

CORNELL'S QUARTERLY MAGAZINE FALL 2009

EZRA



ROOTED IN MINDS AND HEARTS

WHY CREATIVE WRITING IS A FORCE ON CAMPUS

14 - AFRICANA STUDIES AT 40 17 - 'ROMP-N-STOMP' 19 - 'COMMON GROUND' IN NYC

FLORA & FAUNA

To catch a catbird



A gray catbird (*Dumetella carolinensis*) found itself in the catbird seat in May when it was captured and released at the Appledore Island Migration Banding Station – making it the 100,000th bird banded at Appledore.

The station is part of the Cornell- and University of New Hampshire-operated Shoals Marine Lab in the Gulf of Maine, six miles off the coast of Portsmouth, N.H., where thousands of migrating songbirds stop each year. The resting spot is an ideal location for researchers to study the migration and stopover ecology of nearctic-neotropical migrants.

More than 131 species have been banded at Appledore since 1981. On one notable day in May 1985, nearly 600 birds were captured and released.

Many birds banded on Appledore have been sighted far afield. One northern waterthrush, for example, was banded on Appledore in August 1992 and caught again by a bird-bander in Venezuela in October 1994.

ACCOLADES

Army strong

Student and Army cadet Carolyn Evans '10 finished ahead of nearly 500 other Army ROTC cadets in the Army Physical Fitness Test, held as part of cadet training in Fort Lewis, Wash. Passing the test is a prerequisite to be commissioned as a U.S. Army lieutenant.



Thousands of college students converge in Fort Lewis each summer to attend Army ROTC's capstone training and assessment exercise, the 29-day Leader Development and Assessment Course.

Evans scored 366 points on an extended scale. "The maximum is 300, but because the Army is full of type A personalities, we've got to have a measure for those who far exceed the standard," said Army public affairs officer Maj. David Rudock. "So to recognize achievement and to show that [a] cadet or [a] soldier has put in so much more effort, we created this extended scale."

Evans' score is "awesome," Rudock added.

Her achievement places her in the top 2 percent of her 500-person regiment. The test, which measures the students' strength and endurance, consists of sit-ups and push-ups, each timed over two minutes, and a two-mile run.

AROUND CAMPUS

Shrinking the distance

When 12 students from Weill Cornell Medical College in Qatar (WCMC-Q) came to Ithaca in the summer of 2008, they were met by a welcoming committee of fellow Cornell students – IthaQatar (IQ) Ambassadors – who introduced them to campus, showed them around the area and began a dialogue aimed at bridging the distance between Ithaca and Doha.

This past summer, the second generation of IQ Ambassadors took the vision of the program's founders and ran with it.

Like last year's group, this year's 19 Ithaca undergrads, two staff members and 24 Qatar students bonded on Cornell Outdoor Education's Hoffman Challenge Course, heard a chimes concert featuring Middle Eastern music atop McGraw tower and took weekend trips to New York City and Niagara Falls.



PEOPLE

CALS dean to step down in 2010

Susan Henry will step down as dean of the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences when her second five-year term ends June 30, 2010.

She will have served as the Ronald P. Lynch Dean of Agriculture and Life Sciences for 10 years, as long as any recent college dean at Cornell.

"My time as dean has been enormously satisfying. While I will miss my daily interactions with the many committed people with whom I



work closely as dean, I expect to continue my relationships with the CALS community as a faculty member when I return to teaching and research," Henry said. "I am continually impressed by the excellence of our faculty, students and staff and the level of enthusiasm of our alumni and stakeholders for providing

leadership and improving people's lives in challenging times. I am very proud to be part of that effort."

Henry, who is a professor of molecular biology and genetics, will teach and spend more time in her research lab.

Welcome to Hogwarts



There's no quidditch pitch or owls that deliver mail. But Cornell does have the look, feel and school spirit of Hogwarts School of Witchcraft and Wizardry, the school where Harry Potter, the boy wizard we all wished were real, got his top-notch education.

Applywise.com, an online admissions counseling site, recently named Cornell one of five university campuses that most resembles Hogwarts – but not because of magic, real or

imagined. The list is based on physical appearance, residential community, academic rigor, extracurricular opportunities and unique traditions, according to the article.

Cornell is situated far from the hustle and bustle of Manhattan, much like Hogwarts is removed from London, the citation reads. West Campus buildings, appropriately called The Gothics, are cited for their resemblance to Hogwarts architecture, as are the War Memorial, Risley Residential College and the Law Library – all “gothic masterpieces.” And, of course, Cornell students study hard and endure long winters, just like Harry and his cronies.

As if you needed another reason to apply to Cornell. Bring your wand and broomstick, just in case.

A concerto dedicated to Cornell

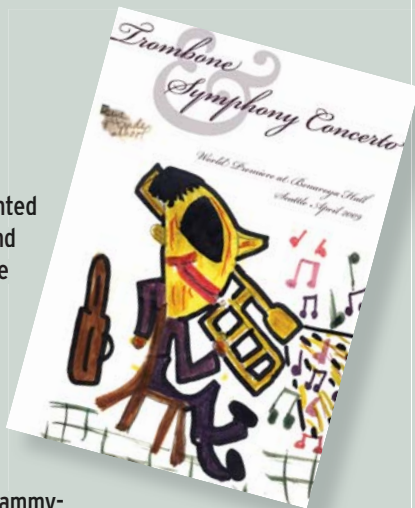
Charles Staadecker '71 wanted to honor his alma mater and his 25-year marriage, so he commissioned a concerto for the Seattle Symphony and dedicated it to Cornell in honor of his anniversary.

The 26-minute work in three movements, by Grammy-nominated composer Samuel Jones, conveys the journey of a Cornell undergraduate from admission to graduation.

“It’s a dialogue, with the student’s theme and the university’s theme as two main voices,” Staadecker said. “It relates to a person ready to embark on his life course full of optimism and passion.”

Staadecker first approached the symphony in 2006, and he and his wife, Benita, were involved in the composition process. (The Staadeckers have sent two children to Cornell – Tess '07 and Benjamin '09.)

The Concerto for Trombone and Orchestra, subtitled “Vita Academica,” was performed by the symphony in April at Benaroya Hall in Seattle.



BILL STAFFIELD/PROVIDED

DOWNLOAD THIS

Not yet built, already tweeting

Want to stay up-to-the-minute on the progress of the College of Architecture, Art and Planning’s Paul Milstein Hall, but don’t have time to sit around the construction site dodging backhoes and pile drivers?

The Milstein Hall Twitter feed (twitter.com/CU_MilsteinHall) offers a real-time building’s-eye view (ably translated from building-ese to English by AAP communications director Aaron Goldweber) of the operation, with regular updates on construction progress, news, photos and related links, including one to a live on-site webcam.

The 47,000-square-foot building, designed by architect Rem Koolhaas and the Office for Metropolitan Architecture, will connect to Rand Hall and East Sibley Hall. Construction is expected to take about two years.

Why the twitter? “The idea is to create the most transparent, intimate look at the construction of a Rem Koolhaas building ever,” said Goldweber, who gets regular updates from the project manager and follows up with some reportage of his own.



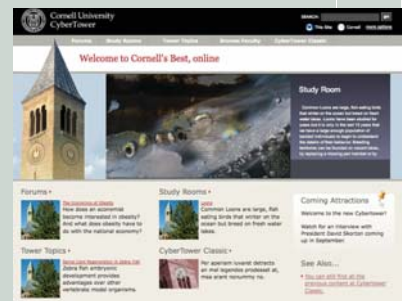
New Cybertower brings the faculty into sharper focus

Beginning this September, visitors to Cornell’s Cybertower Web site will find more videos and a new section featuring easily digestible samples of Cornell research and scholarship.

Cybertower, launched 10 years ago by Cornell’s Adult University, is targeted at anyone interested in Cornell scholarship, but especially alumni and prospective and entering students and their families. “This is an ongoing experiment,” said Ralph Janis, director emeritus of CAU, “to find ways to bring all parts of the university community closer to the faculty.”

The revamping of the site www.cybertower.cornell.edu follows a user survey last summer. In particular, users asked for easier navigation – fewer clicks to get where they want to go – and better video.

The updated site adds larger and sharper video that can be viewed full screen without loss of quality.



EZRA



FROM THE PUBLISHER

The creative process is, of course, essential to the development of great writers and poets, and sometimes that process includes taking courses in creative writing. But creative writing programs also benefit those who do not aspire to become published authors, from lawyers to engineers. Even students taking a single creative writing class can find that it aids their ability to communicate across disciplines.

In this issue of Ezra, we look not only at the example of Cornell's creative writing program and how it is central to the humanities at the university, but also at its ability to transfer techniques and skills that are crucial in many other fields.

In our cover story, you will hear from authors and poets among Cornell's faculty and also from talented undergraduates like Helen Havlak '11 and young alumni like Junot Díaz MFA '95, the 2008 winner of the Pulitzer Prize for fiction.

Also in this issue: a feature on the future of the Africana Studies and Research Center, which is marking its 40th anniversary this year; a look at a professor who has brought century-old eggs to life to study evolution; why some lawns on campus are growing into meadow; and the debut of two new regular feature sections – on Cornell in New York City and on Cornell people.

Thomas W. Bruce
Vice President, University
Communications

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COVER STORY

Why creative writing is a force on campus

BY GEORGE LOWERY

The value of creative writing instruction in a university is difficult to quantify. It may never ensure its students a steady paycheck or retirement plan, and the discipline itself is sometimes called into question. And although it is central to the humanities, its techniques are employed by scientists, engineers, lawyers and business people alike.



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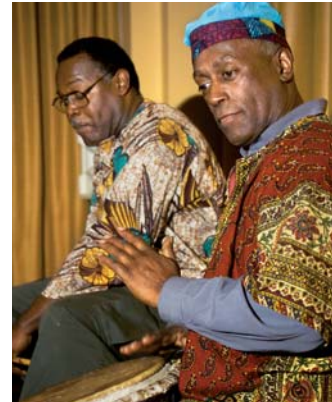
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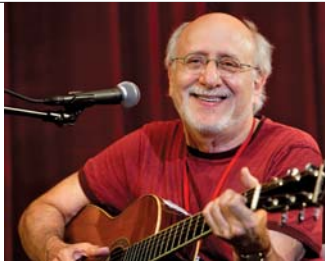


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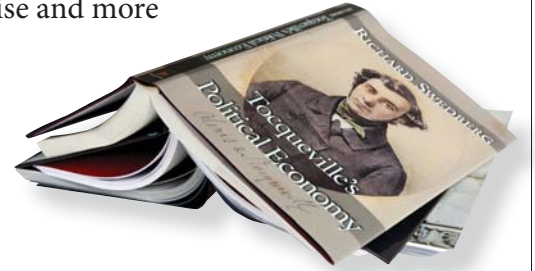
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Publisher: Thomas W. Bruce
Managing Editor: Joe Wilensky
Senior Editors: David Brand, Lauren Gold, Susan S. Lang
Contributing Editor: Bryce T. Hoffman

Copy Editor: Karen Walters
Designer: Robin Zifchock
Contributors: Daniel Aloï, Linda Glaser, Gwen Glazer, Lauren Gold, Julie Greco, Bryce T. Hoffman, Emily Hopkins, Anne Ju, Sabina Lee, George Lowery, Krishna Ramanujan
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ON THE COVER:
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BY GEORGE LOWERY

Why creative writing is a force on

Maintaining a balance between 'the mind and the heart' through

A

Louisiana Cajun, Christopher Lirette has worked on an offshore oil rig, researched his heritage in Canada and survived the devastation of Hurricane Katrina. Now he is enrolled in Cornell's graduate program in creative writing, and he carries with him the life experiences that inform his poetry.

For Lirette, who will receive a Master of Fine Arts degree in 2010, drawing meaning from experience comes from writing about it. For example, he drew on a year studying Acadian culture in New Brunswick, Canada, to write the poems that became his portfolio submission to Cornell.

Lirette is heir to a long and distinguished tradition of literary expression at Cornell by writers within and outside the creative writing program, whose recent graduates include Junot Díaz, MFA '95, winner of the 2008 Pulitzer Prize for fiction for his novel "The Brief Wondrous Life of Oscar Wao."

In a February 2009 visit to campus, Díaz paid tribute to the influence of his classmates and teachers. "I received a place to write, pretty unobstructed, for three years, with funding and mentorship, and that's phenomenally important," said Díaz, who teaches creative writing at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. "Our faculty members brought writers in, and it felt very, very alive. There was a level of concentration that I think I owe a lot of my abilities to."

A group of students with government professor Matthew Evangelista, standing, meets behind the A.D. White House Aug. 24 to discuss "The Grapes of Wrath," this year's choice for the New Student Reading Project. Students met in small groups all over campus, led by administrators, faculty and staff members, to discuss John Steinbeck's classic.



campus storytelling

'I SEE STUDENTS WHEN THEY ARE AT THE
COMMENCEMENT OF WONDER. IT'S JUST BEAUTIFUL.
IT'S ALMOST RELIGIOUS.'

