

SCHOOL OF LITERATURES CULTURES AND LINGUISTICS

A NEWSLETTER COVERING THE
DEPARTMENT OF THE CLASSICS
PROGRAM IN COMPARATIVE AND WORLD LITERATURE
DEPARTMENT OF EAST ASIAN LANGUAGES AND CULTURES
DEPARTMENT OF FRENCH
DEPARTMENT OF GERMANIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES
DEPARTMENT OF LINGUISTICS
DEPARTMENT OF RELIGION
DEPARTMENT OF SLAVIC LANGUAGES AND LITERATURES
DEPARTMENT OF SPANISH, ITALIAN, AND PORTUGUESE
AND CENTER FOR TRANSLATION STUDIES

SUMMER 2014

SLCL RECEIVES \$100,000 BEQUEST IN HONOR OF PROFESSOR TALBOT TO SUPPORT STUDENTS IN ROMANCE LANGUAGES

Two Illinois graduates have made a \$100,000 bequest to support undergraduate students studying Romance languages while honoring a revered faculty member from the University of Illinois Department of French.

In December, Michael and Camille VandeBerg finalized an estate gift of \$100,000 to support the initiative, which was given in honor of Emeritus Professor Emile Talbot (1941-2014), who passed away on March 22 this year.

The fund will be used to provide scholarships to undergraduate students who are enrolled in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences and who have declared a major, a secondary major, or a minor in a Romance language.

Recipients must demonstrate outstanding academic merit and have financial need, and the director of the School of Literatures, Cultures, and Linguistics or designee will determine the recipients, amounts, and timing of the scholarships to be awarded. Those students so honored will be known as recipients of the "Professor Emeritus Emile Talbot Scholarship."

Camille VandeBerg received her BA

('76), MA ('78), and PhD ('84) in French from Illinois. Michael (Mick) VandeBerg received a BA ('71) in history, an MA ('78) in teaching of English as a second language, and a PhD ('84) in comparative literature.



Professor Talbot received his MA and PhD from Brown University, joined the Illinois faculty in 1967 and retired in 2003 after a long and distinguished career as a renowned scholar of Québec literature and French literature of the 19th and early 20th century.

In announcing the fund, the VandeBergs shared what Professor Talbot meant to them personally: "Emile Talbot was a role model and inspiration to us, as a professor and as a human being. In the classroom he

was patient, caring, knowledgeable, and powerfully engaging. In his personal life he shouldered life's burdens with unfailing courage and grace. We loved and respected Emile for all of this, and especially for his wonderfully calm demeanor and his exemplary kindness toward everyone. It is very difficult for us to adjust to the reality that Emile, this extraordinary and loving man, is gone. We are honored to make a bequest in his memory." ✍

Gifts to the Emile J. Talbot Memorial Fund can be made online, through the mail, or by phone.

Online, go to las.illinois.edu/giving. Under Other Program Funds, write in Emile J. Talbot Memorial Fund, the amount, and click continue.

A gift can be made via mail by check made payable to UIF/Emile J. Talbot Memorial Fund. Checks can be sent to UIF, Harker Hall, 1305 W. Green St., Urbana, IL 61801.

LETTER FROM THE DIRECTOR

Give to the School

Please consider investing in the future of the School through a gift designated for either: 1) **the SLCL Annual Fund**, which helps to promote overall excellence in the school; 2) **the Douglas A. Kibbee Prize**, awarded annually to the most outstanding dissertation proposal; or 3) **SLCL departments or programs**. Your gift is most appreciated! Visit our website, slcl.illinois.edu and click "Give to SLCL" in the upper right-hand corner.

Attention, Alumni: We Want to Hear Your Stories

We want to hear from you: what do you do (job title, duties), where do you work, and how has your U of I education prepared you for your success? Please send us your story, 200 words maximum, subject heading "My alumni story" to: Rick Partin, partin@illinois.edu. You may include a photo of yourself in electronic format (.jpg or .png preferred). We'll publish select ones on our School website: slcl.illinois.edu.

Check out Our Website

We also have a new look on our School webpage, which now includes a Calendar of Events, Announcements, a Feature News section, and our own Facebook page. Please visit us online at slcl.illinois.edu to find out what's happening in SLCL!

