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Alumni & Friends
Reason, understanding, persuasion: Why I give to U-M History
This year, we bid farewell to Connie Hamlin, who worked in our department for forty years and retired in December 2014. In April Lorna Atkinson said goodbye to her friends in history after thirty-four years to move to the new U-M Shared Services Center. Their accumulated seventy-five years of wisdom, their good humor, and generosity are sadly missed in Tisch Hall these days!

We are delighted to report that we have filled two endowed chairs with excellent new colleagues. History welcomes our new J. Frederick Hoffman Chair, Professor Ken Mills, a distinguished expert in British Atlantic history, who joined us this fall from the University of Toronto. The search for the next Manoogian Chair in Armenian History concluded successfully with the appointment of Assistant Professor Hakan Al-Bastani (PhD, Social Anthropology, London School of Economics), who will join us from the University of Caen in Fall 2016.

In an era of "declining humanities," we sought some 6,300 undergraduates during the last academic year, around four hundred of whom were our majors. Our new minors in Global History and Law and Policy are now in place, and we continue to develop new and exciting courses in areas of high student interest such as the environment, human rights, public history, and sexuality and gender, along with new courses on "history of the present," global trash, and economic history. Our career workshop for undergraduates, along with our No Free Mopping internship program, continue to thrive, and this year we were thrilled to launch, in conjunction with the Eisenberg Institute, our Michigan in the World program (see story on page 4).

Our graduate program continues to attract talented students from across the globe and is enriched by programming offered by the Eisenberg Institute, Medieval and Early Modern Studies, and the Science, Technology & Society program, along with our interdisciplinary PhD programs in History and Women's Studies, Anthropology and History, and Greek and Roman History. This past year we also offered the first Kemp Symposium on geography and history, as well as special workshops on early modern religion, the judicial archives, empire and African studies, and gender and civility.

In January History hosted an outstanding MLK Day panel featuring former PhD students LaKisha Simmons, Kikala Williams, and Andrew Highsmith, whose recent books examine issues of race and society in US history (see page 10). The department also sponsored a showing of the film Shot in a local theater, followed by a question-and-answer session with History faculty.

I am grateful to the many colleagues and students whose intellectual vision and energy give Michigan History its vibrancy! We look forward to hearing from you and to another lively year!

Best wishes,

Kathleen M. Canning, Department Chair
Sonya O. Rose Collegiate Professor of History
Arthur F. Thurnau Professor of History, Women's Studies, and German Studies

NEWSBITS

Eisenberg Institute postdoctoral fellow Padre Manaville (PhD 2013) coordinated a series of campus public programs with Congolese painter Sapin Makembe, who completed this work while in residence in January 2013. The painting was donated to the Department of History and now hangs in the department office in 1029 Tisch Hall.

IN THE FIELD

Partnering to Preserve

Battling Termites and Floods to Recover an Archive in Uganda

By Ashley Rockenbach, PhD Candidate

In the interest of preserving Uganda's rich archival sources and promoting equitable accessibility, faculty and students from the University of Michigan and Uganda’s Makerere University have, in recent years, parceled with Ugandan archivists to preserve, catalogue, and digitize the country’s local and national repositories.

Most of these collections are disorganized and difficult to access, but are nonetheless usable. This has afforded a new generation of historians the opportunity to write histories of the colonial and postcolonial state—providing they have the patience, time, and funding necessary to spend months picking through mountains of unused files.

Since 2009, Professor Derek Peterson has led five teams of undergraduates and graduate students from History and the School of Information to conduct cataloguing projects at the Uganda National Archives in Kampala; district archives in Kabale, Fort Portal, Hoima, and the Central Police Station Archives in Kampala. This past summer Peterson’s team traveled to eastern Uganda to catalogue the Jinja District Archives (JDA), the largest known provincial collection in the country.

Jinja was long the industrial capital of Uganda and a regional hub for labor migration, and this is reflected in the JDA’s impressive collection of files concerning labor and labor organization. The region was severely affected by Idi Amin’s so-called Economic War (1972) and his decision to expel Uganda Asians, who made up the majority of Jinja’s mercantile class. The JDA therefore offers a unique window into the history of colonial economies, labor migration, and the postcolonial state, and should be of great interest to historians of East Africa, the Indian Ocean, the South Asian diaspora, and global labor movements.

The JDA, however, also presented some of the more significant preservation challenges the team had yet encountered. Housed in the basement of the district headquarters, the archive suffers termite damage and floods every time it rains, resulting in severe water damage to files left on the floor and lowest shelves. The team spent the first three weeks of their stay removing wet files from the basement and drying them in the District Council Chamber using fans, paper towels, and time.

