremism

**Dr Susan Neylan**, Associate Professor & Graduate Officer: Canadian Indigenous Peoples, Cultural History

**Dr Chris L. Nighman**, Associate Professor & Co-ordinator of Medieval & Medievalism Studies: Medieval & Renaissance Europe, Digital Humanities



The Tri-University Graduate Program in History combines the faculty and resources of three of Canada's premier universities. Since 1994 our program has been educating students in innovative ways while providing them with a solid grounding in traditional historical methods.

The Tri-University program integrates the scholarship and experience of over sixty graduate faculty, making it one of the biggest graduate history programs in the country. Some 150 History graduate students are currently enrolled in the program and each year we accept up to 20 new Doctoral students and 60 new Master's students. Because of its impressive size and scope and because of student mobility among the three campuses, we are able to provide courses and supervise research in the widest possible range of areas.

For more information, please visit: [www.triuhistory.ca](http://www.triuhistory.ca)

**Dr Eva Plach**, Associate Professor: Modern Europe, Poland, Women's History

**Dr Roger Sarty**, Professor: Canadian Naval History, Canadian Military History

**Dr Michael Sibalis**, Professor: Modern Europe, French Revolution & Napoleon, History of Sexuality

**Dr David Smith**, Associate Professor: Early Modern Britain, Law & Society, Europe & the New World

**Dr Kevin Spooner**, Associate Professor (cross-appointed to North American Studies): 20th-century Canadian Foreign Policy

**Dr George Urbaniak**, Associate Professor: 20th-century International Relations

**Dr Dana Weiner**, Associate Professor: Pre-1877 US; Women's, Gender & African-American History

**Dr Suzanne Zeller**, Professor: Canadian History, Science in Victorian Culture & Society

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