— PROFESSOR KEN MCCLANE





“... take me home, you say/ as the mud gives way beneath
my tongue – it was as if you,/ sapling, never saw skin before.”

– Christopher Lirette, from the poem “First Harvest After Ruination”

The value of creative writing instruction in a university is difficult to quantify. It may never ensure its students a steady paycheck or retirement plan, and the discipline itself is sometimes called into question. And although it is central to the humanities, its techniques are employed by scientists, engineers, lawyers and business people alike. They, like the talented students in one of the nation’s most selective creative writing programs, appreciate the power of words to influence and inspire, as well as to communicate.

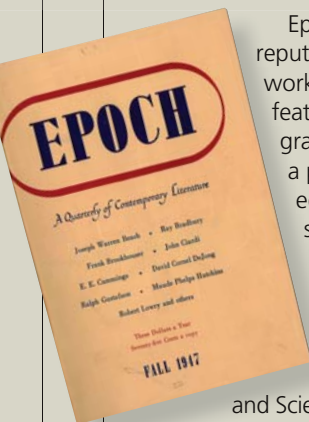
For Matthew Belmonte, an assistant professor of human development who studies autism and also writes novels, writing is as elemental as thought. “I don’t believe that it’s possible to fully understand something unless one has written it, or at least is capable of writing about it,” he says.

A Cornell alumnus who was an English and computer science major, Belmonte also holds an MFA in fiction writing from Sarah Lawrence College and a Ph.D. in neuroscience. In addition to his novels, he writes plays and essays, often about “autism and what it tells us about being human.”

Scientific writing offers many opportunities to employ fictional techniques, he notes. “We like to separate creative writing from expository or scientific writing, but they actually have more in common than most people realize,” Belmonte says. In science, “there is a story and a plot. Any time you tell the story of a physical phenomenon, you destroy certain aspects of that phenomenon to emphasize others. The creative skill in large part lies in making those life-or-death narrative choices.”

EPOCH: A DECADES-LONG HISTORY OF PUBLISHING AUTHORS’ EARLIEST WORKS

BY LINDA GLASER



Epoch, Cornell’s literary magazine, has a national reputation for publishing traditional and experimental work by exemplary authors. Each year’s three issues feature fiction and poetry, and sometimes essays, graphic art, screenplays or cartoons. “We’ve been a pretty formidable magazine for 62 years,” says editor and lecturer Michael Koch, “helping to shape and sustain American writing.”

A literary magazine at Cornell was first proposed by Goldwin Smith Professor of English Baxter Hathaway when he came to Cornell in 1946 to work on the creative writing program, but C.B. deKiewiet, dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at the time, refused to spend Cornell funds on a magazine that published non-Cornell writers. So Hathaway gathered a group of writers, and in 1947 they launched Epoch with their own money. They continued to support the magazine for the next decade with white elephant sales and monthly fees the editors themselves paid for the privilege of reading the submissions.

Today’s editors no longer have to pay to read submitted manuscripts; over the years, Epoch has become integrated into

the graduate creative writing program at Cornell. MFA students now spend the first year of their program working as associate editors on the magazine, in addition to their class work.

Koch gestures toward a tall wooden bookshelf against the wall of the Epoch office. Empty on this summer day, he says that by fall it will be filled “top to bottom” with manuscripts, and won’t be empty again until three weeks after the magazine stops accepting submissions for the following summer. MFA students assess each of these manuscripts as first readers, and then discuss their choices with Koch. Out of the thousands of submissions, only 20 to 30 stories and fewer than 30 poems will be accepted for publication each year.

Many now-famous authors found early acceptance in Epoch – including Thomas Pynchon, Philip Roth and Joyce Carol Oates. Epoch’s 1947 debut issue included work by Ray Bradbury and e.e. cummings. Don DeLillo published his very first story in Epoch in 1960; during Epoch’s 50th anniversary celebration in 1997, DeLillo spoke of how important being accepted into the magazine had been for him. More recently, Jhumpa Lahiri’s Pulitzer Prize-winning collection, “The Interpreter of Maladies,” included a story that first appeared in Epoch, and poems by Yusef Komunyakaa, the 1994 Pulitzer winner, have appeared in the magazine’s pages.

Can it be taught?

The term “creative writing” can be misleading, though. “I can teach someone to be a better writer,” says Ken McClane ’73, MFA ’76, the W.E.B. DuBois Professor of Literature and author of 10 books of poems and essays. But, he continues, “great writers, I think, are born with it. We can teach people to respect literature and to respect themselves, how to read well and think about life with more discrimination. I see students when they are at the commencement of wonder. It’s just beautiful. It’s almost religious.”

Non-English majors also flock to undergraduate creative writing classes, says Robert Morgan, an English professor, novelist and poet whose most recent book is the acclaimed “Boone: A Biography.”

He says some of the best writers he has taught came from engineering, the ILR School and the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences. In writing workshops they find more than instruction, he says. They find tools to develop and refine their voices, perceptions and relationship to the world.

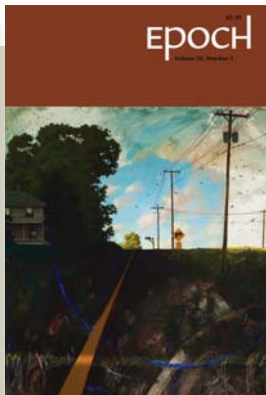
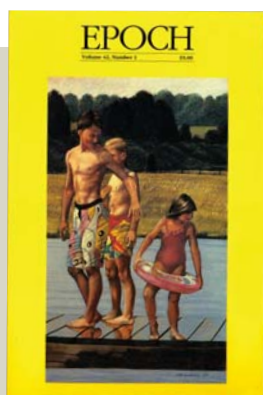
“Creative writing cannot be taught, but it can be learned,” Morgan says; particularly in the small workshops where students critique each other’s work. “The teacher acts as a kind of coach. What all young writers look for is a ‘true reader,’ the reader who can see not only what the writer has done, but what the writer is capable of.

“It’s also a way of inspiring young readers to get involved in writing and reading and thinking. That can lead to a much better sense of how to use



“Yet always I see what I must see: these halves made whole.”

– Ken McClane, from his poem “The White Deer: A Small Fable”



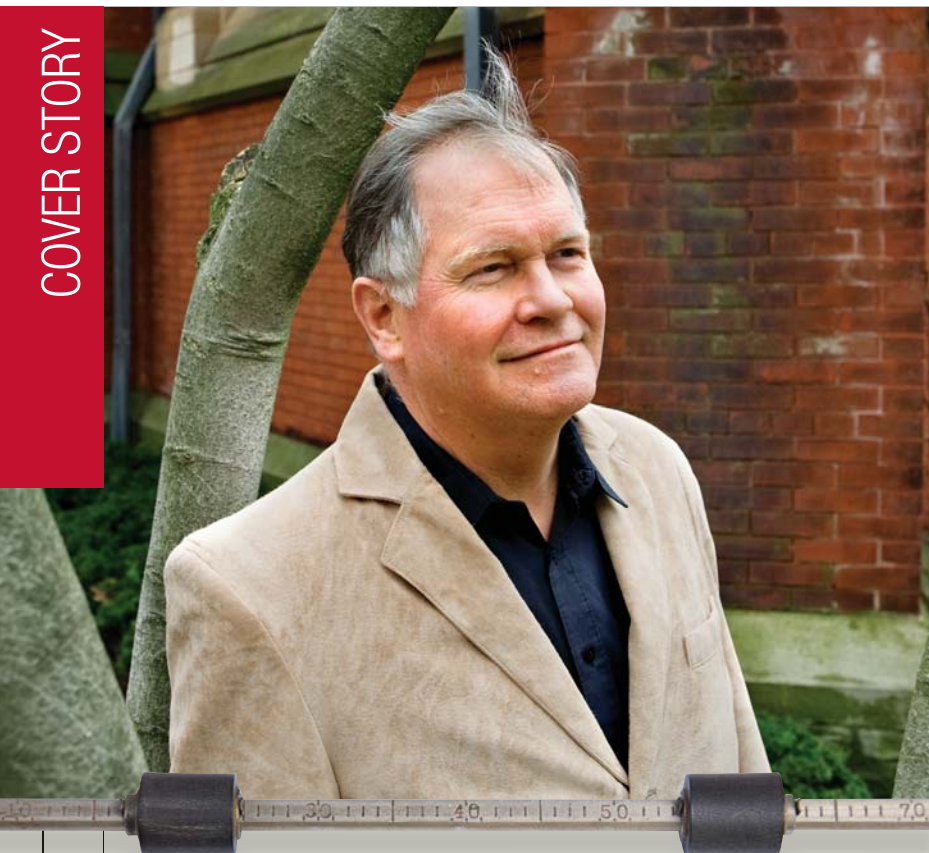
Many graduate students who have worked on Epoch have become literary stars. On the long table in Epoch’s office sits a stack of books published by former staffers, including Susan Choi, a 2003 Pulitzer Prize finalist who now teaches at Princeton, and Junot Díaz, the 2008 Pulitzer Prize winner, who is a professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

Despite its small circulation, Koch says Epoch is recognized nationally as a significant place to publish. Works from Epoch are regularly reprinted in such major anthologies as Best American Short Stories, Best American Poetry, The Pushcart Prize: Best of the Small Presses and Prize Stories: The O. Henry Awards.

Linda Glaser is a freelance writer.

‘... THERE NEEDS TO BE A BALANCE BETWEEN THE ARTS AND THE HARD SCIENCES, THE MIND AND THE HEART. THE WHOLE PERSON NEEDS TO BE TAKEN INTO ACCOUNT. CREATIVE WRITING HELPS PEOPLE KEEP THAT BALANCE. IT KEEPS PEOPLE SANE.’

– KEN McCLANE



“Clouds are our friends when we have no one else,” John said. “Clouds remind us how little and fleeting we are.”

– Robert Morgan, from the novel “Brave Enemies”



“As soon as I’m in a relationship, I promote fear from clerk to president, even though all it can do is sweep up, turn off the lights, and lock the door.”

– Melissa Bank, MFA ’88, from the novel “The Wonder Spot”

language in speaking, arguing and writing. The range of our program – from creative nonfiction, essay writing and poetry to fiction – is very important. Creative writing has grown into a much bigger thing than it was when I came here.”

Writing workshops give students a place to learn and grow into the craft; and they also impart skills that have value far beyond it, says J. Robert Lennon, who joined the creative writing faculty in 2006 and whose sixth novel, “Castle,” was published this year.

Given the damage an ill-considered remark could cause in a setting where classmates often reveal intimacies, “students have to learn how to deliver criticism in a constructive manner,” he says. “They have to find a way to make their criticism useful. This is a valuable skill to have in the professional world.”

Students also learn about honesty and endurance, says McClane.

“Writing is hard work. You have to try to be as truthful as you can, and you have to realize that writing is a public act. You have to be responsible to an audience. To begin to take yourself seriously is to take other people seriously. To actually talk about your anxieties in a real and discerning way requires courage.”

