Railroad bypassed first black-founded town in the U.S.

By Diana Yates

Life Sciences Editor

I mitigating topography, expense and even their recommendations, regional railroad official in the mid-19th century diverted a new rail line around New Philadelphia, Ill., “the first town in the United States planned, platted and legally registered by an African-American,” a UI researcher reports. The bypass pushed what would have been a fairly straight, even run of railroad tracks from Griggsville, Ill., to New Philadelphia, Mo., in a wide, hilly arc around New Philadelphia.

The findings, reported in Historical Archaeology, are the result of an exhaustive review of railroad company records, maps, government orders, land deeds, surveys, engineering reports and newspaper accounts from the period.

Founded in 1836, New Philadelphia began as an audacious experiment that tested the limits of racial tolerance in a country divided by slavery. Decades before the Civil War, black and white families lived divided by slavery. Decades before the Civil War, black and white families lived divided by slavery. Decades before the Civil War, black and white families lived divided by slavery. Decades before the Civil War, black and white families lived divided by slavery. Decades before the Civil War, black and white families lived divided by slavery. Decades before the Civil War, black and white families lived divided by slavery.

At its peak, recorded in the 1865 state census, the town had about 160 residents. After the new rail line was completed, bypassing the town in 1870, New Philadelphia began to lose residents. In 1885, much of the town reverted to farmland; by the 1890s the town was defunct.

Senate approves response to proposed changes

By Craig Chamberlain

News Editor

Serious concerns remain among faculty members and student members of the Urbana-Champaign Senate regarding changes to the university administration and to key university governing documents proposed by the UI Board of Trustees — and now those concerns are in writing. The senate on Nov. 1 approved a slightly amended “Response to the Proposed University Reorganization,” submitted by the Senate Executive Committee, which spelled out three primary reasons it could not accept the board’s proposals in their current form.

The concerns about campus independence, and finding the proper balance between centralization and decentralization, appear to get top billing in the response.

“We believe that the commitment to maintaining the distinct identities and excellence of the three university campuses must be prioritized above the discourse of one university,” according to the response. “This is probably the area that is causing the greatest consternation among faculty, staff and students.”

The proposed changes the response addressed came out of a Sept. 23 meeting of the board of trustees in which UI president Michael Hogan was asked to move forward with a plan to restructure the university administration in order to reduce costs, streamline operations, create opportunities to generate new revenue and better coordinate the three campuses.

UI leads nation in number of Fulbright Scholars

T he UI and George Washington University lead the nation in the number of recipients of U.S. Fulbright Scholar awards, according to the Institute for International Education. Eight UI faculty members were awarded Fulbrights in the current grant cycle.

This is the earlier awarding of grants to 15 Illinois students as part of the Fulbright U.S. Students Program, placing the campus in the top five in that category among all public universities. The students are offered the opportunity to design their own program and pursue one academic year of study, research or teaching English abroad.

“This accomplishment is another indication of the creative and innovative thinking, overall excellence, and above all, strong desire to engage with the world beyond our borders that is so characteristic of our faculty,” said Wolfgang Schlöer, interim associate provost for international affairs at Illinois.

“No less important is the fact that our campus is sending 15 Fulbright student award-ees this year. It shows that our students are not only motivated to have deep interna- tional experiences, but have the academic excellence to make it through a highly com- petitive selection process.”

The Fulbright Program was founded in 1947 by U.S. Sen. J. William Fulbright, who saw the program as a much-needed vehicle for promoting “mutual understanding between the people of the United States and the people of other countries of the world.”

The program sends 800 U.S. faculty members and professionals each year to 140 nations, allowing scholars to study, teach, conduct research, exchange ideas and con- tribute to finding solutions to shared inter- national concerns.

The UI scholars, their project titles or ar- ticles are:

Fulbright scholars, their project titles or articles are:

Sally McFarland Carillon and Carillon Legacy Gardens were dedicated during a ceremony Oct. 22. The carillon was created in memory of Richard McFarland’s late wife. He presented the gift of a 185-foot carillon located on the College of ACES south Quad to create a unique place on campus for gathering and relaxing. The carillon’s 58 bells are electronically programmed to play familiar songs as well as UI tunes.
Excerpt from the Senate “Response to the Proposed University Reorganization”

“[As President Hogan has acknowledged], this is a challenging time for the University of Illinois. Several years of budget cuts, uncertain state funding, faculty and staff furloughs, key faculty losses and a growing uncertainty about the future, have combined to damage the morale of faculty, students, and staff. As participants in shared governance and partners committed to protecting and serving this institution, we are prepared to have serious discussions about reorganizing, restructuring and rethinking the university to adapt to this ‘new normal.’ But such reforms must be formulated and carried forth in a way that understands the sources of faculty, staff and student uncertainty and concern.