SUMMER 2014

School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics
College of Liberal Arts and Sciences
University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign

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College of
Liberal Arts & Sciences
AT ILLINOIS



This past spring, the School of Literatures, Cultures, and Linguistics (SLCL) gathered data for a future brochure designed to highlight the achievements of our faculty, staff, and students, and to publicize our general contribution to the University of Illinois' mission over the years. This proved to be a fruitful exercise, as it reveals the extent to which the School plays a major role in advancing research in the humanities, educating students, and representing the excellence of our campus to the world. A few of the findings will illustrate this point.

Thirty-five languages, from Spanish and Mandarin Chinese to Wolof and Croatian, are currently taught in our building. We offer more than a thousand courses annually across this wide range of languages and cultures, and during the 2012-13 academic year more than 25,000 students enrolled in those courses.

Since 2009, 40% of the research grants proposed in SLCL have been awarded, for a sum total of \$4,217,775 coming from private, federal, foreign, and institutional sources—quite an accomplishment for departments in the humanities.

Over the past five years, the SLCL faculty has published some 85 books, in addition to hundreds of book chapters and journal articles. Several of our professors have received major national awards for their publications.

During the same period, more than 600 students have enrolled in the four "residential" Study Abroad Programs in Austria, France, Japan, and Spain run by SLCL departments. Five of the seven area studies centers on campus, whose goal is to promote interdisciplinary research and education programs in various geographic regions of the world, are currently directed by SLCL faculty.

Our faculty, staff, and graduate and undergraduate students routinely receive campus awards, ranging from excellence in research, teaching, and administrative service to competitive fellowships from the Graduate College.

The list goes on, and these few items are only a small sample of our school's commitment and contribution to international studies at Illinois.

I look forward to serving as the school's new director, and wish to thank Professor Marcus Keller for his help and advice as interim associate director this past semester. ✍

Jean-Philippe Mathy

FAST TRACK TO GOOGLE:

LINGUISTICS DOCTORAL GRADUATE HIRED BY GOOGLE-TAIWAN

By Rick Partin, Editor



Li-Hsin Ning
(PhD '14, linguistics)

Hiring in academia tends to be a slow process, but nobody told Li-Hsin Ning, who defended her dissertation in linguistics on February 5, on the University of Illinois campus. Two weeks later she had a job at Google-Taiwan. By mid-March she started her new job as a speech

data analyzer in Taiwan's capital city, Taipei.

In her new job, Ning, who speaks Taiwanese Mandarin, is analyzing the language, as Google wants to create a giant database for Taiwanese Mandarin. Ning's work includes analyzing lexicon, phonetics, and other linguistic aspects of the language.

The new position was a perfect fit based on her graduate education in the U of I Department of Linguistics. Ning came to the U.S. in August of 2009 to pursue a doctorate. She had already earned a master's degree in linguistics in Taiwan, and in 2012 she added an MA in linguistics from U of I.

When asked what brought her to Illinois, she said that the U of I is a well-known program. The Fulbright Institute of International Education sent her three applications, of which the U of I was one. Plus, her advisor recommended Illinois.

Chilin Shih, associate professor of linguistics and East Asian languages and cultures, first contacted Ning. By 2010 Ning was a teaching assistant for a Chinese course. She taught fourth-year Chinese Mandarin for a year and a half. She also gave some lectures for various classes in phonetics (study of speech sounds) and phonology (study of the systematic organization of sounds in languages).

By 2011 she went to work as a research assistant for Ryan Shosted, associate professor

of linguistics, and Torrey Loucks, an associate professor of speech and hearing science. Her work there led Ning to develop the idea for her dissertation, on the effects of auditory feedback. Shih, Shosted, and Loucks would all become members of her dissertation committee, along with Tania Ionin, associate professor of linguistics, and Aaron Johnson, assistant professor of speech and hearing science.

In her research, Ning studied native speakers of Mandarin, concentrating on how they are sensitive to pitch. It took her two years to complete her study, from its initial design, to collecting data, to analyzing the data.

The research was carried out in Professor Loucks's Speech and Hearing Lab. The subjects were approximately one-third native English undergraduate students, one-third students taken from Chinese classes, and one-third Mandarin speakers. In all, 76 persons took part in the research.