They then commenced sorting, consolidating, rehousing, cataloguing, and shelving the entire collection, completing the project within eight weeks. While funding constraints prevented the district from constructing a new storage space for the archive, the team left the collection safely above the flood line and the new catalogue (both electronic and hard copy) in the hands of the district records officer. The team completed their project by presenting their work to the Jinja District administration and records management students and faculty at Makerere University.

Cover image: Archival files dry in the Jinja District Council Chamber. (photo: Keefer Denney-Turner)
by Gregory Parker, EIHS Administrator

It felt less like course work and more like detective work.

“Archival research meant literally digging through thousands of documents—
more that had nothing to do with our project—to find a single piece of
paper,” said Emilie Irene Neumeier, a student in Professor Matthew Lassiter’s
winter 2015 seminar, History 497, Global Activism at U-M: The Anti-War,
Anti-Apartheid, and Anti-Sweatshop Movements.

“As tiring as that can get, the moment of finding a document that mattered was
so exciting it made up for the hours spent looking through everything else,”
said Neumeier, a history and political science major who graduated in May.

Neumeier was among thirteen undergraduates who set out to understand
the role of University of Michigan students in social movements against the
Vietnam War, apartheid in South Africa, and sweatshops that manufactured
U-M apparel. Their quest took them deep into university archives and less
beaten paths, even requesting documents from the Office of the
President via the Freedom of Information Act. Some sought answers from
the participants themselves, compiling hours of interviews, all captured via video.

The students and the instructor all agree that conducting research for a public
audience motivated everyone to work extremely hard. “Instead of the traditional lengthy research paper, where the intended audience
is generally the professor, the students produced a high-quality public
website—an in-depth digital version of a museum-style exhibit with images, documents, and interviews,” said Lassiter.

Lassiter’s course was the first installment of Michigan in the World: Local and
Global Stories project, a collaboration between the Department of History
and the Eisenberg Institute for Historical Studies, with additional support
from a generous gift from alumni Lisa and Timothy J Sloan (the Sloans hold
three U-M degrees between them, including Timothy Sloan’s bachelor’s in
history and economics in 1982). Michigan in the World will continue through
the university's bicentennial celebration in 2017.

The program provides undergraduate history students the opportunity—in
course work and through paid summer internships—to undertake archival
historical research on the university and its relationships beyond its borders,
and to present their findings to the public in online exhibitions.

Projects like these, called public history, provide students with a new
perspective on historical research and the role of the scholar in society. They
handle the public, providing digestible yet nuanced accounts of historic
events. And they help students gain technical knowledge in the construction
and presentation of the online exhibits. These skills are essential in many of
today’s career paths.

After bringing themselves up to speed on the secondary literature
surrounding their topics, the students dug into the archives. They met
regularly at the Bentley Historical Library, which preserves documents,
images, films, and objects related to the history of the university and the
state. They also explored the Joseph A. Labadie Collection, which focuses on
the history of social movements. Part of the challenge was simply learning
what to look for—and to limit their project’s scope—over the course of
a single sixteen-week term.

“The students became adept at sifting through vast amounts of information
and using sources to find other sources, which led to some incredible
discovers in unexplored archival collections,” said Lassiter. The online
exhibits include hundreds of these full-text original sources, which allow
viewers to review digitalized versions of documents and images, most of them
available to a general public audience for the first time.

In March, the students in the anti-war team took advantage of the
fifty year anniversary commemoration of the 1965 U-M teach-in on the Vietnam
War to interview key players like William Ossio, Tom Hayden, and other
former professors and students who returned for the event.

“Having the opportunity to interview them in person was priceless,” said
Obadiah Brown, a history and international studies major who plans to
obtain a law degree in the fall. “It’s available in an online exhibit, accessible to scholars, students, and the
general public.”

The exhibits are accessible on the Michigan in the World website, where new
content will be added several times per year.

In June, the students working in the anti-apartheid and anti-Vietnam War
teams learned they had won first and second place, respectively, in their
category for the 5th Annual U-M Library Undergraduate Research Award.
Said Lassiter, “This was one of the most meaningful and important teaching
experiences of my career.”

“We found the Facebook group the members had created—that gave us a lot
of context and some insight into group dynamics that is usually impossible
to find,” Lassiter said.

In some cases, the stories had never seen the light of day. Students
working on the anti-apartheid exhibit developed one of the first scholarly
considerations of the campus movement to pressure universities to diversify
from corporations that did business with the South African government.