We cannot accept these proposals in their current form, for three primary reasons. First, while withholding specifically the Board of Trustees and President Hogan – who, we believe, certainly have the very best interests of the institution in mind in putting forth these proposals – we conclude that some of these proposals will have questionable, and in some cases harmful, effects on the quality of the campuses, and therefore also upon the university as a whole. Because we do assume the good intentions of all parties concerned, we hope that raising these concerns will slow down the process of implementation, and open up a further conversation about what we are trying to accomplish and how it can be achieved more effectively.”

“Second, the proposals lack sufficient detail about implementation and costs to fairly evaluate their implications for the institution. In several instances, the proposals and their rationale contain internal contradictions, further exacerbating faculty, staff and student concerns about just what is being proposed, and why.

“Third, without questioning the intentions of the board of trustees and President Hogan – who, we believe, certainly have the very best interests of the institution in mind in putting forth these proposals – we conclude that some of these proposals will have questionable, and in some cases harmful, effects on the quality of the campuses, and therefore also upon the university as a whole. Because we do assume the good intentions of all parties concerned, we hope that raising these concerns will slow down the process of implementation, and open up a further conversation about what we are trying to accomplish and how it can be achieved more effectively.”

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We share nearly all the aims described in the proposals coming from President Hogan and the Board. It would be foolish to argue against the virtues of saving costs through shared services, achieving greater administrative efficiencies and encouraging more cross-campus cooperation. Where we differ with the proposals is whether these particular changes are necessary for achieving these aims, and whether these proposed changes entail other unintended consequences that will be harmful to the institution we all care about and support.”

Inside Illinois

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By Anna K. Herkamp
Assistant Professor

President Michael Hogan and Chancellor Bob Ester talked with the media Monday about recent changes to the vision for their future and upcoming administrative changes during the Urbana-Champaign Senate’s Annual Meeting on the Frontier.

Despite an uncertain future, the UI remains a top institution whose faculty members can be trusted to look out for the best interests of the university, said Ester in his opening comments.

Ester reiterated the sentiment, saying that he feels honored to be in charge of an institution that has been rated second in the Big Ten, and no economic or political problems will ever diminish his pride in being chosen as its leader.

“Many of the concerns expressed in the conversation, and we hope the board is aware of these,” she objected to concerns about “negative public perception of UI Athletics.” She objected to concerns about “negative public perception of UI Athletics.”

Hogan reiterated the sentiment, saying that he feels honored to be in charge of an institution that has been rated second in the Big Ten, and no economic or political problems will ever diminish his pride in being chosen as its leader.

The three-page response document (available on the senate website) now goes to the University of Illinois Board of Trustees, which is responsible for collecting comments from all three campuses and putting together a response to the board prior to its Nov. 18 meeting.

The approved document, submitted by the Senate Executive Committee, was condensed from 40 pages, 13 long, which the senate voted to append to the shorter document for the senate’s consideration, and whether these proposed changes entail other unintended consequences that will be harmful to the institution we all care about and support.”

Paging 2...
On the Job

Cheryl Street

Cheryl Street has worked for the School of Social Work since 1999. As an admissions and records officer, she helps keep records orderly for students entering the social work profession.

What do you do?

I have the responsibility, as students are applying to our program, to maintain documents and get everything in order for them to be reviewed by the admissions committees. Once undergraduate students are admitted, then I’m responsible for reviewing course work and running audits for them so that when they go consult with their advisers, they have accurate information.

What are some of the records you’re responsible for keeping?

Transcripts, letters of recommendation, applications—all the documents that come in during application time, as well as other correspondence.

Does anyone else share these responsibilities?

It’s just me (laughs). The undergraduate program just began this fall and this was already a new role for me. Just when I was about to get things figured out, the undergrad program got under way.

How long have you worked at the UI?