Along the way, Ning said that professors Loucks and Shih were particularly helpful and supportive. "Sometimes you just don't know what's wrong," she explained, adding "Subjects might be angry or upset." At such times, Ning turned to her mentors for advice, or, in the case of Shih, moral support: "She was like a mom!"

Ning added that she learned valuable computational skills from Shih, who also provided a careful reading of Ning's dissertation draft.

The dissertation was, as is usually the case for doctoral students, a long process, too. Ning spent about six months, from June of 2012 to January of 2013, writing the draft. However, unlike many doctoral students, particularly ones writing in English as a second language, she enjoyed the process. "It's like your baby: when you finish it, it's like your baby's grown up."

As she neared the completion of her dissertation this past spring, Ning applied to Google-Taiwan in January. Abbas Benmamoun, a professor of linguistics and at that time the

director of the School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics, forwarded the link for the application to Professor Shih, who in turn forwarded it to Ning.

Once Ning defended her dissertation and accepted the job, she was very happy to be returning to Taiwan, where her mother, father, and brother live. She also appreciates how supportive they've been throughout the long process of pursuing a PhD. "They said 'That's a good plan!'" she recalls, after telling them about her research. "They know I love to study."

As for the future, she says her goal is to stay in Taiwan and develop her job skills at Google via "research projects and innovation."

In regard to her time at U of I, Ning says she'll most miss the friendships she made. "People were so kind and helpful to me!" she exclaimed.

In particular, she was struck by how at the U of I, "all the professors love to collaborate between departments. Students can broaden their horizons and learn more stuff using different labs and putting together specializations."

In Ning's case, this type of collaboration was a two-way street, as friends and colleagues speak glowingly of her and her abilities.

Obviously, Google-Taiwan thought so, too. As Ning prepared to leave Illinois she remarked how fast everything was moving and how she'd miss her many friends and professors who had such a great influence on her. "I say they are 'the gift that God gave to me.'" ☺

PROFESSOR'S BOOK EXPLORES EDUCATIONAL VALUE OF RELIGION IN PUBLIC SCHOOLS

By Sharita Forrest, Education and Social Work Editor, U of I News Bureau

More than 40 years after the U.S. Supreme Court struck down sponsored prayer and scripture readings in the nation's public schools, the role of religion in education remains a sharply divisive topic in many communities.



Richard Layton, associate professor of religion and co-author of *"For the Civic Good: The Liberal Case for Teaching Religion in the Public Schools"*

A new book, *For the Civic Good: The Liberal Case for Teaching Religion in the Public Schools* (University of Michigan Press), explores the educational value, constitutionality, and liberal arguments for providing religious education in public schools.

"Religion course" and "teaching about religion" are general descriptors for four different kinds of courses—Bible history, the Bible and its influence, Bible as literature, and world religions—that authors Walter Feinberg and Richard A. Layton explore in the book. Feinberg is a professor emeritus of education policy, organization and leadership at the University of Illinois; Layton is a professor in the Department of Religion at Illinois.

Feinberg and Layton emphasize that they do not advocate curricular content that attempts to induct children into a specific religious group or that promotes an affiliation with religion in general.

However, the authors believe that academic instruction that teaches about beliefs, practices, and canonical texts of various religious traditions can be an appropriate part of the curriculum. According to the authors, religion is integral to the human experience, and religion curricula can prepare youth for civic engagement in an ethnically and religiously diverse society.

Public schools that choose to teach religion courses should teach them in a manner consistent with the analytic, interpretive, and critical skills that are associated with the humanities. Like humanities courses, religion courses can serve as catalysts for critical thinking, reflection, and personal growth, helping public schools fulfill their unique mission of constructing a democratic, informed populace.

"The aim of the humanities, from a civic standpoint, is to promote civic skills by changing the process of believing and thus preparing the ground for engaging different points of view in civically constructive ways," the authors wrote.

Fostering appreciation for different religious traditions and examination of one's own traditions opens students to the value found in a plurality of religions—and can provide transformative learning opportunities without inculcating particular beliefs, distorting the facts, or violating individuals' rights.