The Cornell mystique

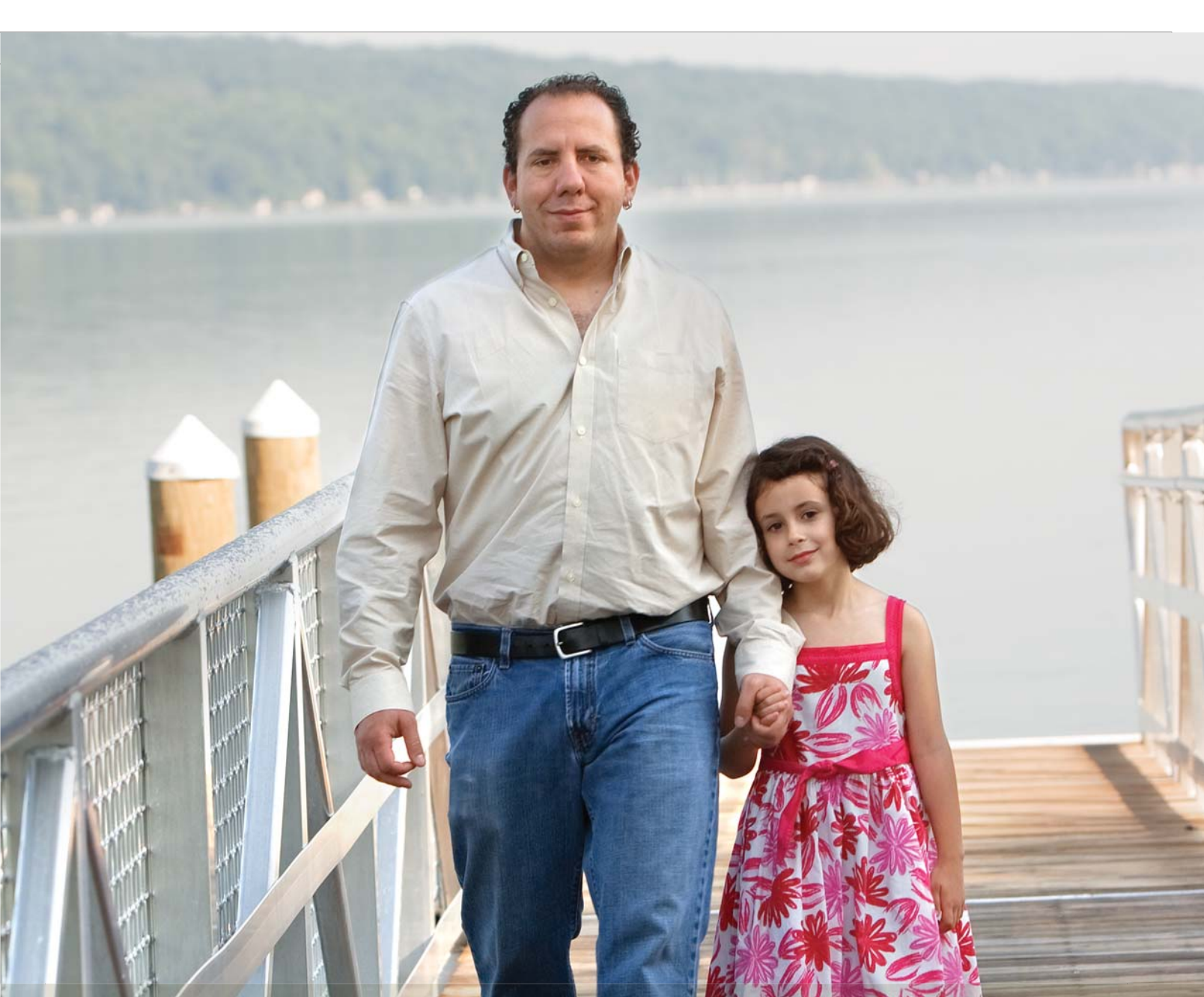
Cornell’s highly regarded creative writing program, housed in the English department, can point to its storied legacy and to its current Pulitzer and MacArthur winners, its best-sellers and critics’ darlings. In fact, the only two women U.S. Nobel laureates in literature, Pearl S. Buck and Toni Morrison, earned their master’s degrees in English at Cornell.

Luminaries of contemporary literature associated with Cornell – although not necessarily associated with the creative writing program – include Kurt Vonnegut, Thomas Pynchon, William Gass, Alison Lurie, E.B. White, William Vollmann, Lorrie Moore, W.D. Snodgrass and Vladimir Nabokov, who while teaching at Cornell wrote the modern classic “Lolita.”

The legacy of Cornell’s greatest writers can be daunting, but it’s also an inspiration, Lennon says. “You want to measure up. You’re not going to be as good as Nabokov, but you want to try as hard as you can.”

Morgan joined the Cornell faculty in 1971 to fill in for poet A.R. Ammons. McClane was a student in Morgan’s first class, and he also taught fellow creative writing faculty member Alice Fulton, MFA ’82, the Ann S. Bowers Professor of English, a poet and short story writer. In 2000 Oprah Winfrey selected Morgan’s novel “Gap Creek” for her book club, launching his book onto best-seller lists.

Alexi Zentner, MFA ’08, is on his way to his



“He knew that he needed to move, to head home to her, but he was transfixed: two white birds perched on the railing by the door. Doves.”

– Alexi Zentner, from “Salt”

own version of success. He came to the program at age 32, married and with two children, after working as a newspaper reporter. He landed at Cornell based on a simple criterion: He applied only to schools whose faculty wrote books he admired.

“It was a huge deal to me to be part of a community where writing is taken seriously and you could say, ‘I’m a writer’ and live that life,” Zentner says. “As much as I believe writing fiction is an art, there’s no hocus-pocus. It’s mostly about getting your butt in the chair and writing. I became a writer when I realized the difference between writing and working at writing. Talent

isn’t really a precious commodity. You need to combine talent with work.”

Despite its decades-long track record of minting acclaimed writers, Cornell has never had a “house style.” Faculty members strenuously avoid any attempt to create clones of themselves. “The things that make a writer excellent have to come from that person, and we strive to help students develop that part of themselves,” Lennon says.

“Writing, in a way, is the discipline that rolls all the other disciplines into one,” he says. “There are novels about scientists and novels about businessmen. And poems about plants, animals

“... THE RAW
MATERIALS
OF STUDY
ALL GO INTO
WRITING.”

– ASSISTANT
PROFESSOR
J. ROBERT LENNON



JOSEPHINE HAVLAK/PROVIDED

“the sister chick cries, hungry, perhaps/ or trying to
swallow the wild fear/ of little-girl smell/ musty and peach
and satin stiff.”

– Helen Havlak '11, from her poem “Painting of a girl-child”

and physics. The raw materials of study all go into writing. We channel all of the interests of Cornell.”

The mind and the heart

According to the June 8 issue of *The New Yorker*, 822 MFA programs unleash would-be Junot Díazes from U.S. colleges each year. Thirty-seven award creative writing Ph.D.s. One of the oldest American creative writing programs, Cornell's program celebrated its 105th anniversary in 2008.

That longevity “suggests something important about creative writing and the humanities: that there needs to be a balance between the arts and the hard sciences, the mind and the heart,” says McClane. “The whole person needs to be taken into account. Creative writing helps people keep that balance. It keeps people sane.”

At Cornell, the creative writing faculty teaches mostly undergraduates. Eight poets and eight fiction writers, chosen from hundreds of applicants, comprise the entire Master of Fine Arts program. Introductory creative writing classes – some offering a dozen sections and taught by recent MFAs – enroll hundreds of students.

Undergraduates vie for openings, according to English honors student Helen Havlak '11, who recently took an introductory creative writing course. Her first assignment: a personal essay. “You have this giant mix of people, who are not writing or English majors,” Havlak says. “Because we wrote about subjects that are really important to us, even if the writing wasn't strong you still had to give people your respect and attention because they were pouring their hearts out.”

LIBRARY PRESERVES EARLY WORK OF FUTURE LITERARY GIANTS

BY GWEN GLAZER

Before they were famous, they left traces of their pasts in the library.

Copies of students' theses line the shelves of Olin Library, and they have been collected in the university archives ever since graduate studies began at Cornell. Among those final projects are early drafts of now-familiar novels and short stories by some of the university's most famous writers, like Lorrie Moore and Junot Díaz, and unpublished fiction from contemporary authors like Melissa Bank and Elizabeth Merrick.

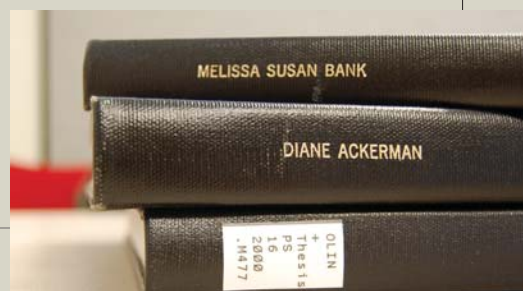
The scholarly side of creative writers is on display as well: Diane Ackerman, Pearl S. Buck and Toni Morrison all wrote academic theses (on metaphysics, the art of the essay and the treatment of alienated characters in works by Virginia Woolf and William Faulkner, respectively) housed in the library.

Serious coursework isn't the only aspect represented, either. Kurt Vonnegut's fresh and satirical writing as an undergraduate is on display in the 1940s-era Cornell Daily Sun, newly digitized and available online. Sound recordings of Cornell authors reading at events are also available on cassette and CD.

And no discussion of Cornell authors can be complete without a quick mention of E.B. White. The large collection of White materials at Cornell includes edited drafts of Strunk and White's “The Elements of Style” and the very first notes of the work that would become “Charlotte's Web,” complete with tiny sketches of spiders and the layout of the barnyard.

Some of these early works are available in the circulating collection – meaning that anyone with a Cornell ID card can check them out of the library – and some Ph.D. theses are even available online. The rare materials can be accessed with a phone call, a trip to the Division of Rare and Manuscript Collections in Kroch Library or a visit to rnc.library.cornell.edu/services/reference.php.

Gwen Glazer is a staff writer at Cornell University Library.



‘BECAUSE WE WROTE ABOUT SUBJECTS THAT ARE REALLY IMPORTANT TO US, EVEN IF THE WRITING WASN’T STRONG YOU STILL HAD TO GIVE PEOPLE YOUR RESPECT AND ATTENTION BECAUSE THEY WERE POURING THEIR HEARTS OUT.’

– HELEN HAVLAK ’11

Not with the program

Cornell is home to dozens of writers with no connection to the MFA program. These include faculty members in the sciences as well as the humanities, such as English professor Jonathan Monroe, a poet, and classics professor Fred Ahl, a poet and acclaimed translator of Greek and Latin epic poetry. Physicist Paul McEuen will publish his first mystery novel next year. Near Eastern studies associate professor Shawkat Toorawa has published poems in Creole, English and French and a short story in English.

Magnus Fiskesjö, assistant professor of anthropology, had his class write about the U.S.-Mexico barrier – as fiction. Some students wrote excellent papers, he says, for example deploying the perspective of a bird or an animal.

This semester, Billie Jean Isbell, professor emerita of anthropology, is teaching her novel “Finding Cholita” in an introductory anthropology course. The novel is a fictionalized account of her long-term research in Peru, which began in 1967 and was altered by the outbreak of war in the 1980s between Maoist Shining Path guerrillas and the Peruvian government. Isbell interviewed people who were displaced, tortured and raped.

“Novels are more readable than most ethnographies,” Isbell says, “and I wanted to protect the identities of people who told me stories about the war, disappearances and massacres.”

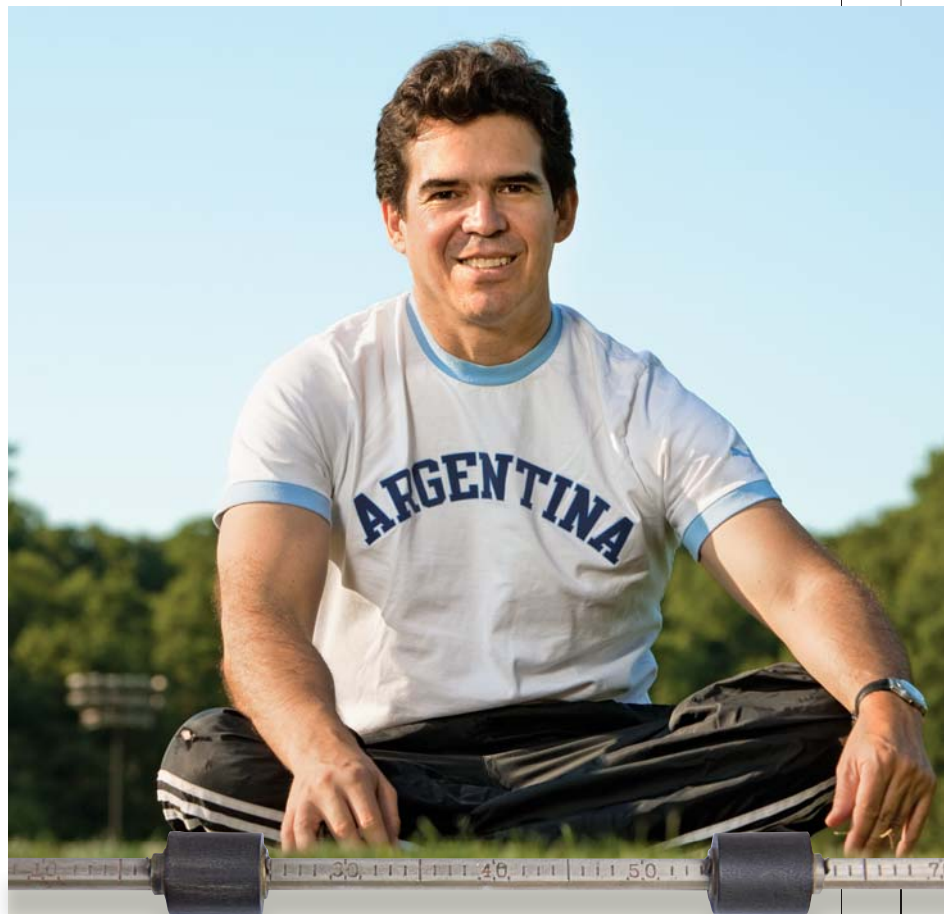
As a child in Bolivia, Edmundo Paz-Soldán took inspiration for his first short stories from Agatha Christie. He began writing seriously in his late teens, and in 1991, when Paz-Soldán was 24, his first novel was published to acclaim and won Bolivia’s most important literary prize. At Cornell, Paz-Soldán, a professor in Romance studies, teaches literature and culture. His seven novels have been translated into nine languages. In South America he is a widely read political writer, blogger and public intellectual.

“Whatever your professors tell you, you



“She was looking into the abyss and was beginning to see beyond it.”