I came in August 1999 as extra help. I was very excited. My first assignment was at the School of Social Work. I got a permanent assignment was at the School of Social Work since 1999. As an admissions and records officer, she helps keep records orderly for students entering the social work profession.

What do you do that people might not know?

As applications are coming in, I review them for minimum qualifications and prerequisites. That is one thing that I think is unique. Another thing is maintaining field education documentation, which is the paperwork that documents internship experiences for students in the master’s program. We maintain those documents almost indefinitely. As individuals go to other states to get licensed, licensing agencies sometimes want specific documentation of their experiences. We’re moving to maintaining them electronically.

What did you do before working at the UI?

I worked in early childhood education as assistant director at a preschool here in town, Chesterbrook Academy on Windsor Road. I had been working there for eight years when they sold the building, so I started looking for a new job. The director of the preschool encouraged me to apply at the UI.

Are you happy with your decision?

Definitely. After coming here I completed my bachelor’s degree. I finished in May. I had completed about a year and a half of my associate’s degree when I started at the UI. I finished my associate’s degree at Parkland College and completed a bachelor’s degree through Eastern Illinois University.

So do you ever miss working with young children?

I did like working with children. The interesting thing is that what I did there is similar to what I do here. When I would tell parents of our prospective preschoolers about all the great things our center had to offer and why it was the best, it’s like talking with a student about why our School of Social Work is the best program around. I also had to keep records updated there.

What do you say to students who are thinking of coming here?

I tell them that we have a nationally ranked program. In our state, the UI is considered one of the top institutions. I think the one thing that seems to attract people is the environment in Champaign-Urbana. It’s the best of both worlds: It’s not so big that you’re always dealing with traffic and everything like that but yet there are a lot of things you can do in the community so you’re never bored. It’s also a small enough place that someone from a small town won’t feel like they’re in a big city.

Do you like working at the UI?

I love working at the UI. I think just the diversity of the community and having the opportunity to meet lots of people with lots of different backgrounds is exciting. With the undergrad program coming back to us this year, it’s neat to see enthusiastic undergrads excited about getting an education here.

Where are you from?

I’m originally from western Illinois, near Moline.

What’s something about your office that you’re proud of?

I think the school in general is proud of its service to the community. We have a student group that will do fundraisers to provide additional support to agencies who need it. At Christmas, they’ll do some kind of gift drive for kids who are in foster care. At the Children and Family Research Center, they do research to help assess needs and provide better services for the community.

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Fulbright Scholars, continued from Page 1

ewas of specialization, and their destinations:

Sue Anne Cole, a professor of social work, “Developing Social Work Interven-

tion Skills to Meet the Needs of Children

and Families in Taiwan and China,” National-

al Taiwan University

Kristin L. Hagonon, a professor of history, “The United States in World Con-

text,” Ludwig-Maximilians-University of

Munich, Germany

Richard C. Hunter, a professor of educational organization and leadership, “Teacher Education, Methodology and As-

sessment,” University of Bahrain in Ma-
nama, Bahrain

Christopher A. Lubinski, a professor and fellow of educational organization and leadership, “School Enrollment Poli-
cies and Equity Patterns in New Zealand,” University of Waikato in New Zealand

Sarah T Lubinski, a professor of curriculum and instruction, “Mathematics Education Reform in Ireland,” Dublin City

University in Ireland

Dana L. Rush, a professor of art his-
tory, School of Art and Design, “In Remem-

brance of Slavery: Tchamba Slave Spirits in Vodun Art and Thought,” University of Benin in Abomey-Calavi, Benin, and the

University of Lome in Togo

Marsha C. Woodbury, visiting lec-
turer, computer science, “Information Tech-
nology,” Indian Institute of Technology in

Chennai, India

David Wright, a professor of English,
“And In the Ruined Houses, A Novel; Afri-
can-American Studies,” University of Sao

Paulo in Brazil
Recently retired and long-serving staff employees will be honored at the 2010 Staff Service Recognition Program Nov. 9 in the Grand Ballroom of the Holiday Inn, 1001 Killarney St., Urbana. The program will honor 416 employees who retired between Sept. 1, 2009, and Aug. 31, 2010. In addition, employees will be honored for service completed during that time: 115 employees who completed 25 years, 33 who completed 30 years and four who completed 35 years.

A website for the Staff Service Recognition Program is accessible through the Staff Human Resources home page. Retirees and service honors are listed alphabetically by name, department or number of years served. Here are two recent staff retirees...