"At a time when different religions are playing such an important role in civic life throughout the world, citizenship and informed public participation require a greater understanding of the role religion plays in people's lives," the authors wrote.

Feinberg and Layton spent two years researching the topic, traveling "from the Bible Belt to the suburban parkway, observing classes and interviewing public school teachers involved in religion courses."

Using case studies of several schools and communities in which religion courses are taught, the authors explore the academic merits and problems associated with each curriculum. The schools and communities—located in the Midwest, the South, and along the Atlantic coast—are identified by pseudonyms in the book, as are the teachers, school officials, and community organizations affiliated with the programs.


Curricular content, depth of classroom discussions, and even the selection of instructors varied widely, and was often influenced or constrained by students', teachers', and the surrounding community's religious values as well as teachers' interpretations of their roles and fears about legal entanglements, the authors found.

"In many communities, there's a tendency to implement religion courses for their perceived value as builders of good moral character or because they satisfy the interests of some particular segment of the community," Feinberg said. "These courses tend to present the path to individual and collective development as closed, rather than developing students' interpretive, analytic, and critical skills to prepare them for membership in a constantly evolving, diverse public."

Although some schools and teachers hoped to deflect controversy by teaching the Bible as a neutral history textbook, Feinberg and Layton observed that this approach discouraged critical inquiry, silenced classroom discussion, and often focused on Christian viewpoints to the exclusion of other doctrines.

"Bible history courses were the most problematic type of courses in our sample," Layton said. "The chief difficulty of these courses is the presumption that the Bible is a history textbook that provides unmediated transmission of the historical events of Israel and the early Christian community."

Bible as literature courses were the most academically promising, if teachers and the curricula promoted active interpretation, critical reading skills, and students' awareness of multiple possibilities within their own religious traditions, the authors wrote.

The Department of Education Policy, Organization and Leadership is a unit in the College of Education at Illinois; the Department of Religion is a unit within the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences at Illinois. 

A CLASSIC SCHOLAR

GONE FOR ALMOST 70 YEARS, WILLIAM ABBOTT OLDFATHER ENDURES AT ILLINOIS

By Dave Evensen, LAS News

Almost 70 years since his untimely death, the life and influence of Professor William Abbott Oldfather is still felt in the Department of the Classics.

One day prior to World War II, a group of outdoor enthusiasts from the University of Illinois were playing softball when an angry bull burst onto the scene. As players fled before the charging beast, one of them, William Abbott Oldfather, a classics professor, picked up a bat and fought the bull like a matador, dodging its horns and landing blows as the animal barreled past. Finally, the bull fled, and the game resumed.

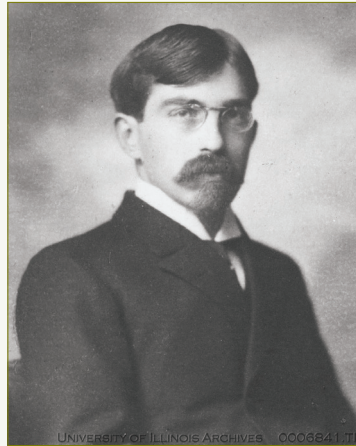
Asked later, Oldfather said the incident had been exaggerated, according to a biography by Michael Armstrong (MA '87, classics; PhD '93, classical philology). It was, he said, not a very large bull.

Such was the impression left by Oldfather during his 36 years at Illinois, before his tragic death in 1945. Various sketches portray him as a goateed, cigar-chomping, German folksong-singing star athlete with a larger-than-life personality, but most of all he was known as the greatest American classical scholar of his era, whose methods of studying literature changed the field.

Ariana Traill, head of the Department of the Classics, says that even though Oldfather has been gone almost 70 years, his presence remains in the department.

He was instrumental in acquiring the vast collection of texts in the Classics Library at Illinois, which is still recognized as one of the top three of its kind in the U.S. And his prestige and distinguished research established Illinois as a center for philological inquiry—the study of how literature and language developed—that continues today.

"His legacy certainly does continue," Traill says. "Oldfather's masterly text and translation of the philosopher Epictetus is on every faculty member's shelf and his portrait still hangs on the wall, reminding students of his connection to



William Abbott Oldfather

our program."