– Billie Jean Isbell, from the novel “Finding Cholita”



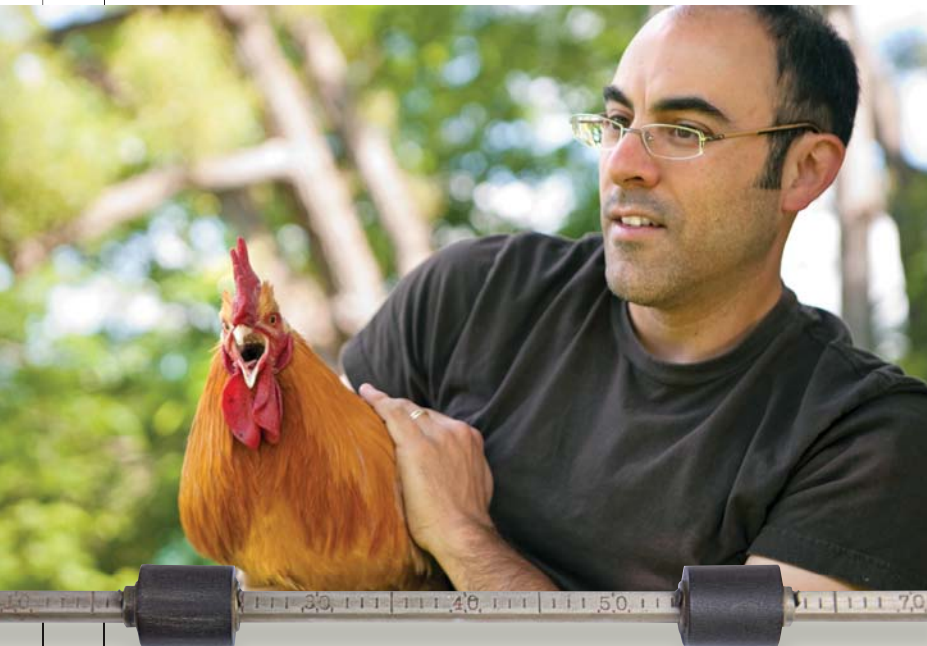
“Yes, that’s all you want: to write about the living and the dead.”

– Edmundo Paz-Soldán, from the novel “Los vivos y los muertos”



“All of them journeyed out of the neighborhood and outward into the massive unknown to become a part of the city’s migration. It might have strained lesser believers, might have broken their profound belief in hard work, were these women not made of gut and grist and a gleam of determination as blinding as the California sun.”

– Helena Viramontes, from “Their Dogs Came with Them: A Novel”



“Mailman does not consider that there might be more of life to live, more pain, more uncertainty: but even if it were so, it wouldn’t crush him, really. He would not object. Despite everything fifty-seven years have taught him, he would not object to a little bit more life.”

– J. Robert Lennon, from the novel “Mailman”

‘WHAT ALL YOUNG WRITERS LOOK FOR IS A “TRUE READER,” THE READER WHO CAN SEE NOT ONLY WHAT THE WRITER HAS DONE, BUT WHAT THE WRITER IS CAPABLE OF.’

– ROBERT MORGAN, ENGLISH PROFESSOR

should always question it,” says Paz-Soldán. “The best writers – like Kafka, Borges, Hemingway or Faulkner – show that you can have your own ideas about style. We can give general advice. But when you find your own voice, you may find that sometimes you should ignore our advice.”

Ultimately, says McClane, “Writing is a way to make sense of things. It’s always an act of revelation and self-discovery. It’s never boring. And if you add to the reservoir of wonder, you’ll always have a readership.”

Force and success

The process of writing has been a journey of self-discovery for English professor Helena Viramontes, director of the Creative Writing Program, who first shared her fiction at a Latino writers’ workshop in East Los Angeles in the early 1980s. The fruits of that workshop gained her admission to the UC-Irvine creative writing program, and her first story collection, “The Moths and Other Stories,” was published in 1985. Then her progress was slowed by raising two children, work and community service. Even so, nearly a decade later she earned her MFA and sold her thesis as her first novel, “Under the Feet of Jesus.”

“I don’t at all doubt that MFA programs work,” she says. “This is the only space where serious writers can engage in their craft. As you see students’ evolution, it’s remarkable. You can see by the sheer force and success of their work and the impact they make.”

There is no better example of this evolution than Melissa Bank, MFA ’88, who returned to Cornell to teach in spring 2009. The author of the best-selling short story collection “The Girls’ Guide to Hunting and Fishing” and the novel “The Wonder Spot,” Bank declares, “I learned everything you can learn from other people about craft in an incredibly supportive environment.”

Cornell’s MFA program, she says, “is kind of miraculous, and the faculty are open-armed, very generous, thoughtful, inspiring people.

“I know that I turned into a better writer there.”

T H E E N D

‘Mischievous abandon’ and solidarity in a first creative writing class

PROVIDED



Sana Krasikov '01 is the author of "One More Year," which was a finalist for the 2009 PEN/Hemingway Award and The New York Public Library's Young Lions Fiction Award. Krasikov won the 2009 Sami Rohr Prize for Jewish Literature and was one of the National Book Foundation's "5 under 35" honorees for 2008.

STEEPLING
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LYDIA HAD
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— SANA KRASIKOV '01

During my junior year at Cornell, I signed up for my first writing course – a class called The Art of the Essay. Walking up the hill to drop off my writing sample, I caught up to Scott Aaronson, a kid who lived in my house. Scott was 18 and already a senior starting his master's in artificial intelligence. Though it was the middle of January, he was wearing a T-shirt and rubber house slippers without socks. Scott could usually be found cackling nerdily in the basement computer room, or blocking my way during kitchen cleanups, where he'd stand pondering a dishrag.

Now, to my surprise, he was clutching a rolled-up piece of paper and heading for the same drop-box I was. "Hey, Scott," I asked, "what's your submission about?"

"Big numbers," he said.

Probably *fan fiction*, I thought.

When we returned to the house, he printed out a copy. His essay was indeed the history of big numbers, and how each successive generation of mathematicians sought ever bigger numbers, prompting cryptologist Alan Turing to invent the "Busy Beaver," a theoretical machine that bustled along a tape of squares marked with 1's and 0's. Turing's search for the biggest number led him finally to the discovery of modern computing. I read to the end without stopping. Scott made the epic search read like the Argonauts' quest for the Golden Fleece.

Scott and I got into the class, as well as nine other students all pursuing their particular

preoccupations. I remember Meghan, an aspiring flight attendant, who wrote about the scourge of public urination in Paris, and Will, a quiet environmental science major who once crossed a bridge in Guatemala and watched a man behind him stumble, fall and slowly drown in the rapids below. There was Stacy, an unjustly beautiful girl who wrote about running her parents' karaoke bar, and Justin, a rock-climbing instructor who wrote about having to part with his first doll after getting the message that boys didn't play with dolls. Our teacher, Lydia Fakundiny, enjoined us to read our essays aloud to each other slowly and with feeling.

"Never sell your words short," she'd command when one of us relapsed into mumbles. Steepling her long fingers, she'd signal for the reader to start again. Lydia had us learn by mimicking the masters, Hemingway and Virginia Woolf, but the real fun came in mimicking each other; by the end we'd come to know one another's writing so well that even Lydia couldn't guess which was original and which the clever imitation.

The memory of that class moved me to apply to Iowa's writing program a few years later. I sought the "creative community" that I'd heard other writers gush about. I did find a community, but it was less playful, more ... courtly. The writers were older and already involved in "complicated" and sometimes neurotic relationships with their craft. After a while I began to wonder if my memory of the mischievous abandon of Lydia's class, and the solidarity I'd felt there, was as unreliable as the memory of first love.

A few months ago, I saw Scott again. We'd arranged to have brunch with some old friends the day after New Year's. Another January afternoon, but this time Scott was more appropriately dressed in a scarf and pea coat. He'd become a computer science professor and was still writing just as charmingly about topics I could barely understand. He was keeping a popular blog at MIT, where he chronicled his "metaphysical spoutings" about quantum complexity. I told him about my first book of short stories. Just sitting in that booth in Harlem for half an hour conjured up the peculiar madness and camaraderie of our first writing class at Cornell.

BY DANIEL ALOI

Africana studies at 40: Pioneering and leading

Cornell's Africana Studies and Research Center, established during a time of political struggle and minority exclusion on campuses nationwide, is entering its 40th year with its sights set squarely on the future.

Conceived as an independent, transdisciplinary unit, ASRC encompasses the study of African, African-American and African diaspora peoples, history, culture and ideas. The center produces publications, sponsors outreach and hosts conferences and prominent authors and scholars.

The center has forged academic ties across campus from its inception, when its course credits were accepted in four Cornell colleges. "[We have] very productive scholars doing interdisciplinary work," says Salah Hassan, ASRC director since 2005. "We've always included scholars who work in more than one area."

The center has 11 dedicated faculty members, plus four lecturers and visiting scholar Ushari Khalil from Sudan. It is approaching a gender balance in hiring, with four "highly engaged" women faculty members, Hassan says, "and also an intellectual balance, with appointments in the social sciences, in cultural studies, and the arts and humanities."

ASRC will offer 40 undergraduate and graduate-level courses in fall 2009 and 47 in spring 2010 (some cross-listed with other departments), including writing seminars, thesis and independent study.

After an external review based on a critical self-study in 2008, ASRC established an advisory council of prominent scholars from outside Cornell to guide implementation of the review's recommendations.

Hassan highlights the recent strides Africana has made, and initiatives in its five-year plan for growth and development. They include:

- recruitment of senior faculty, with five new hires since 2008: associate professor of African-American literature Riché Richardson, an artist and a cultural envoy to Paris in early 2009; Grant Farred, a cultural studies theorist and editor of *South Atlantic Quarterly*; Judith Byfield, a historian and vice president of the African Studies Association; Carole Boyce Davies, a gender theorist who helped build the African Diaspora Program at Florida International University; and Travis Lars Gosa, a sociologist joining the faculty this fall, specializing in hip-hop, African-American youth culture and education.
- building an accredited Ph.D. program in African and



Students Elizabeth Thomas, Christine Bernard, Tara Learnan and Lasonia Gidney in 1994.



Civil rights veteran activist Robert Moses, with Cornell's James Turner, emeritus professor and former director of the Africana Studies and Research Center during Moses' 2005 visit to Cornell.

African-American studies. The Graduate School will consider the proposal this fall.

- expanding the undergraduate curriculum. "We've added 17 courses, with a balance of social sciences and humanities," Hassan says.

- an African languages curriculum. In addition to Kiswahili (taught for 35 years) and Arabic (in collaboration with Near Eastern Studies), the center has added Yoruba and Zulu, and offers one-to-one instruction in other languages when needed.

- linkages to African universities. Edited volumes are being published from two joint conferences with Addis Ababa University, one at Cornell on modernity and monarchy in Ethiopia, and one in Addis Ababa on Darfur and crisis of governance in Sudan. The center is also pursuing a study abroad program through professor emerita Anne Adams, who directs the W.E.B. DuBois Center in Ghana.

- forming an advisory council that will include Africana alumni.

"We've expanded the notion of what academia can look like," Hassan says. "We remain socially and intellectually engaged, and we want to remain connected to issues of concern to African-Americans and the global African community."

Africana's foundations

The Africana Center and its achievements would not have

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The Africana Studies and Research Center on North Triphammer Road.

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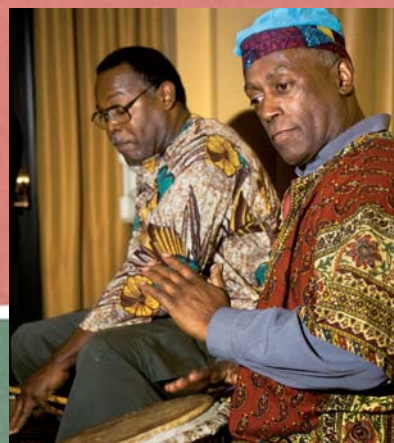
Professor Jay Saunders Redding with visiting professor Eleanor Traylor at the Africana Center.



left, chats
fessor and
d Research
ll and Ithaca.



Robert L. Harris Jr. teaching in the early 1970s.



A scene from the prededication ceremony and celebration at the Africana Studies and Research Center in February 2005.

been accessible in mid-1960s academia, says James Turner, founding director of ASRC from 1968-86. At that time, a Eurocentric construction of knowledge was dominant, and black students nationwide campaigned for educational reform.

“Africa was regarded as a continent of modest civilization and unimportant in international geo-politics,” Turner says. “African-Americans were not recognized for their vital role in the making and building of America, especially economically and culturally.”

The pilot for what became Africana studies at Cornell came in 1968-69, with courses in African-American literature and politics of the civil rights movement, taught by Society for the Humanities visiting fellows Michael Thelwell, Cleve Sellers and Haki Madhubuti.