Housing’s ‘resident historian’ retires

By Anna K. Herkamp
Assistant Editor

If the walls of the UI residence halls could talk, they couldn’t give you a more complete account of their history than Stanley Apperson could. He can tell you about a beautiful mean, much student mail service in dorm residence hall rooms, but women did not. He can tell you about the days when drinking parties were allowed in residence halls, and where the now-independent student radio station WPGU got its call letters.

Apperson, who retired from the Division of Housing on July 31 as a program director, has the sort of institutional memory that extends beyond his 36 years on campus, including his time as a student.

“After some of the other people retired, I became the de facto historian,” he said. “If someone had a question or was doing research, they’d end up at my door.”

Originally from Foosland, in northern Champaign County, Apperson moved into 428 Townsend Hall in the Illinois Street Residence Halls as a freshman in 1974. Four years later he earned a degree in secondary education, social studies.

“I’m one of those that never left,” he said. “Some people are out to see the world; I was always more of a homebody, so I was content here. It all seemed to work well. There were always new and exciting challenges.”

After graduation, he was hired part-time as an administrative assistant in the Housing Division. He moved to his first full-time job as director of Weston Hall in September 1979. (WPGU was in the basement of Weston, part of the six-pack of residence halls that replaced the old Parade Ground Units, built as temporary post-war housing.)

Residence hall directors are responsible for training and overseeing student resident advisers. They plan programs and coordinate services for students.

Johnson said the biggest changes she witnessed at the UI were the ones for technology. The change from using a manual typewriter at her first job to seeing the advent of digital storage and the Internet was a pretty big one.

“It was a huge change from the ’60s to now,” she said. “Just the way you processed things – we didn’t have copiers or computers.”

One time years ago, a student worker came to her with a piece of onion-skin copy paper she’d found in a filing cabinet and asked what it was. Johnson explained that the paper was used with typewriters to make copies that would go into storage files.

She recalled the days when you learned not to make mistakes in typing class, and to work quickly. She remembered using typewriter erasers, and later tape that could be used to correct mistakes.

The idea of a word processor that could quickly erase mistakes was revolutionary – if a bit intimidating at first.

“I could repair a typewriter,” she said, remembering when computers were first introduced into offices in the 1980s. “But any time something went wrong with her computer, she had to call a specialist for help.”

“That was the hard part,” she said.

Johnson’s career at the UI took her to the Dean of Women’s office from 1974 to 1979, and then to the Office of Student Services and Coordinator of Student Programs and Coordinate Services for Student Residential Services.

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Residence hall directors are responsible for training and overseeing student resident advisers. They plan programs and coordinate services for students.

He remembers many years when marijuana use wasn’t a reason to call the police, and when drinking parties were not against any rules.

“We had a period of time when you could have alcohol parties in the dorm when I was a student. I’m so glad I didn’t have to deal with that as a staff member,” he said.

Maid service was available in the residence halls until the late ’70s or so, but it wasn’t until the later years that it was an option for women. Apperson said it was assumed that young ladies could clean up after themselves, but young men needed someone to come in and change their sheets and pick up once a week, he said. Over time, fewer students opted for the service and it was discontinued.

Apperson said there were reasons from the early days that men’s housing was different from women’s. One of the main reasons was that it was an option for women, Apperson said.

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New small-business law could have big effect on retirement accounts

By Phil Ciciora  
News Editor

A new law aimed at helping stimulate small-business job growth through tax deductions could have major consequences for anyone with a retirement savings account at work, a UI expert on taxation and elder law notes.

Law professor Richard L. Kaplan says an obscure provision in the recently enacted Small Business Jobs Act allows 401(k), 403(b) or 457 account holders to convert their retirement savings into a tax-advantaged Roth-version of the same account.

The good news, according to Kaplan, is that by converting to a Roth variant, income can grow completely tax-free because no tax is assessed when funds are withdrawn from a Roth account during retirement.

The bad news: Those who convert retirement savings account to Roth plans must report the amount converted as income, a move that could potentially bump them up into a higher tax bracket.

“The tax bracket you think you’re in may not be the tax rate you pay when you consider the related implications,” he said.

Many tax write-offs that are tied to income, such as medical deductions, student loan interest and education tax credits, might not be deductible.