“The campus anti-apartheid movement is one of the most consequential but
least visible mass social movements of the modern era,” said Lassiter. “Now,
it’s available in an online exhibit, accessible to scholars, students, and the
general public.”

Professor Matthew Lassiter (rear) with students (left to right) Obadiah Brown, Chris Haughey, and Aaron Szulczewski. (photo: Gregory Parker)

“Instead of the traditional lengthy research paper... the students produced a
high-quality public website—an in-depth digital version of a museum-style
exhibit with images, documents, and interviews,” said Lassiter.

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exhibit with images, documents, and interviews,” said Lassiter.

Week 5
Forgotten Photos, Film Provide Unique View of China

By William Foreman, Michigan News

Joseph Ho was working at the Chinese Historical Museum in downtown San Diego five years ago when an elderly man walked in and offered to donate a bunch of scroll, snuff bottles, and other artifacts from China. He introduced the gentleman to the museum’s director and listened as the visitor explained he was born in China in 1934 and that his parents collected the items when they served as Presbyterian medical missionaries.

“The promise of digitizing the photographs and making them available to the world will also attract a lot of attention,” said Caso, an expert on late imperial and modern China. “It makes one wish that Henke and his colleagues could have stayed in China longer to document the country’s next chapter. The material has become the focus of Ho’s doctoral dissertation. He’s delighted he found possible he ran out of photography supplies. Their photos might also have been lost or confiscated when they left China.

After the Communists took over, some of the medical staff were asked to denounce the missionaries or resign from their positions, Ho said. “One of the doctors I have a photograph of was thrown from a window,” he said. “People said he committed suicide, but the doctors who knew him believe he was murdered by Communist political ofﬁcers for not being willing to cooperate with them. Other medical staff just went to work for government hospitals. They were ﬁne making the transition.”

The man who met Ho in the San Diego museum and showed him the photos was Dr. Richard Henke, a retired pathologist living in Rolling Hills, California. He said that his late father, Harold, would be happy that his pictures and footage would have so much scholarly value. “My father was very broad-minded, and if there was any use for the photos—by the family or an institution—he would be delighted,” he said.

The last scene shot by Henke before he left the country shows huge portraits of Mao Zedong and Zhou De, the army’s commander-in-chief, hanging on Tiananmen, or the Gate of Heavenly Peace, in Beijing. Although the country is going through a revolution, the scene looks peaceful, with doxy eare and cyclists moving in and out of the picture. It makes one wish that Henke and his colleagues could have stayed in China longer to document the country’s next chapter.

The article appeared with permission from Michigan News. For more on this project, link to an interview with Joseph Ho at www.rackham.umich.edu/blog/ serendipity-and-graduate-study-what-we-are-posting-cards.
INNOVATIVE INSTRUCTION

Connecting in Cyberspace

History Faculty Lead Virtual Classroom Joining U-M Students with Peers in Istanbul and Kyoto

Graduate student Austin McCsey was named one of the Michigan Daily’s “Students of the Year” for 2014-15. Austin was selected for his scholarship and activism. The Daily article noted, “Serious is certainly one way to describe McCsey’s work: a combination of grassroots organizing, racial justice education, and potentially groundbreaking research on Midwestern cities in the seventies and eighties.”

INNOVATIVE INSTRUCTION

BOOK REVIEW

Freedom and Criminal Responsibility in American Legal Thought

By Thomas A. Green
Cambridge University Press, 2014

The question of the relationship between mental capacity and criminal responsibility does not easily go away. Even after generations of philosophical and political debate, competing arguments range back into pre-public view with each new act of shocking violence committed by a seemingly disturbed individual. The famous “insanity defense” may by now be a stalemate, but concern about mental illness and criminal culpability persists.

In his magisterial new volume, Freedom and Criminal Responsibility in American Legal Thought, Tom Green does not presume to resolve the tension between a moral presumption of the human freedom to choose and scientific understandings of causation that portray “choice” as itself the product of prior determinants. Instead, he aims to preserve the full complexity of scholarly debates as they unfurled across time within academic legal writings from the 1890s to the 1990s.

These debates among legal authors reveal much about the periods in which they emerged. Progressive Era social science helped to shape both criminology and pathology, but could not escape the entanglements of the underlying uncertainty about criminal responsibility. Initiatives began in the name of a more humane approach to criminal responsibility than the harshest standards of legal causation, grounded in the liberty and humanity of perpetrators and understood as the role of trial by a jury of one’s peers. To the extent that questions of justice were reframed as questions of social hygiene, important elements of democratic practice were lost.