The proposed center was actively supported by Keith Kennedy (then associate dean in the College of Agriculture), President James Perkins and his successor, Dale Corson, whose “vision and determination to support African-American studies was very important,” Turner recalls.

The center opened in September 1969 with 160 students, 10 courses and seven faculty members. The original facility at 320 Wait Ave. was destroyed by arson in April 1970, and in 1971 ASRC moved to 310 Triphammer Road. That building was renovated and rededicated in 2005 with an expanded library and a multipurpose room accommodating 150 people.

Establishing a research library – as a resource for visiting scholars and for students and faculty on campus – was crucial to the center’s mission.

Cornell was not just swept along in the black studies movement; it emerged as a leader in the newly established field of Africana studies.

With a unified rather than a discipline- or area-bound approach, “the Africana center provided a model that units at other universities sought to emulate,” Hassan says, noting such peer institutions as Harvard, Princeton, Northwestern and Yale. “It brought Africana and African-American studies together in one place” instead of being split among various departments.

In 1973 ASRC granted the first master’s degree in a pioneering and still pre-eminent graduate program in African and African-American studies. By 1976 the number of students and course offerings would more than double from 1969 levels.

The center’s stature and reputation grew when it attracted many distinguished scholars and intellectuals to Cornell. Its success also opened intellectual space for women’s studies, Latino studies and Asian-American studies at Cornell, Turner points out. Students enrolled in courses at the Africana center also reflect all demographic sectors of Cornell.

“From the beginning it was our commitment to develop a first-class academic program with an integrated curriculum,” Turner says. “Africana studies has enhanced pedagogy and the intellectual environment at Cornell by the construction of a rigorous scholarly discipline that has broadened the parameters of education.”

Lawns grow long and roofs go green in effort to cut campus costs



To cut mowing costs and naturalize campus landscapes, planners have let the grass below the Johnson Art Museum grow into meadow.

LANDSCAPE PLANNERS USED THE STORM WATER DISPOSAL STREAM 'TO REPLICATE THE AESTHETICS OF A NATURAL CREEK.'

– DAVID CUTTER,
LANDSCAPE ARCHITECT

As Cornell becomes more sustainable – and cuts costs – Cornellians are seeing fewer lawns and more meadows on campus, longer grass and more green roofs and functional plantings.

At the same time, Cornell's landscape planners are working to naturalize the look and feel of central spaces, maintain such familiar historical gardens as those around the A.D. White House and support the long-standing tradition of using the landscape as an extended research and teaching classroom.

Landscape designers also are “relying more and more on endowments and gifts” to manage spaces, says David Cutter, landscape architect for Planning, Design and Construction at Cornell's Facilities Services.

Such open-space initiatives are written into the Comprehensive Master Plan for the Ithaca Campus, which has “a very strong landscape focus,” says Cutter. As Cornell develops and grows, “we need to make sure such development fits into a larger landscape plan.”

Cornell's campus combines both urban (managed by the Grounds Department) and country settings (managed by Farm Services and the Cornell Plantations), and the landscape varies from gorges, greens and gateways to quads, streets and walkways. Each setting requires an integrated management plan, Cutter adds.

Naturalization

and sustainability have been central themes that run throughout the landscape plan. For example, the Grounds Department plans to include plantings between curbs and sidewalks to enhance aesthetics, purify water and reduce storm runoff and pollution into Cayuga Lake, as well as supplement tree-root systems.

Similarly, Kroch Library, the Cornell Store, several West Campus buildings, Weill Hall and Mann Library all have green roofs. The Susan A. Henry Garden Terrace on the Mann Library rooftop is edged with 2-by-2-foot trays with sedum plant varieties growing in lightweight gravel, which reduces weeds and mimics sedum's native rocky alpine environment. The plantings insulate the building from heat, limit sun and heat damage, extend the roof's life and reduce water runoff.

Landscape planners have also naturalized the Wee Stinky Glen that runs diagonally across campus from Beebe Lake past the A.D. White House, between Sage and Day halls, and on to West Campus and Llenroc. Planners used the storm water disposal stream “to replicate the aesthetics of a natural creek,” says Cutter.

The Grounds Department has also cut costs by raising its mower blades to allow lawns to grow to four inches, which extends the grass-root systems; because grass won't grow much longer, it reduces the need to mow as often. And researchers are currently testing sustainable, low-maintenance fescue grasses on the steep slope behind Uris Library. The turf is being developed by Cornell researchers in plots near Game Farm Road.

Campus planners have also identified key little-used spaces, mostly on the edges of campus but also below the Herbert F. Johnson Museum of Art, where the grass has been left to grow into meadow.



The Susan A. Henry Garden Terrace is part of a green roof on top of Mann Library.

Famed folk musician Peter Yarrow celebrated his 50th Cornell reunion in June 2009 by leading a group of alumni in songs and remembrances of a folklore course known in the 1950s as “Romp-n-Stomp.”



BY DANIEL ALOI

Peter Yarrow '59 – of Peter, Paul and Mary fame – reflects on ‘Romp-n-Stomp’

Peter Yarrow '59 remembers his time as a guitar-wielding student instructor in a popular folklore class at Cornell as a watershed experience, shaping his life and career as a professional musician.

Professor Harold Thompson's American Folk Literature course, colloquially known on campus as “Romp-n-Stomp,” was a highlight of late-1950s student life at Cornell, Yarrow says.

The New York City native says Cornell was “a place where I felt comfortable. They had a folk

song club, and then I got a job teaching in this course! It paid \$500 a year, at that time about 20 percent of what a year at Cornell cost; and I got to park my \$50 car on campus.”

For an hour three times a week, Thompson would lecture for 20 or 30 minutes, then a student musician would lead the class in songs related to the topics Thompson had just discussed. They sang traditional folk songs and murder ballads, Dust Bowl songs made popular by Woody Guthrie, and songs of freedom and slavery that spoke to the pressing issues of the civil rights movement.

“The reason ‘Romp-n-Stomp’ was so popular was no one failed this course,” Yarrow says. “There was always a cadre of football players who, when awake, probably had no idea what I was talking about.”

He did manage to connect with his fellow students, however, by having them sing along to bloody tales of lovelorn retribution.

“My memory of ‘Romp-n-Stomp’ is that one of the types of song that opened people up to something unusual was murder ballads,” Yarrow says.

Within a year of leaving Cornell, Yarrow would be

preparing for his debut with Mary Travers and Noel Paul Stookey, as Peter, Paul and Mary – originally dubbed “The Ivy League Three.” They were one of the most popular acts of the 1960s, giving Bob Dylan his first hits.

“If you take what I learned in ‘Romp-n-Stomp’ and look at Peter, Paul and Mary in the march on Washington in 1963, singing ‘Blowin’ in the Wind’ and ‘If I Had a Hammer,’ it was just an extrapolation from ‘Romp-n-Stomp,’” Yarrow says.

Yarrow turned out to be the last student to lead the course, which ended when Thompson retired in 1959.

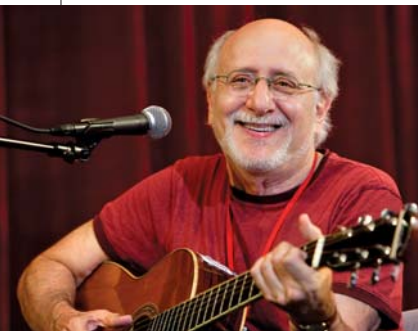
Thompson's course was the subject of a forum and concert with Yarrow and other “Romp-n-Stomp” alumni during the 2009 Cornell Reunion, held in June. His class's 50th was the first Reunion Yarrow had attended.

The Class of 1959 presented “Romping-n-Stomping: A Revival,” drawing more than 900 people to Bailey Hall and keeping them singing along for 90 minutes. Yarrow led a circle of folk music-playing Cornellians in a program of songs – from “Down by the Riverside” to “Blowin’ in the Wind” – and pausing to comment on their memories of Thompson and the class.

Yarrow was joined onstage by Ellen Stekert '57, another student instructor in Thompson's class from 1955-57, who also made a career as a musician; Joel Hendler '58, Harry Petchesky '59, Stan Lomax '59 (a cousin to musicologists Alan and John Lomax, a fact he said pleased Thompson), and professor of history Richard Polenber, whose writing seminar, The Blues and American Culture, carries on some of Thompson's legacy for contemporary Cornell students.

Yarrow and Stekert played guitar, Polenber and Hendler played banjo, and all the participants sang harmony while urging the audience to sing along with them. Hendler subverted a hippie-era put-down by leading a singalong of “Kumbaya.”

Yarrow's career demands kept him from coming to a Cornell Reunion for many years. He currently works with his nonprofit organization, Operation Respect, geared to giving schoolchildren a safe, compassionate environment in which to learn.



BY ANNE JU

From teacher training to cultural exchange, students get to know Rwanda



Cornell student Jonah Brill trains teachers at Kagugu Primary School how to use the One Laptop Per Child computers.



Brian Matuszewski '11 learns how to weave a basket at a women's cooperative in Iby'iwacu cultural village, Rwanda.

THE TEACHERS
VOLUNTEERED
“DEEPLY
MOVING
STORIES
ABOUT
PERSONAL
TRAGEDY.”

– KIT DOBYNS '12

As a student of Africana studies, Kit Dobyns '12 figured that spending time in Africa would transcend anything he could learn from a textbook. So along with six other Cornell students, Dobyns spent three weeks in Rwanda this summer opening his mind to the developing world.

The service-learning trip was organized by the Cornell Public Service Center and conceived by Stephen Paletta '87, whose nonprofit organization, the International Education Exchange, hosted the Cornell students.

Paletta won the reality television show “Oprah’s Big Give” in April 2008, and he used his winnings to expand IEE, as well as establish a second nonprofit that highlights the work of social entrepreneurs and philanthropists. Following the show, Paletta also reached out to his alma mater with the hope of getting students interested in serving the country he’d come to love.

“Because of the show and because of some of the money I’ve won and had been able to give back to IEE, we decided to grow it tremendously,” Paletta said of the organization.

The trip’s purpose was twofold, according to Savannah Keith, coordinator of IEE projects in Rwanda and organizer of the trip. IEE, which supports primary schools with teacher training, construction projects and pen-pal programs with U.S. schools, wanted to expose college students to a nongovernmental organization making an impact in a developing country. They also wanted to use

the students’ skills to train teachers in Rwanda in technology and English, she said.

The students were accompanied by John Weiss, associate professor of history, and Robin Remick, the ILR School’s director of international programs. Working with staff at IEE, the students spent several days working with teachers at Kagugu Primary School. At another school in Rwinkwavu, the students helped teachers get familiar with computers donated through the nonprofit One Laptop Per Child program.

Other highlights of the trip: traveling to Kigali Health Institute to meet with students and staff, visiting genocide memorials, hiking to observe gorillas and visiting a women’s cooperative.

Dobyns, a College Scholar in Africana studies and economics, enjoyed interacting with the teachers, some of whom volunteered “deeply moving stories about personal tragedy.”

Brian Matuszewski '11, an ILR major, was especially impressed by a Rwandan social entrepreneur he met whose agency works to make communities benefit simultaneously from conservation and tourism.

“I was incredibly fascinated with his social business model and considered him to be quite an inspirational person,” Matuszewski said.

Keith said the students brought a unique perspective and dynamic personalities to the trip. “Every one of them came with passion, energy, flexibility and an eagerness to learn that really brought life to the trip,” she said.

Architecture seminar explores NYC's 'Common Ground'

Cornell's 14 graduating Master of Architecture II (M.Arch.2) students held their final design research seminar this summer at the College of Architecture, Art and Planning's New York City studio. M.Arch.2 is a three-semester, post-professional degree program for architecture students who have an accredited bachelor or master of architecture degree and some professional experience. Students can focus on one of five areas of investigation: discourse, urbanism, media, technology or ecology.

The 10-week seminar was led by program coordinator and visiting assistant professor Mark Morris, with the participation of Cornell faculty Mary Woods, Christian Otto and Henry Richardson; and invited critics including Kathy Battista, education program director at Sotheby's. For their two-week module, "Common Ground," visiting critics Lebbeus Woods and Christoph a. Kumpusch focused on examining urban life and themes inspired by various New York City locations.

Visiting critic Lebbeus Woods, middle, confers with guest critics Shannon Mattern, professor of media studies and film at Parsons The New School of Design, and Anthony Titus, professor at Cooper Union. In the background is a "Common Ground" project by student Bogeng Chen and in the foreground, an installation by Joshua Nason.



"If we can interpret this common ground, we can interpret relevant but previously hidden dimensions of living in the city," Woods said. "This is the ground surface of streets, sidewalks, parks, plazas and other – even informal – public spaces, comprising the ground plane we share with others we do not personally know."

During one two-week module, students studied ordinary city surfaces and environments – sidewalks, pavement, parks, noises and markings on streets – that could be interpreted to help depict the rich and diverse lives and everyday scenarios taking place within the cityscape.