“Converting a retirement account raises your income level, and some very popular deductions phase out at a certain level of income,” Kaplan said.

“There are various unexpected tax consequences from converting the account, most of which are negative.”

Although most states tax Roth conversions, Illinois doesn’t at the moment, which could make switching potentially more attractive for some.

But that will likely change in the near future, considering the state’s yawning deficit.

This new law represents a major tax planning opportunity for people who fear that their tax rates will increase in the future,” Kaplan said.

It’s very similar to the decision of whether to convert an Individual Retirement Account to a Roth IRA, which Kaplan discussed in an article published last year titled “To Roth or Not to Roth: Analyzing the Conversion Opportunity for 2010 and Beyond.” But Kaplan explains that more people have a retirement savings plan at their workplace than have an IRA, so the ramifications of this change in the law could be much more significant.

The bill, signed into law Sept. 27 by President Obama and effective the next day, ostensibly was drafted to help small businesses grow and hire more workers.

The changes to retirement accounts were put in to offset the revenue loss of the small business tax incentives.

Kaplan also notes that those interested in converting their retirement assets to a Roth-variant don’t necessarily have to convert their entire account.

“You can hedge your bets and convert only part of it,” he said. “The major impact is for people who have not yet retired but who want to diversify their retirement portfolio – not in the sense of stocks versus bonds, but in the sense of having some after-tax accounts as well as some pre-tax accounts.”

Richard Kaplan
**NEW PHILADELPHIA. CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1.**

Leagues explored every hypothesis that could plausibly explain why the Pike County Railroad Company (PCRC), later called the Hannibal Railway Company, chose to divert the rail line off an otherwise straight run between Griggsville and Hannibal. The company paid for a survey of the proposed rail line in 1857, and the surveyors recommended that the railroad run in a straight, east-west line across most of Pike County. This new line would connect the vast eastern railway system that included the Illinois Central Railroad to the western regional railway, which at that time went no further east than the Mississippi River. A fairly straight path between Naples, Ill., where the official railroad had a depot, and Hannibal, Mo., would have taken the rail line through New Philadelphia.

That path also would have conserved the most expensive component of the new rail system: its iron rails. The Toledo Wa-bash Railroad Company, which was to run and maintain the railroad, insisted that the builders use only the highest-grade iron rails, Fennell said. “They had to use English iron to do this because the American foundries couldn’t produce the volume and consistency of iron needed,” he said.

But the PCRC holding company asked the surveyors to modify their proposed route, bending the rail line north around the headwaters of Keyser Creek, which ran alongside New Philadelphia. “There are many reasons that a particular railroad route might take one path rather than another,” Fennell wrote. “If a topographic feature such as a high point of elevation or a deep ravine lies along a particular path, a railroad will often be diverted to avoid the expense of traversing that location.”

But Keyser Creek was shallow, and a review of decades of newspaper clippings from the area found no reports of it ever flooding, Fennell said. A landscape analysis revealed that the topography of the area actually favored the original route. “The northernmost part of the rail line’s loop around Keyser Creek is 150 feet higher than all the rest of the length of this railroad,” Fennell said.

The change in elevation was so abrupt that, once the railroad was built, the Toledo Wabash Railroad Company had to station a “helper locomotive” at Hannibal to “pull the freighter past the high point on the northern part of that arc,” Fennell said. (This led many to call for the railroad company to re-build that part of the line further south, as the surveyors had originally proposed.)

The cost of building a culvert over the shallow creek could not compare to the expense of the added iron rail, Fennell said. “You actually are having an increase in iron not only for the curve in horizontal space but also because you’re going up in elevation and down in elevation,” he said. Neither political nor economic pressure from people along the route was a factor either, Fennell found. There were no towns north of New Philadelphia between New Salem, where the bypass began, and Barry, where the rail line straightened out again. No wealthy or influential landowners to the north of New Philadelphia lobbied for the route change or contributed to the PCRC. In fact, PCRC officials were so committed to their otherwise straight path across Pike County that, despite active lobbying by county officials, they refused to move the line further south to connect to the county seat, Pittsfield. Instead, they built a spur to connect Pittsfield to the main line. “The last explanation standing,” Fennell said, is that PCRC officials, who were based in Hannibal, a slave-market town, “did not want to see New Philadelphia thrive as a depot town.”
Among the newcomers to the Urbana campus are faculty members whose appointments began this summer or fall. Inside Illinois continues its tradition of introducing some of the new faculty members on campus and will feature at least two new colleagues in each fall issue.