Born in Persia (now Iran) in 1880, to Presbyterian missionaries, Oldfather (a descendant of Daniel Boone) moved to southern Indiana as a boy. He earned degrees from Hanover College and Harvard, and he worked as an instructor in classics at Northwestern University before arriving at Illinois in 1909. Married and a father of two daughters, he remained at Illinois for the rest of his life, serving as department head in the classics from 1926-45.

Combative and opinionated, Oldfather often rubbed people the wrong way, but friends recalled that below the exterior was a sensitive and observant person. His devotion to his field was renowned. As he drove from place to place, his wife, Margaret, would sit in the passenger seat and read scholarly texts aloud.

He acquired a taste for German culture and scholarship (he would become fluent in German) that he followed for his entire career. He remained devoted to studying German scholarship even during two world wars, when it was literally unsafe to do so.

In 1917, during World War I, federal agents accused Oldfather and several colleagues of disloyalty to the United States, but at a public hearing that ultimately exonerated Oldfather, he insisted that his love was for German scholarship and not its government, according to Karl Max

Grisso's biography of former Illinois President David Kinley. Oldfather also opposed Fascism during the World War II.

Oldfather wrote hundreds of influential publications and was known to scour the countryside of Greece and Italy for his research. Other prestigious universities clamored for him to come there as a speaker or visiting professor.

"Oldfather wrote books that last," scribed William M. Calder III, professor emeritus of classics at Illinois, in *Illinois Classical Studies*. "Oldfather sensibly preferred authors off the beaten track because there were not so many manuscripts and there still was a lot to be done with the text."

According to Calder, Oldfather was also remembered for his vivid teaching style, complete with his "growling laugh" and his methods of creating independent minds and a spirit of inquiry—including a final exam for a course in ancient athletics, part of which involved participating in track and field events on the Quad.

For years, Oldfather led students and colleagues on outdoor excursions, known as the Saturday Hiker's Club. In the evening they would gather around a fire and listen to him speak. It was during one of these excursions that he fought the aforementioned bull. Tragically, however, on May 27, 1945, he was canoeing with a student near Homer, Ill., when the craft capsized. The student struggled safely to shore, but Oldfather was dragged under the surface by an undertow, and drowned.

Richard Lattimore, Oldfather's former student who went on to become a renowned classical scholar and poet, composed a poem, "Memory of a Scholar," after Oldfather's death. It's placed just below an oil painting of the professor, placed prominently in the Classics Library at Illinois.

"You, my professor, you before my face," reads the poem, in part, "unrolled the script of scholars, put in place / Traube and Vahlen, Leo, Reitzenstein, / and set the stars for all our lives to steer them by." ❧

NEWS BRIEFS

THULIN LECTURER ADDRESSES GLOBAL HINDUISM



Vasudha Narayanan, Distinguished Professor of Religion at the University of Florida, delivered the annual Marjorie Hall Thulin Lecture in Religion on April 9.

Titled "Global Hinduism," her talk viewed three main areas: Southeast Asia at the turn of the first millennium CE, the United States during the 20th and 21st centuries, and briefly, the Caribbean.

Focusing on temple architecture and performing arts, she discussed Angkor Wat and other key sites in Southeast Asia; how temples are put together in

the United States; and the significant ways in which North American Hindus "perform" their religious traditions.

Narayanan, past president of the American Academy of Religion, was educated at the Universities of Madras and Bombay in India, and at Harvard University. She is one of the leading international experts on the spread of Hinduism around the world.

The speaker is the author or editor of numerous influential books on different facets of Hindu culture and practice, including her book *Hinduism* (2004 and 2009) and the popular and widely read edited collection *Life of Hinduism* (2007).

Together with the University of Florida, Narayanan has established the nation's first Center for the Study of Hindu Traditions to encourage the research, teaching, and public understanding of Hindu culture and traditions. She was named University of Florida's Teacher Scholar of the Year in 2010.

Marjorie Hall Thulin (1910-2009), for whom the annual lecture is named, was a 1931 graduate of the University of Illinois. Through her endowment, each year an internationally known scholar of religion and contemporary culture is a resident on the Champaign-Urbana campus for several days. ☞

JEAN-PHILIPPE MATHY NAMED SLCL DIRECTOR



Jean-Philippe Mathy, professor of French, comparative and world literature, and criticism and interpretive theory, has been named the director of the School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics, effective August 16.