There is considerable passion in Green’s enterprise. For all his even-handedness, he does not hesitate to describe Freudian psychology’s understandings of causation as potentially “false,” or to refer to the “behaviorist abyss.” And beneath the competing legal theories of responsibility, rehabilitation, and “just deserts” lie a deep philosophical quandary concerning free will. Many philosophers now believe that free will does not require an absence of determinism, but rather instead “compatibilism”—the doctrine that free choice is made from one’s basic aims and commitments, without interference; and that predictability does not nullify personal freedom.

Any climb back up from that abstract formula to a real-world application of criminal responsibility is bound to be tenuous. And by the 1980s, even compatibility seemed to some legal scholars to offer no definite solution to the moral problem posed by the apparent need to punish.

Freedom and Criminal Responsibility is above all a great work of legal history. Instead of building up the puzzle from its philosophical component parts, Green traces over time the sequence of major legal theorists who sought to resolve these tensions. Increasingly, we see them reach for concepts of dignity and personhood, not metaphysical free will, to ground the insistence on choice and criminal responsibility.

Moreover, theorists who in the first instance legalists cannot entirely escape the demands of what Green labels “conventional morality.” Unlike philosophers, they must find ways to fit their theories to the discipline of the criminal trial and its institutions.

As we reach the conclusion, we find Green wondering whether law will escape the clutches of whatever proves to be the next determiner: emotion—neuroscience, perhaps? Thus, after nine meticulous chapters of fair-minded explication of legal writing, the final paragraph delicately tips his hat to Green: “Perhaps only by viewing Green the law professor and Green the historian, he ends with the words of an early twentieth-century pioneer, Gato Spenzer: ‘Law is one of the humanities.’

Students, Faculty Partner to Digitize Historic Photo Albums

The Arabella Chapman Project website debuted on March 10, 2015, the latest phase in a multi-year initiative that utilizes Chapman’s photos albums to “explore the role of visual culture, especially photographic, as a critical dimension of the everyday life and politics of black Americans at the end of the nineteenth century.” The website features digitized versions of the photo albums, the originals of which are preserved in the University’s William L. Clements Library.

The project was coordinated by undergraduate students in a DASH History-Women’s Studies course taught by Professor Martha S. Jones. The students added a third album, containing their tintype portraits, which is also housed at the Clements along with the Chapman albums. Jones is Arthur F. Thomas Professor, Associate Professor of History and African Studies. Visit the project at arbabellachapman.com.

The Arabella Chapman photo albums, courtesy of the University of Michigan William L. Clements Library. (photo: Daryl Morabito)

Martha S. Jones (middle-right) with students (left to right) Emily Moore, Holly Berkovitz, and Kate Dickson. (photo: Daryl Morabito)
FACULTY NEWS

Stephen A. Berry and Ellen Mikusberger have each been awarded the Class of 1923 Memorial Teaching Award for outstanding teaching of undergraduates. Juan Cole has been appointed to hold the Kluge Chair in Countries and Cultures of the South at the Library of Congress for summer 2016. Appointments “are chosen solely on the basis of intellectual accomplishment and the ability to communicate ideas to a broader audience.”

Gregory D. Dauid, Marissa S. Jones, and Reena Sinha have been named Senior Fellows by the Michigan Society of Fellows. Dana Goodman was named the Distinguished Fellow in History at the Huntington Library. Thomas A. Green was named the Dibner Distinguished Fellow in the History of Science and Technology at the The Huntington Library.

Thomas A. Green was received the Joyce Medal from the American Society for Legal History, and the College, will deliver the History Department’s symposium lecture on January 18, 2016.

Thomas A. Green is pursuing a dual bachelor’s degree in history and music. His current research concerns the ways in which religious, social, and political forces affected the formation of Middle East and North Africa. He is particularly interested in the role of intercommunal violence and its aftermath in shaping political, religious, and social life in the region.

Academia members quoted multiple concerns on how to apply historical scholarship to understanding and combating contemporary racial injustice in America. Professor Martha C. Nussbaum emphasized the importance of examining historical continuity and change to better understand the persistence of social, economic, and racial inequality.

Later that week, on January 22, the History Department and the Eisenberg Institute collaborated with the State Theatre to present a free screening and discussion of Ava DuVernay’s Oscar-nominated film John from University of Michigan community members. The theater line stretched around the block, and the theater was filled to capacity.