**NEW faces 2010**

**Asef Bayat**
*a professor of sociology and of Middle East studies, College of Liberal Arts and Sciences*

**Education:** Ph.D, in social sciences (sociology and politics), University of Kent, England; B.A. (politics), Faculty of Political and Social Sciences, Tehran, Iran.

**Research Interests:** Middle Eastern studies, social movements, urban societies and youth cultures. "More than two decades of wide-ranging research has made Bayat one of the most respected and innovative sociologists of the Middle East, making major contributions to both theory and empirical case studies of the region," said Anna-Maria Marshall, professor and head of the sociology department. "His studies of Islamic social and political movements have introduced major theoretical innovations in the field of social movements, Middle Eastern studies and political culture."

**Why Illinois?** "I find this to be a very dynamic campus," Bayat said. "One that brings together a variety of fields and areas of interest which can produce an immensely productive interdisciplinary system. I find this a very nourishing environment for myself and a comparative advantage for the university."

**Teaching at Illinois:** Two courses this spring; SOC 496, "Middle Eastern Society and Cultures" and SOC 562, "Seminars in Transnational Studies Globalization and Urbanization: Cities in Extreme".

**Jordyn Boesch**
a clinical assistant professor of veterinary clinical medicine, College of Veterinary Medicine

**Education:** D.V.M., Cornell University; B.S. (animal science), University of Massachusetts, Amherst.

**Research Interests:** Pain management and anesthesia in small, large and exotic animals. At Cornell, she pursued a zoo/wildlife/aquatic animal medicine track and then completed externships at the San Diego Wild Animal Park, the North Carolina Zoo, the Fossil Rim Wildlife Center in Asheboro, N.C., and the Smithsonian National Zoological Park.

"She comes to us from a very respected and vigorous training program that produces top-notch veterinary anesthesiologists," said Stuart Clark-Price, a professor of veterinary clinical medicine. "Her decision to join us is very exciting and will help us to continue to deliver expert care to our patients and provide veterinary students with a world class education."

**Why Illinois?** "I chose Illinois because when I interviewed, I felt that it was a progressive veterinary college where I would find the support to pursue my professional interests, which include zoo animal and wildlife anesthesia and pain management in all species," Boesch said. "And (I) felt that the people I would be working with, including the clinicians, technicians and students, were a very skilled, friendly and dedicated group of people."

**Teaching at Illinois:** Co-teaching VCM 676, "Veterinary Anesthesiology and Fluid Therapy".

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Planarian hormone study may aid in understanding parasites

A study of peptide hormones in the brain of a seemingly primitive flatworm reveals the surprising complexity of its nervous system and opens a new approach for combating a major parasitic disease, researchers report.

The planarian flatworm, Schmidtea mediterranea, is perhaps best known for its prodigious powers of regeneration. Cut it in half (lengthwise or crosswise) and each fragment will regrow its missing parts, including its brain. The planarian is of interest to those studying reproduction because it exists in sexual and asexual varieties. Asexual planaria reproduce by splitting into two pieces and then regenerating. Sexual planaria are hermaphroditic. Some planaria can even switch between the sexual and asexual forms.

The free-living planarian also is of interest because it is related to several parasitic flatworms. For example, flatworms of the genus Schistosoma parasitize more than 200 million people worldwide. Schistosome larvae can penetrate the skin and spread when a potential host comes into contact with contaminated water. Once inside a host, the worms mature, mate and produce thousands of eggs that damage internal organs. Disease is the animal’s amazing reproductive output.

Previous studies suggested that signals from the nervous system play a role in planarian reproduction, but little research had been done to clarify that role.

“We’ve known for decades that neuropeptides are important for coordinating vertebrate reproduction,” Collins said. “But it’s not clear whether similar sorts of mechanisms exist for controlling invertebrate reproductive development.”

Collins then traced expression of 51 prohormone genes in different tissues throughout the planarian body. One of these genes, known as npy-8, appears to promote the development and maintenance of the worm’s reproductive organs.

“These peptides are showing us that the planarian brain is much more complicated than we had appreciated,” Newmark said. “The fact that they can regenerate this brain seems even more amazing now that we know this.”