Manasi Pandey, from Gujarat, India, spoke highly of the seminar and the program as she presented "Ephemerality," a digital collage of photos depicting a new world emerging and disappearing on puddles of water as the water evaporates. "During the one-year program, I was able to focus on my chosen discipline while investigating other interesting and relevant topics to push my experience and knowledge as an architect," she said. Pandey also acknowledged the assistance of financial support from the university.

For his interactive project "Body Politics," Texan Joshua Nason imagined a world without divisions or boundaries, where people and space bleed into one another to become one. Nason, who plans to teach architecture, said he was drawn to the program's "balance of structure and creativity and its strength in theory and criticism. I wanted a school that challenged me, and Cornell offered just that."

Also joining the final discussion were Miodrag Mitrasinovic, Urban and Transdisciplinary Design Chair at Parsons The New School for Design; Shannon Mattern, media studies and film professor at The New School; and Anthony Titus, professor at Cooper Union's Irwin S. Chanin School of Architecture.

AAP NYC offers undergraduate and graduate students an opportunity to live and study in a vital urban center, with a full roster of courses and access to New York City's artistic, historical and cultural resources. For more information, visit aap.cornell.edu/nyc. For information on the M.Arch.2 program, visit aap.cornell.edu/arch/programs/marchpost.cfm.

The College of Architecture, Art and Planning's New York City Center, at 50 W. 17th St. in Manhattan.

IN OUR NEXT ISSUE:

The winter issue of Ezra will take a comprehensive look at Cornell in New York City and how many of Cornell's colleges, schools and programs are a vital part of the Big Apple and afford students and faculty unique opportunities.

BY KRISHNA RAMANUJAN

Cornell ecologist studies evolution by bringing century-old eggs to life



HAIRSTON LAB/PROVIDED

Above: Professor Nelson Hairston takes samples from a sediment emergence trap at the bottom of a lake.

Inset: Hairston, professor and chair of Cornell's Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology, studies long-dormant eggs buried in lake sediments.

Suspending a life in time is a theme that normally finds itself in the pages of science fiction, but now such ideas have become a reality in the annals of science.

Cornell ecologist Nelson Hairston Jr. is a pioneer in a field known loosely as “resurrection ecology,” in which researchers study the eggs of such creatures as zooplankton – tiny, free-floating water animals – that get buried in lake sediments but can remain viable for decades or even centuries. By hatching these eggs, Hairston and others can compare time-suspended hatchlings with their more contemporary counterparts to better understand how a species may have evolved in the meantime.

The researchers take sediment cores from lake

floors to extract the eggs; the deeper the egg lies in the core, the older it is. They then place the eggs in optimal hatching conditions, such as those found in spring in a temperate lake, and let nature take its course.

“We can resurrect them and discover what life was like in the past,” said Hairston, who came to Cornell in 1985 and is a professor and chair of Cornell’s Department of Ecology and Evolutionary Biology. “Paleo-ecologists study microfossils, but you can’t understand much physiologically or behaviorally” with that approach, he said.

Hairston first became interested in the possibilities of studying dormant eggs in the late 1970s, when he was an assistant professor

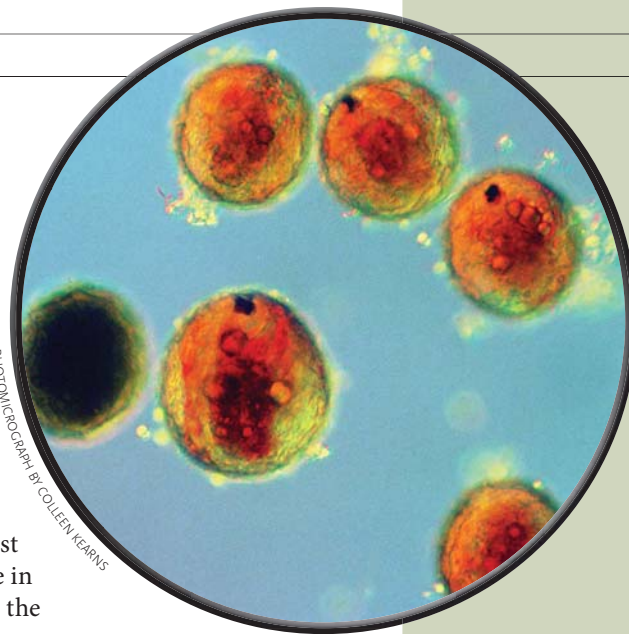
of zoology at the University of Rhode Island. There, he noticed that the little red crustaceans – known as copepods – in the pristine lake behind his Rhode Island home disappeared in the summer, only to return as larvae in the fall.

The observation prompted him to study why they disappear; his research revealed that the copepods stay active under the ice in the winter, but they die out as their eggs lie dormant on the lake floor through the summer when the lake's fish are most active. When the fish become less active in the fall, larvae hatch from the eggs, and the copepods continue their life cycle.

This time suspension, when zooplankton pause their life cycles to avoid heavy predation or harsh seasonal and environmental conditions, also increases a species' local gene pool, with up to a century's worth of genetic material stored in a lake bed, Hairston said. When insects, nesting fish and boat anchors stir the mud, they can release old eggs that hatch and offer a wider variety of genetic material to the contemporary population.

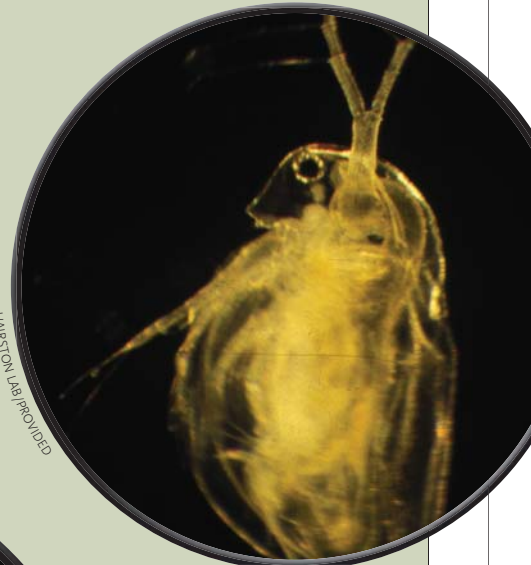
In 1999 Hairston and colleagues published a paper in *Nature* that described how 40-year-old resurrected eggs could answer whether tiny crustaceans called *Daphnia* in central Europe's Lake Constance had evolved to survive rising levels of toxic cyanobacteria, known as blue-green algae. In the 1970s, phosphorus levels from pollution rose in the lake, increasing the numbers of cyanobacteria. The researchers hatched eggs from the 1960s and found they could not survive the toxic lake conditions, but *Daphnia* from the 1970s had adapted and survived.

Hairston and colleagues have organized a resurrection ecology symposium this September in Herzberg, Switzerland, to bring together researchers in this growing new field.



PHOTOMICROGRAPH BY COLLEEN KEARNS

Left: These dormant *Daphnia* eggs, each about 100 micrometers in diameter, can sit in sediments for hundreds of years and still hatch if returned to the surface (to receive light and oxygen cues to hatch). The eye spot of the reddish embryos is visible in eggs with transparent cases (getting ready to hatch). The brown egg is still dormant.



HAIRSTON LAB PROVIDED

Right: A daphnid, a tiny crustacean that measures 1.2 mm in length.



HAIRSTON LAB PROVIDED

Left: *Daphnia* dormant eggs in specialized pigmented, chitinous cases called ephippia, which are approximately 600 micrometers on the long axis.



Left: A female copepod carries a bright red egg sac at the base of her body. (Actual size is approximately 2 mm.) These eggs were likely hatched within a few days of this photomicrograph.



PHOTOMICROGRAPH BY P. SPAK

Right: *Daphnia* neonate emerge from a dormant egg. Approximate size is 300 micrometers.

Sudan solutions, housing hubris, marriage motivations, trail traipsing, the dollar's demise

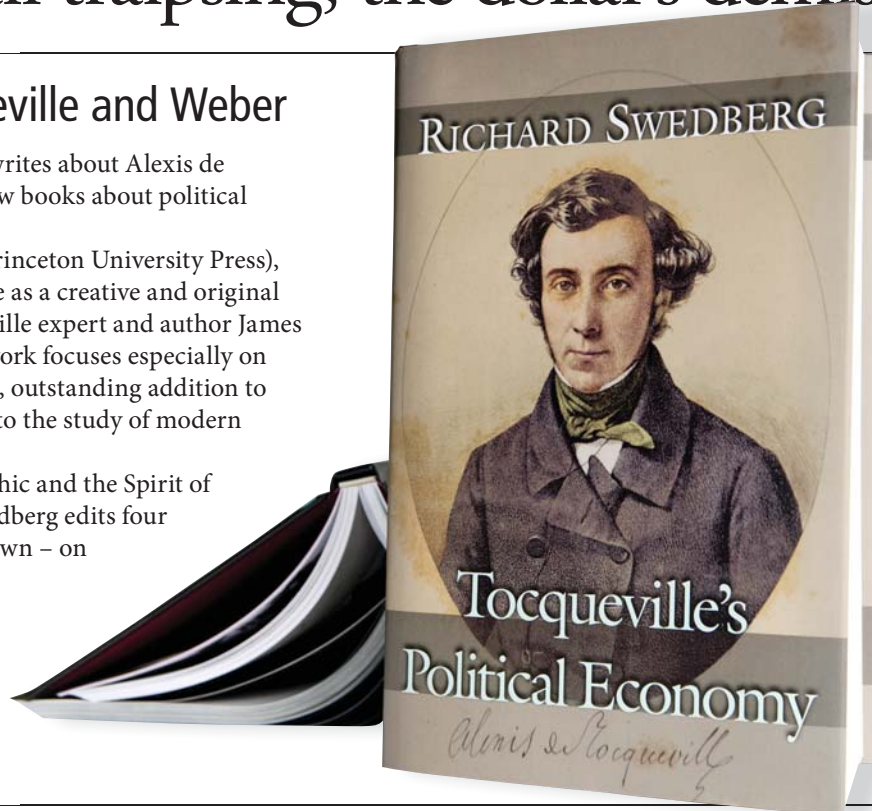
Swedberg takes on Tocqueville and Weber

Sociology professor Richard Swedberg writes about Alexis de Tocqueville and edits Max Weber in two new books about political economy in the 19th century.

In "Tocqueville's Political Economy" (Princeton University Press), Swedberg "persuasively presents Tocqueville as a creative and original analyst of economic topics," writes Tocqueville expert and author James T. Schleifer in a cover review. "Swedberg's work focuses especially on Tocqueville's way of thinking, and is a fresh, outstanding addition to contemporary Tocqueville scholarship and to the study of modern economic thought."

In the new edition of "The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism" (Norton Critical Editions), Swedberg edits four critical essays – and contributes one of his own – on Weber's landmark 1904 tome.

"From the moment that it was published, Weber's study has led to a stormy debate that is still going on," Swedberg writes. "Its readers either admire the arguments in 'The Protestant Ethic' or dislike them."



Collaborating on solutions in the Sudan

Salah Hassan, director of the Africana Studies and Research Center and professor of African and African diaspora art history, is the co-editor of a new volume, "Darfur and the Crisis of Governance in Sudan: A Critical Reader" (Cornell University Press, 2009),

about the ongoing conflict in the western Sudanese region of Darfur. Hassan

edited the book with Carina Ray, assistant professor of African and black Atlantic history at Fordham University.

The book aims to go beyond what most coverage of the crisis provides – a cursory understanding of the historical, economic, political, sociological and environmental factors that contribute to the conflict – to offer perspectives by the people of Darfur and the Sudan. As a result of this superficial coverage, Sudanese civil society's active engagement in resolving the country's problems goes unrecognized, the book's editors say.

The volume brings together a diverse group of contributors from Sudan and beyond – scholars, activists, NGO and aid workers, members of government and the Darfurian rebel movements, and artists – who provide a comprehensive, balanced and nuanced account of the conflict's roots and the

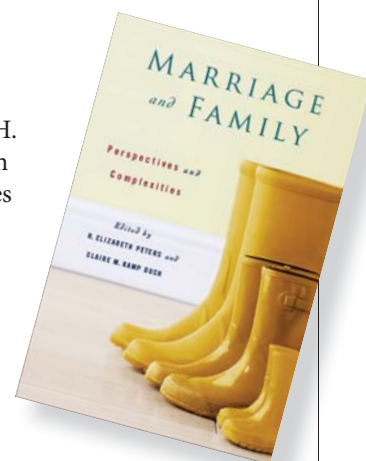
contemporary realities that shape the experiences of those living in the region.

The book also features a portfolio of full-color photographs of daily life in Darfur by photographer Issam A. Abdelhafiez.

'I do' ... but why?

Why do people get married? Policy analysis and management professor H. Elizabeth Peters explores the question in "Marriage and Family: Perspectives and Complexities," which she co-edited with Ohio State University sociologist Claire Kamp Dush.