Mathy currently serves as the interim director of the school, a position he has held since last fall, when Professor Abbas Benmamoun left the directorship to accept a position as associate provost for faculty development at the University of Illinois.

Brian Ross, interim dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, said of the school's new director, "During his stint as interim director, Professor Mathy has been an effective and energetic advocate on behalf of the college. We look forward to working with him in the future, and to helping him advance the School of Literatures, Cultures, and Linguistics."

Mathy received a PhD from Ecole des Hautes Etudes en Sciences Sociales, Paris, in 1985. He joined the U of I in 1988, and previously served as head of the Department of French and director of the Program in Comparative and World Literature. ☞

NIKELLY LECTURER ADDRESSES 20TH-CENTURY MODERN GREEK MUSIC



The U of I Modern Greek Studies Program presented the second annual Dr. Arthur G. Nikelly Lecture on April 7.

Professor Gail Holst-Warhaft of Cornell University spoke on the topic "Apologia for 20th-Century Modern Greek Music."

In her lecture Holst-Warhaft focused mostly on 20th-century popular music: from the rich tradition of folksong, to the urban Rembetika and the "art" of songs of Theodorakis and Hatzidakis, and the marriage of that music with poetry. She argued

that despite the fact that 20th-century Greek poetry tends to dominate the discussion when we think of the achievements of Modern Greece—partly because two Greek poets won the Nobel Prize—in fact, it is the combination of music and poetry that is Greece's most enduring contribution to world culture.

Holst-Warhaft works in the Departments of Classics, Comparative Literature, and Near Eastern Studies at Cornell. She is also director of the Mediterranean Studies Initiative and faculty associate of the Cornell Center for a Sustainable Future.

She is also a poet, translator, musician, writer, journalist, and broadcaster.

The annual lecture was established last year in honor of the memory of the late Dr. Arthur G. Nikelly, a clinical psychologist and associate professor of health sciences who began his career at the U of I in 1959. ☞

LINGUISTICS PROFESSORS FRED DAVIDSON AND WAYNE DICKERSON RETIRE



Professors Fred Davidson (far left) and **Wayne Dickerson** (third from left) are pictured cutting the cake at a standing-room-only reception held on campus on April 30 to mark their respective retirements from the Department of Linguistics at the U of I. Also pictured is Professor Dickerson's wife, Lana, and James Yoon, professor and head of linguistics.

Professor Dickerson joined the U of I faculty in 1971. He established the Online Program in Linguistics, and previously served as the Director of the MATESL Graduate Program. He also received the Campus Award for Excellence in Graduate and Professional Training. He is the author of three books, two sets of recordings accompanying two pronunciation textbooks, and 57 articles/reviews/encyclopedia entries.

Professor Davidson joined the U of I faculty in 1990. An expert in language testing, he has edited/authored/ or coauthored five books, has given 16 major plenary lectures, and has published more than 70 articles/book chapters/reviews/ or technical reports. He has received 16 grants or contracts with a total worth of more than \$1 million, and has conducted workshops around the globe. ☞

SLATE ANNOUNCES NEW GRADUATE CONCENTRATION



Second Language Acquisition and Teacher Education (SLATE) has announced a new graduate concentration available to students in any of the 13 affiliated PhD programs at the U of I.

These programs include: anthropology, communication, curriculum and instruction, East Asian languages and cultures, educational psychology, French, German, Italian, linguistics, Portuguese, psychology, Spanish, and speech and hearing science.

Only PhD students are eligible for SLATE certification; they can earn their PhD in their home department and receive the SLATE designation on their transcript upon successful completion of the requirements.

The SLATE designation qualifies candidates for a wider range of positions than their PhD alone. SLATE is recognized around the world thanks to its faculty and alumni, and boasts a 100% placement rate in the year following graduation. Most graduates secure tenure- or non-tenure- track positions at colleges and universities across the U.S. and abroad.

The director of SLATE is **Melissa Bowles**, associate professor of Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese. To learn more about the program, visit: slate.illinois.edu.