These events will mark the beginning of a new era in the department, where the history of the department will be celebrated in conjunction with the university-wide Martin Luther King Day commemoration. Thomas A. Cole, the University of Chicago’s James Risse-Thompson Professor of American and African American History and the College, will deliver the History Department’s symposium lecture on January 18, 2016.

Thomas A. Green received the 2015 Matthews Underclass Teaching Award, which recognizes an instructor who inspires wonder and excitement in students while making the case for the importance of historical understanding.

The conclusion of “Senses and Longings” in winter 2017 will mark the completion of the Eisenberg’s tenth year (and five biannual themes) as well as the commencement of the University’s bicentennial celebration. Brick, who is working with EHHS administrator Gregory Parker on plans for LSIS biennial thematic seminars, looks forward to the convergence of anniversary that year.

“The Eisenberg Institute is deeply engaged with the bicentennial,” Brick remarked. The public history project, “Michigan in the World,” will continue to celebrate the university’s past, “and our focus on longings, especially in the future tense, meshes with the bicentennial’s anticipation of further horizons for achievement at Michigan.”

Brick entities the University of Michigan tradition for holding for a notion of learning that “is never finished but always ongoing, thus nurturing wisdom, creativity, and aspirations for better things to come.”

IN MEMORIAM

Jaeck (Jack) Myron Price, chair of the department from 1971 to 1972 and 1979 to 1984, died after a long illness on May 6 at Glacier Hills in Ann Arbor.

Jack joined the department in 1956 and remained here an economic historian until his retirement in 1991. His study of the global tobacco trade culminated in 1973 with the magisterial two-volume France and the Chesapeake, which had his signature micro-macro approach to track the French royal monopoly of tobacco sales until its destruction in the French Revolution. His other works include the short book, Capital and Credit in British Overseas Trade (1980), which focuses on the commercial laws of the origin of the Industrial Revolution, and the even shorter Perry of London (1992), which traces the all-too-human rise and fall of an important trading family and its firm.

Jack was as shy person who was wedded to his work. Friends knew him as a passionate, deeply knowledgeable lover of classical music, especially opera. He could be exceptionally kind and generous to any of them who needed his help, he never married. His parents and a younger brother, Malcolm, predeceased him. His only survivors are his devoted friends.

Adapted from the University Record obituary written by John Shy, Professor Emeritus of History.
Joshua Bilmes (right) with award-winning science-fiction writer and client Scott Edelman. (photo: Scott Edelman)

By Joshua Bilmes (BA 1985)

It’s thirty years ago but it seems like yesterday. My professor David Hollinger was demanding that I put in real effort to get a high grade in my upper-level history seminar, and I’d been trying to take that to heart. I was putting in serious hours at the library, looking over the New York Times dating back to the early years of the 20th century, maybe even earlier. And I made a connection. I started to realize that I was reading the same article over and over again. As much as the world had changed, the Times wasn’t covering an election in El Salvador in the 1980s all that much differently from elections that had taken place there decades before, or from elections in many other countries, for that matter.

For all the problem sets I’d done in physics before becoming a history major, for all the books I’d read for my history classes, this discovery was my own. It revealed a pattern. It was a prism, a lens that I could use to view the world. I could start to read the newspaper—read everything!—in a new and better way.

History does that.

Today I’m a literary agent. When I sit across the table from a publisher negotiating a contract, we’re on a field of battle. I need to know my math, know how big a pie the publisher and my writer have to share. I need to know the intricacies of a publishing contract. I need to know about publishing. But none of what I know matters if I can’t also draw connections for my clients. The client has to understand why, has to understand their place in the business, their role as an author in a long line of authors. And it’s not enough to know about publishing if I don’t understand the publishers I’m talking to. I need to use the skills I was pushed to learn thirty years ago by David Hollinger and my other history professors at the University of Michigan.

When I give to the History Department today, I feel like I’m passing down to others the gifts I received from being challenged and educated by my professors thirty years ago. The gifts of reason, of understanding, of persuasion.


GIVING

Michigan is proud to be one of the nation’s premier public universities, and your continued support remains vital for how we pursue our mission. Gifts of all sizes are welcome!

Give online at leadersandbest.umich.edu/find/#!/u/o/ls/history, by phone at 888.518.7888, or by mail. Please be sure to make your check payable to the University of Michigan.

Department of History
1029 Tisch Hall, 435 S. State St.
Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1003

To learn about funding priorities or to discuss other giving opportunities, please contact Robin Colgan (Major Gift Officer, LSA Development; rcolgan@umich.edu; 734.615.6317).