The book, published by Columbia University Press, explores the motivation to marry and the role of matrimony in a diverse group of men and women from a variety of perspectives, including historical, cross-cultural, gendered, demographic, socio-biological and social-psychological. Comparing empirical data from emerging family types (single, co-parent, gay and lesbian, among others) and studies of traditional nuclear families, Peters and Kamp Dush also consider the effect of public policy and recent economic developments on the practice of marriage and the stabilization or destabilization of family.



Predicting the future of the dollar

Predictions of the U.S. dollar's demise as an international currency have accompanied major international financial crises for the past four decades. In "The Future of the Dollar" (Cornell University Press, 2009, a "Cornell Studies in Money" book), co-editor Jonathan Kirshner, professor of government, explores analysts' and scholars' profound disagreements about this question.

For half a century, the United States has garnered substantial political and economic benefits as a result of the dollar's de facto role as a global currency. In recent years, however, the dollar's preponderant position in world markets has been challenged. The dollar has been more volatile than ever against foreign currencies, and various nations have switched to non-dollar instruments in their transactions. China and the Arab Gulf states continue to hold massive amounts of U.S. government obligations, in effect subsidizing U.S. current account deficits, and those holdings are a point of potential vulnerability for American policy.

The book's other co-editor is Eric Helleiner, professor of political science at the Balsillie School of International Affairs, University of Waterloo, Canada.

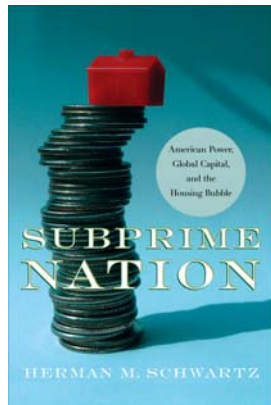
'Subprime Nation'

U.S. growth and power worldwide over the last 20 years have depended in large part on domestic housing markets, asserts Herman Schwartz in "Subprime Nation: American Power, Global Capital and the Housing Bubble" (Cornell University Press, 2009, a "Cornell Studies in Money" book).

Schwartz, M.A. '84, Ph.D. '86, professor of politics at the University of Virginia, explains that mortgage-based securities attracted a cascade of overseas capital into the U.S. economy. High levels of private home ownership, particularly in the United States and the United Kingdom, helped pull in a disproportionately large share of world capital flows, says the book.

Beginning in mid-2008, mortgage lenders became ever more eager to extend housing loans, for the more mortgage packages they securitized, the higher their profits. As a result, they were dangerously inventive in creating new mortgage products, notably adjustable-rate and subprime mortgages, to attract new, mainly first-time, buyers into the housing market.

However, mortgage-based instruments work only when confidence in the mortgage system is maintained, Schwartz says. Regulatory failures in the U.S. savings and loan sector, the accounting crisis that led to the extinction of Arthur Andersen



LLP and the subprime crisis that destroyed Lehman Brothers and Merrill Lynch and damaged many other big financial institutions have jeopardized a significant engine of economic growth.

Schwartz concentrates on the effect of U.S. regulatory failure on the international economy. He argues that the "local" problem of the housing crisis carries substantial and ongoing risks for U.S. economic health, the continuing primacy of the U.S. dollar in international financial circles and U.S. hegemony in the world system.

Hit the trail

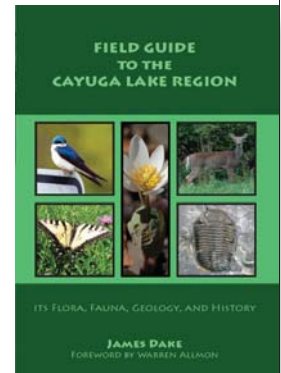
Going for a hike? Check out "Field Guide to the Cayuga Lake Region: Its Flora, Fauna, Geology and History," a new book by James Dake and colleagues at the Cornell-affiliated Paleontological Research Institution and the Cayuga Nature Center.

The field guide focuses on the areas surrounding Cayuga Lake, with sections on local history and geology, and descriptions of plant life and wildlife found across the region.

The guide is intended for hikers, summer camps and those who simply want to explore the area, says Paula Mikkelsen, PRI's associate director for science and director of publications. "I've already used it in my own backyard," she said.

Author Dake acts as the liaison between PRI and the nature center, fostering the collaboration between the two organizations. The book was funded with a grant from the Triad Foundation and published by PRI.

"Field Guide to the Cayuga Lake Region" can be purchased online at museumoftheearth.org and at the Museum of the Earth's gift shop.



Courting regional activists

David B. Reynolds (Ph.D., '93) is the co-author of "A New New Deal: How Regional Activism Will Reshape the American Labor Movement" (Cornell University Press, 2009), which details a plan to revitalize American labor activism and build stronger connections and a sense of common purpose between labor and community organizations.

Reynolds and co-author Amy B. Dean say that alliances organized at the regional level are the most effective tool to build a voice for working people in the workplace, community and halls of government. Reynolds and Dean argue that workplace battles should be seen not as the parochial concerns of isolated workers, but a fundamental struggle for America's future.

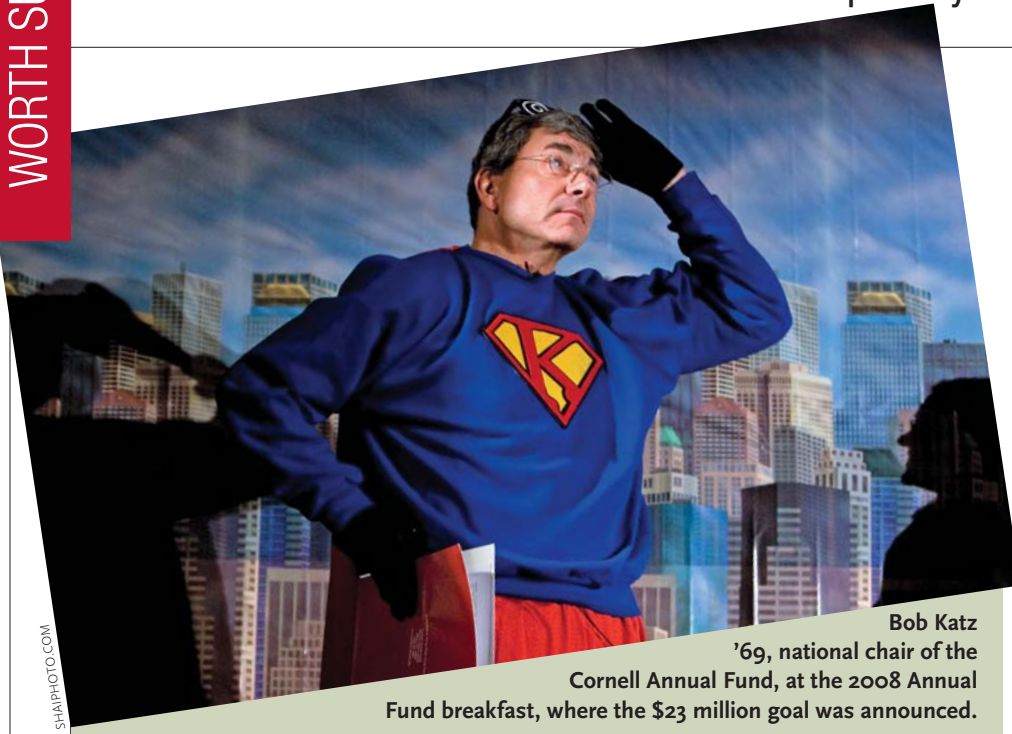
Reynolds is a labor extension coordinator at the Labor Studies Center of Wayne State University and a field organizer for Building Partnerships U.S.A.



BY EMILY HOPKINS

Small change, big deal

How the Cornell Annual Fund came out on top in a year that was the pits



Bob Katz
'69, national chair of the
Cornell Annual Fund, at the 2008 Annual
Fund breakfast, where the \$23 million goal was announced.

The retirement funds of millions of Americans melted away, the real estate bubble burst and Cornell's endowment – like the endowments of universities across the country – was diminished by almost a third.

Maya Gasuk, director of the Cornell Annual Fund since 2001, wasn't sure it was possible, in such a dire economy, to meet the fund's \$23 million fundraising goal for the 2008-09 fiscal year.

"In May, it was clear we needed to have a better June than we'd ever had in our history," she says.

Luckily, a number of factors came together to give Cornell the June it needed. There was an innovative matching campaign, a highly effective Parents Committee that solicited gifts from non-alumni parents, and record-breaking giving from reunion classes. There was also a flood of larger-than-usual gifts, thanks in part to National Annual Fund Chair Bob Katz and Chairman of the Board of Trustees Pete Meinig, who personally secured gifts on Cornell's behalf.

"It's a testament to our alumni,

parents, and friends that they stuck by Cornell during a rough, rough time," says Charlie Phlegar, vice president for Alumni Affairs and Development.

Twenty-three million might not sound like a lot of money in the context of the \$4 billion *Far Above* ... fundraising campaign, and at a university that regularly raises \$300-\$400 million annually, but, as Peter Lepage, the Harold Tanner Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, explains it, "Annual Fund income is especially important because of its immediacy."

Unlike endowment gifts, the principal of which must be invested forever, the Annual Fund is a pot of unrestricted money that can be spent right away.

"The Annual Fund helps the college meet a range of needs," says Lepage, "from keeping a key program running while we work very hard to raise the money required to fully endow it, to supporting students, to retaining star faculty."

"It would take an additional \$500 million of endowment," President David J. Skorton has said, "to generate what the Annual Fund provides in current-use support every year."

To encourage graduates of the past 10 years to give, Trustee Martin Tang funded the M.A.R.T.I.N (My Annual Reason To Invest Now) challenge, giving Cornell \$25 for every qualifying gift from young alumni.

"I know it's not much," a recent graduate wrote to Tang in an e-mail, "but I guess if we all got together and did our bit that would amount to a large contribution!" And it did: the challenge raised \$166,000 from more than 2,000 young alumni.

On June 30 at 11:53 p.m., someone clicked the "make a gift now" button on the Annual Fund's Web site and made the last gift of the fiscal year, with just seven minutes to spare.

Gasuk and her staff crunched the numbers and discovered that in the midst of the worst financial collapse since the Great Depression, Cornell had exceeded its dollar goal, topping the previous year's results by 13.4 percent. Final tally: \$24.4 million. As of presstime, Cornell is one of only a few schools in the country to do better this year than last at raising unrestricted cash gifts.

Katz reflects on the results: "Cornell's constituencies came together to do something extra special in a very challenging economic environment for giving. When you consider the budget stresses across the campus coming from the shrinkage in our endowment, you know that it wasn't just special, it was *crucial*. The most remarkable thing, and what will be the most important thing going forward, is the community who shared in doing this: the development staff, the local and national campaign committees, the student leadership, the class officers and reunion leaders, the 30,000 donors. It's about how much we all care about the university, and thus will take care of it. And that's what will always sustain Cornell."

Gasuk says she and her staff didn't celebrate for long. "We're concentrating on the new fiscal year, the next goal and the ultimate goal of consistently raising \$30 million annually by 2012."



Beth and Seth '79 Klarman

'CORNELL PLAYED AN IMPORTANT ROLE IN MY LIFE, AND I AM IN A POSITION TO DO MY PART TO HELP CORNELL THROUGH A DIFFICULT TIME.'

– SETH KLARMAN '79

BY BRYCE T. HOFFMAN

Bullish on Cornell, with no strings attached

People who study the career of Seth Klarman '79 – iconoclastic hedge fund manager and philanthropist – immediately realize two things.

First, he chooses his investments very, very carefully. Second, when the crowd is stampeding in one direction, he usually goes the other way.

It's a formula that has worked wonders in the 30 years since he left Cornell with a degree in economics. As CEO of The Baupost Group, Klarman has grown his business to more than \$16 billion today from \$27 million of invested funds in 1982, while delivering net annual returns approaching 20 percent for his investors.

Equally impressive, Baupost has protected capital well during the financial market crisis of the past 18 months.

In the bubbling economy of 2006, when exuberant investors were heaping money into the markets, Klarman held nearly half of his fund's assets in cash. In his annual letter to investors, he gave a simple rationale: The market was so flooded with money that bargains were hard to come by.

When the bubble burst, Klarman and his investors were able to watch from a position of relative safety – and to resume bargain hunting.

Now, just as philanthropists nationwide are pulling back, the Klarman Family Foundation is pushing forward with a substantial investment in Cornell. The foundation has committed \$5 million over the next five years to provide budget relief from the continuing economic crisis.

Unusual for a gift of this magnitude, it comes with absolutely no strings attached.

"Cornell played an important role in my life, and I am in

a position to do my part to help Cornell through a difficult time. I have great respect and admiration for [President] David Skorton and trust that he will utilize our gift to have the greatest impact on Cornell," notes Klarman.

Skorton has indicated the money will go toward critical initiatives, including expanded financial aid for undergraduates.

"This gift is remarkable for so many reasons," Skorton says. "It is a tremendous vote of confidence in the leadership of the university, and it will give us flexibility to preserve our most important priorities in the face of drastic cuts. It is our responsibility to use this gift for the maximum good, and we will."