SLCL STUDENTS WIN ESSAY PRIZES AND SCHOLARSHIP FOR LANGUAGE STUDY

SLCL students won both the graduate and undergraduate categories in the 2014 Yaro Skalník Prize for the Best Student Essay, sponsored by the U of I Russian, East European, and Eurasian Center. **Marina Filipovic**, Slavic languages and literatures, won the Graduate Student category. **Matt McWilliams**, comparative and world literature, garnered the prize in the Undergraduate Student category.

Sarah West, a graduate student in Spanish, Italian, and Portuguese, won the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities (IPRH) Graduate

Student Prize for her publication, "A Neoliberal Love Spell, Race, Tourism and the Yucatan Peninsula, An Analysis of Televisa's *Sortilegio*." Her award was among those announced by the IPRH for its 2013-14 Prizes for Research in the Humanities.



Additionally, **Ruchi Tekriwal**, a senior linguistics major from Lakeville, Minn., was one of three U of I students awarded a Boren Scholarship. She will be spending the 2014-15 academic year studying Arabic at Qasid Arabic Institute in Amman,

Jordan. Boren awards, part of the National Security Education Program, provide funds for exceptional undergraduate and graduate students to study nontraditional languages around the world. Tekriwal, who is minoring in Arabic, has studied Arabic for 10 semesters, including a semester in Morocco.

MARY ELLEN FRYER RETIRES AFTER 33 YEARS OF SERVICE



Mary Ellen Freyer of the SLCL Office of Graduate Student Services retired on June 30 after 33 years of service to the University of Illinois.

Mary Ellen started as a secretary in the Department of Classics in 1981, working there for 25 years before

moving to Graduate Services in 2006.

In reflecting upon her career, Mary Ellen said she is struck by the amount of changes, especially technologically. She remembers when Professor Scanlan of the Department of the Classics used the PLATO computer system for Latin lessons that took place in the basement of the Foreign Languages Building (FLB). All exams at that time were typed on typewriters, and staff members had to do their own offset printing, running off at least 1,000 copies before manually stapling and numbering them.

But when she considers her favorite memories, Mary Ellen says, "the graduate students: I like talking with them and helping them, especially toward degree certification."

She adds that she's glad that the departments of the FLB formed their own school in 2006. "I still feel strongly that the School is important." She said that its formation also brought the staff together, and she values the friendships she's made since the formation of the SLCL.

Throughout the course of her stellar career, Mary Ellen has been acknowledged for her excellence on the job. She won the LAS Staff Award in 1995, the LAS Nancy J. McCowan Distinguished Service Award in 2009-10 and the SLCL Distinguished Service Award in 2011-12.

As for future plans, she intends to remain in the Champaign-Urbana area where her mother lives, and enjoy visiting with her three children and 10 grandchildren.

**School of Literatures,
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SCHOOL OF
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SLCL HOLDS MAY CONVOCATION CEREMONY



Photo courtesy of Hannah Kim.

The School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics held its Spring Convocation ceremony on Saturday, May 17, in the Tryon Festival Theatre in the Krannert Center for the Performing Arts.

Approximately 750 guests watched nine doctoral, 37 master's, and 91 bachelor's degree candidates cross the stage to receive their certificates of graduation. The doctoral candidates were also hooded by professors.

Graduates represented every department in SLCL: Classics; Comparative and World Literature; East Asian Languages

and Cultures; French; Germanic Languages and Literatures; Linguistics; Religion; Slavic Languages and Literatures; and Spanish, Italian and Portuguese.

David Price, head and professor of Religion, was the convocation speaker. In his address Price told the graduates, "Earning a degree from the University of Illinois is a very high distinction, and I predict very confidently that, as you go through life, the importance of this high distinction will grow for each of you."

Price underscored the school's emphasis on language learning through the person of Johann Reuchlin (1455-1522), a German humanist and a scholar of Greek and Hebrew, concluding this year's convocation by telling students, "One of our departing hopes is that you will find the books that lead you on to new discoveries and help to shape your lives!"

The emcee was Jean-Philippe Mathy, professor of French and comparative and world literatures, and newly named director of SLCL. 