To understand the potential function of the neuropeptides, Collins used RNA interference to block the activity of specific prohormone genes in planaria. Neuropeptides are processed from longer molecules, called prohormones, and often are chemically modified before they become biologically active. Because neuropeptides are made up of only a few (typically between three and 40) amino acids, identifying the genes that code for them is a challenging task.

Collins worked with Illinois chemistry professor Jonathan Sweedler, as well as graduate student Xiaowen Hou and postdoctoral associate Elena Romanova, on the painstaking process of identifying prohormone genes in planaria. Using bioinformatics coupled with mass spectroscopy, the researchers identified 51 genes predicted to encode more than 200 neuropeptides. Sweedler’s lab worked out the biochemical properties of 142 of these using mass spectroscopy.

Collins then traced expression of 51 prohormone genes in different tissues throughout the planarian body. This analysis showed a unique pattern of expression for each gene (see image), with some expressed only in specific cells in the brain and other tissues.

“The planarian is a relatively innocuous animal that has relevance to a huge human health issue,” Sweedler said.

The study also supports the use of planaria as a model organism, the researchers said. Its ability to regenerate, the ease with which it is grown in the lab, and the fact that it exists in sexual and asexual forms always has been of interest, Newmark said. But the newly appreciated complexity of its brain and the fact that it makes use of many of the signaling molecules that are essential in vertebrates also enhances its usefulness to science.

The National Institutes of Health and the National Science Foundation supported this research.

Discovery

From left, Phil Newmark, professor of cell and developmental biology; Elena Romanova, research scientist; Jim Collins, postdoctoral researcher; Xiaowen Hou, graduate student; and Jonathan Sweedler, professor of chemistry, conducted an in-depth study of the hormones that regulate development of the planarian flatworm.

Image courtesy David Williams, Illinois State University

Genetic link

The researchers traced expression of 51 prohormone genes in different tissues throughout the planarian body. One of these genes, known as npy-8, appears to promote the development and maintenance of the worm’s reproductive organs.

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Grasses have potential as alternate ethanol crop

By Liz Ahlberg
Physical Sciences Editor

Money may not grow on trees, but energy could grow in grass. Researchers at the UI have completed the first extensive geographic yield and economic analysis of potential bioenergy grass crops in the Midwestern United States.

Demand for biofuels is increasing as Americans seek to expand renewable energy sources and mitigate the effects of fluctuating energy prices. Corn ethanol is the main biofuel on the market, but demand for ethanol competes with corn’s availability as a food, and rising ethanol consumption could lead to higher food costs.

In recognition of this problem, federal regulations mandate that 79 billion liters of biofuels must be produced annually from non-corn biomass by 2022. Large grasses, such as switchgrass and miscanthus, could provide biomass with the added benefits of better nitrogen fixation and carbon capture, higher ethanol volumes per acre and lower water requirements than corn.

“It’s a better way to achieve our goals of energy security and climate change mitigation,” said Madhu Khanna, a UI professor of agricultural and consumer economics. “These two particular crops are among the most promising nonfood crops currently available for large-scale production.”

Switchgrass is a large prairie grass native to the Midwest; Miscanthus, a sterile hybrid, is widely cultivated in Europe as a biofuel crop.

“The Illinois team wanted to determine whether biofuel grasses could be viable cash crops in the U.S. and to explore how this viability varies by location,” Khanna said. “We wanted to look not only at the agricultural potential and socio-economic costs of grass crop production, but also how it differs across location.”

The team began by predicting local yields for the two grass crops. They used an integrated science system model, a biophysical model used not only for yields but also estimated carbon uptake and possible atmospheric effects from changes in land use.

“The research suggests that in order to induce land owners to use their land for bioenergy crops, yield is a critical factor that will influence that decision,” Khanna said. “We wanted to look not only at the implication for a representative landowner, but also how it differs across location.”

The team performed a county-by-county analysis to gain a high-resolution picture of crop potential rather than generalizing the study across the entire region.

“This is the first study to look at both the agricultural potential and socio-economic costs of grass crop production,” said atmospheric sciences professor Atul Jain.

“We came to the conclusion that in order to study the potential to grow these grasses in this region, we have to have an integrated assessment study of socioeconomics and biophysical aspects.”

The team published its results in the October issue of the journal Global Change Biology Bioenergy.