Prior to their current gift, Klarman and his wife, Beth, endowed two Cornell Tradition fellowships in honor of Seth's parents. They also have been generous supporters of Cornell Hillel for many years.

"The great universities in America are crown jewels that we must not allow to be tarnished. We cannot afford to cut back on faculty or financial aid, so all of us must do what we can to lead Cornell through the financial crisis," says Klarman.

Philanthropy has always been a family affair for the Klarmans. They work together on choosing nonprofits to support with their time, their leadership and through giving.

The Boston-based Klarman Family Foundation's funding addresses a variety of issues ranging from education and health to fighting anti-Semitism and anti-Zionism.

"I have been very fortunate since my years at Cornell," notes Klarman. "We all have a responsibility to leave the institutions that have influenced us stronger than when we found them. This seemed a perfect moment to step up to make a difference for Cornell."



PROVIDED

Chris Frendl '10, Mike Rossidis '09 and Drew Baustian '10 are three of the five members of the men's rowing team who represented the U.S. in the FISA World Rowing Under-23 Championships in Racice, Czech Republic.



BRENDON NASH/PROVIDED

Hockey senior player Brendon Nash flexes his muscles with two children from a school in the Dominican Republic.

Service, sports and Schwarzenegger filled student-athletes' summer



PROVIDED

Katie Kirnan,
field hockey tri-
captain, at Industry
Entertainment
Partners in
Hollywood.

For Cornell student-athletes, the summer brings to mind a quote from rocker Warren Zevon – “I’ll sleep when I’m dead.”

While the school year is hectic with classes, practices, competitions and community service, the off season is just as crazy. Athletes have strength and conditioning workout programs to continue in the off season, and they also come to Cornell for the many other experiences the university opens up to them.

That’s why this past summer, student-athletes built houses, volunteered in other countries and explored potential careers, making a difference for themselves and others in just three short months.

Community service

Following the spring semester, men’s hockey senior Brendon Nash was among a group of Cornell coaches, students and alumni who made a trip to the Dominican Republic to improve living conditions in an impoverished town.

The group helped lay the foundation for a nurses’ clinic and a playing field for the town’s children, constructed a building to house the town’s water generator to protect it from rain and theft, and enclosed a well to safeguard it from contamination.

“All the digging for the foundations had to be between three and four feet into the ground because of the storms and the beating that the

weather gives,” Nash says. “Everything we did had to be done with shovels and wheelbarrows.”

While members of the men’s ice hockey team kicked off the summer with a service project, Big Red fencer Rebecca Hirschfeld ended hers in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine, traveling with the American Jewish Joint Distribution Committee, in partnership with Cornell Hillel.

The JDC has been sending groups of students to Ukraine since 2005. For each project, students spend 10 days volunteering and meeting with community leaders and local Jewish youth to grapple with the challenges the community faces.

“I would go anywhere to help out, really,” says Hirschfeld, “But ... I am part Ukrainian and I am learning Russian and have many friends from the Ukraine. ... I am also Jewish, and we aided the Jewish community there, so that was another aspect that was appealing to me.”

Summer sports

Each summer, Big Red basketball player Lauren Benson has done something to improve her game, and this past summer was no different. The senior point guard kicked off her vacation by participating in a European tour with USA Athletes International. She, along with 10 other Division I women’s basketball players, traveled to Austria, the Czech Republic and Italy to play seven games against foreign competition.

“From the games and travel to all the new

people I met, the trip to Europe was an unbelievable experience,” says Benson.

Several members of the men’s and women’s rowing teams also enjoyed productive summers participating with the U.S. national team.

Jeannie Friedman, Anna Psiaki and Tracy Eisser were all invited to participate in the Women’s National Team Freshman Camp, held June 14-20 in Ithaca, while five members of the men’s team qualified to represent the United States in the FISA World Rowing Under-23 Championships, from July 23-26 in Racice, Czech Republic.

Senior Singen Elliott rowed in the men’s heavyweight quad, while Michael Rossidis ’09 and seniors Drew Baustian and Christopher Frenzl competed in the men’s heavyweight four with coxswain. Sophomore Tom Davidson qualified in the lightweight men’s pair.

Following the trials, all five rowers headed to Racice to begin preparations for the championship.

Followers of the Big Red women’s ice hockey program are familiar with the exploits of junior Rebecca Johnston, who has taken time off from the Big Red over the last two seasons to compete internationally for Team Canada. With the 2010 Winter Olympics just a few months away, Johnston has taken a year’s leave from school to pursue her dream of representing Canada in February in Vancouver.

Johnston reported to Calgary in early August for the Canadian national team camp, but like any elite athlete, her training started well before her arrival in Calgary.

“After the semester at Cornell, I had only a week to rest before I had to depart for Calgary for a month-long camp, known as ‘boot camp,’” she

says. “All of the workouts were tough, mentally and physically ... but to be able to represent my country on our soil would be the dream of a lifetime!”

Internships

For Cornell junior football player Doug Dolan, the summer was less about running crossing routes and more about answering phone calls and e-mails. But he wasn’t keeping up with his friends – Dolan was working as an intern in the Office of Constituent Affairs for the governor of California, Arnold Schwarzenegger.

One of his key responsibilities was reading and responding to mail addressed to the governor and answering the phone for the governor’s office, speaking directly with citizens.

“This summer has been a very interesting and exciting time to be an intern in the state capital, as California is in an unprecedented budget crisis,” Dolan says. “As a government major, this internship has been extremely interesting yet, more importantly, has given me a firsthand look at the inner workings of government in our nation’s most populous state.”

Cornell field hockey tri-captain Katie Kirnan also found herself on the West Coast this summer, working for Industry Entertainment Partners, a TV production company in Hollywood. She found out about IEP through Cornell in Hollywood, a program that assists Cornell students who wish to work in Hollywood.

Kirnan’s primary duty involved writing script coverage: reading a script, writing a synopsis of it and then providing an opinion.

“It’s always exciting when I begin a new script, because I never know what I’m going to be reading,” Kirnan says. “How cool would it be if I read the next ‘Office Space’ or ‘Star Wars?’”



Big Red ice hockey junior Rebecca Johnston has taken a year’s leave from school to train for a spot on the Canadian Olympic Hockey Team for the 2010 Winter Olympics, which will be held in February in Vancouver.



Cornell junior football player Doug Dolan with California Gov. Arnold Schwarzenegger; Dolan worked as an intern in the governor’s Office of Constituent Affairs.



Big Red basketball player Lauren Benson (No. 25) spent part of her summer touring Europe with USA Athletes International.

Two matching-gift challenges seek to inspire support for scholarships

Cornell is fortunate to have legions of loyal and committed alumni and friends. They continue to ensure that Cornell can open its doors to the best and brightest students, regardless of their financial means.

To name one example, John '74 and Elaine '77 Alexander recently made a \$2 million gift to endow undergraduate scholarships. A university trustee emeritus and the founder of the CBORD Group Inc., John was the first member of his family to attend college. Cornell provided him with financial assistance in the early '70s, and he says that "made all the difference in my life professionally and personally." John notes that he and Elaine met and married at Cornell. Elaine's father and grandfather attended Cornell, and three of their four children have attended Cornell as well.

"Providing scholarship assistance through the *Far Above ...* campaign, at a time when our students' needs are greater than ever, seems a fitting way for us to thank Cornell, and to honor those whose generosity in the past provided our family with such rich opportunities," John says.

Endowed scholarship funds like those created by the Alexanders are valuable because they benefit students who demonstrate need now and will continue to do so in perpetuity. You may realize this if you were once the recipient of such a scholarship, or if you know someone who was.

Last year, trustee Martin Tang '70 created the Martin Y. Tang International Scholarship Challenge to increase support for international students, with the goal of creating 12 undergraduate scholarship endowments. Two new challenges are encouraging more donors with large hearts to help Cornell students by investing in their future. The Scholarship Endowment Challenge will match gifts on a 1:3 basis, allowing alumni and friends the opportunity to endow a new scholarship or add to an existing one with a smaller gift than would normally be required. Endowments may be funded with a gift of \$75,000 or more, payable over five years.

In addition, another challenge will match any gifts of \$7,500 or more to establish one-year term scholarships for the current year. The gift will be matched on a 1:3 basis, resulting in a \$10,000 term scholarship that will benefit one student for one year, and the scholarship can be named by the donor for the year.

Katrina James '96 says that when she heard about the term scholarship challenge, she knew right away she wanted to help. A former scholarship recipient herself, James says she has volunteered time and given to the Annual Fund since she graduated. "Now, I am fortunate to be in a position professionally where I am able to donate more," she explains.

"In these very difficult economic times, we all cannot help rethinking how we use our financial resources," James says. "And while I have cut what I spend in other areas, I actually chose to increase my gift this year because of the term scholarship challenge. I can only hope that others will make the same choice and support our university during this very challenging, yet crucial time."

Gifts of all sizes are essential to keeping Cornell within reach. To learn more about scholarship challenge gifts, please contact Laura Toy, associate vice president, Alumni Affairs and Development, ll1@cornell.edu, 607-255-3950.

Stephen Ashley '62, MBA '64, *Campaign Co-Chair*

Jan Rock Zubrow '77, *Campaign Co-Chair*

Robert J. Appel '53, *chair, Discoveries that Make a Difference: The Campaign for Weill Cornell Medical College*



Stephen Ashley



Jan Rock Zubrow



Robert J. Appel

BY THE NUMBERS

- 40 percent of Cornell undergraduates who received direct aid from Cornell in 2008-09
- 5,637 number of Cornell students who received assistance this past year
- 73 number of new scholarships established in 2008-09
- 13 percent of Cornell undergraduates who qualified for Pell grants based on family income

Learn why others give to Cornell. Share your reasons.
www.giving.cornell.edu/whyigive/

VISIT: WWW.CAMPAIGN.CORNELL.EDU

Robot or sonnet? The power of creativity for the student and the university



TEACHERS
IN ALL
DISCIPLINES
KNOW THE
IMPORTANCE
OF CREATIVITY
TO PROCESSES
OF DISCOVERY
AND THE
GENERATION
OF
KNOWLEDGE.

The last two decades have seen a decided turn toward the arts in American colleges and universities. Creative writing programs have played a flagship role in this broadening of undergraduate education. Today there are more than 800 such programs in the U.S., and creative writing courses are offered on almost every college campus. At Cornell, such classes reach about 600 students a year from across the campus, who meet in small workshop courses where they have the opportunity to develop their abilities in the creation of fiction and poetry. We educators feel on our pulses the relevance of the arts to a successful and balanced undergraduate education. But we can also spell out the particular kinds of value that creative writing and the arts more broadly add to our fundamental teaching mission.

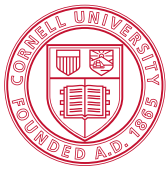
We might begin with the distinctiveness of the student experience. “Creative writing,” it has been argued, “is one of the few formal opportunities in education for self-discovery and self-creation. It leads a student less to right answers than to right questions. It creates more intelligent, informed and responsible readers by immersing them in the actual process of imaginative exploration and accomplishment” (Dave Smith, in the essay “Notes on Responsibility and the Teaching of Creative Writing”). Note the insistence in this formulation on the social as well as the personal, the cognitive as well as the expressive, the intellectual as well as

the affective dimensions of the process. Creative writing shares many of these features with the other creative and performing arts. Its specificity among the arts, then, lies in its complete reliance on language as a medium, with the result that, within this group, it is the art most likely to foreground formal, critical conceptualization.

But we can widen our perspective further. There is no absolute distinction between creativity in the arts and creativity in, say, engineering. Whether the outcome is a robot or a sonnet, the student ends up making something, solving compositional problems, bringing an object into being that did not exist before. Such making is itself an educational process; it is a form of understanding; it is a distinctive way of coming to know the world and one’s place in it. This is not quite the same as the mastery of disciplinary knowledge, even in those fields that especially emphasize an open, inquisitive stance. Having said that, however, we need to recognize that such differences are in no respect absolute. Teachers in all disciplines know the importance of creativity to processes of discovery and the generation of knowledge. All areas of academic life require inventiveness, intuition, “a feeling” for the materials. In other words, the arts exist on a continuum with more conventionally analytical areas of inquiry – a continuum in which every field combines the creative and the critical, albeit in differing proportions.

More broadly still, the arts tie the university, its students and its faculty to the local and larger community in which we find ourselves. Artistic performances – readings and similar events in creative writing – that draw participants from the nearby community, and the creative works that attract viewers, listeners and readers from near and far, enable the university to reach a vast and varied public in highly visible fashion. The arts, then, provide students with important examples of the life of academic work beyond the campus. For a university that has aspired since its founding to combine the liberal arts with a land-grant mission – first to the state, then to the country, now to the world – this is a powerful message and a worthy goal.

Laura Brown, the John Wendell Anderson Professor of English, is Cornell’s vice provost for undergraduate education.



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