Recognizing that growing conditions throughout the Midwest can vary widely, the team performed a county-by-county analysis to gain a high-resolution picture of crop potential rather than generalizing the study across the entire region.

“We have to consider the biophysical aspects—where the crops can grow in terms of soil, water and nutrient availability, and climate conditions,” Jain said.

The researchers found that, in general, the yield is very high for miscanthus—up to three times higher than switchgrass in the Midwest. Even through switchgrass is native to the region, it doesn’t grow well in higher latitudes like Minnesota or Wisconsin because it has poor tolerance for cold temperatures.

For both grasses, yield varies considerably throughout the Midwest, generally lower in the north and much higher in the south.

Most notably, for the southernmost counties—much of southern Illinois and nearly all of Missouri—the model predicts biofuel potential.

Student grief online after campus shootings is analyzed

By Diana Yates
Life Sciences Editor

After the campus shootings at Virginia Tech University in 2007 and Northern Illinois University in 2008, hundreds of affected students turned to social media websites to share their grief and search for solace. A new study of these students found that their online activities neither helped nor harmed their long-term psychological health.

The study, which appears in Personal-ity and Social Psychology Bulletin, gives a first-of-its-kind portrait of student reactions online and off-line activities related to the shootings. Vicary conducted a second survey of many of the same students six weeks later (two months after the shootings).

After a gunman killed five and injured 18 people at Northern Illinois (10 months after the shootings at Virginia Tech), Vicary conducted a similar survey there, with 160 NIU students responding. The combined results from both campuses revealed that 71 percent of the respondents suffered from significant symptoms of depression and 64 percent had significant symptoms of PTSD two weeks after the shootings on their campuses.

Many respondents reported that they had participated in online memorials, texted, sent e-mails or instant messages or posted comments about the tragedies on social networking sites such as Facebook. Nearly 90 percent had joined at least one Facebook group concerning the shooting. More than 70 percent had replaced their profile pictures with a Virginia Tech or NIU memorial ribbon, and 28 percent had posted a message on a memorial website.

Online grieving Doctoral student Amanda Vicary and psychology professor R. Chris Fraley are the first to study psychological responses and grieving behaviors online after a campus shooting

Students responded psychologically to these shootings.

Two weeks after the shootings at Virginia Tech, Vicary sent an e-mail to 900 Virginia Tech students with Facebook accounts inviting them to participate in an online survey.

One hundred twenty-four of those students chose to do so. The survey assessed the students for symptoms of depression and post-traumatic stress disorder, and asked them about their participation in online and off-line activities related to the shootings.

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SEE ONLINE GRIEVING, Page 15
Center to study effects of plastics chemicals on children

By Diana Yates Life Sciences Editor

A new research center based at the UI will investigate whether regular exposure to bisphenol A (BPA) and phthalates – chemicals widely used in plastics and other consumer products – can alter infant and adolescent development, cognition or behavior.

A $2 million grant from the National Institute of Environmental Health Sciences at the National Institutes of Health and the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency will establish the Children’s Environmental Health and Disease Prevention Research Center at Illinois. Four pilot projects will be conducted over the next three years at Illinois and Harvard University.

BPA and phthalates are endocrine disruptors. They mimic natural hormones and thus can interfere with hormone signaling in the body. BPA is used to make shatterproof plastic and is a component of many containers and bottles, PVC pipes, dental fillings and electronics. Resins made with BPA line metal food and drink containers. Human studies have found BPA in many tissues and containers. Human studies have found BPA in many tissues and containers. Human studies have found BPA in many tissues and containers. Human studies have found BPA in many tissues and containers.

Phthalates increase in the second half of pregnancy, are released in breast milk and influence fetus and body development. (Photo by L. Brian Stauffer)

Researchers to develop cyberinfrastructure for GIS software

By Liz Alhberg Physical Sciences Editor

The National Science Foundation has awarded $4.4 million to an initiative led by the UI that will combine cyberinfrastructure, spatial analysis and modeling, and geographic information science to form a collaborative software framework encompassing many research fields.

Geographic Information Systems software has been widely used for spatial problem solving and decision making applications since the 1960s. It has become an invaluable tool for geography-related fields, its uses spanning archaeology, disaster preparedness, public health, resource management, urban planning and much more. However, conventional GIS software isn’t capable of handling the huge volumes of data and complex analysis required for many modern applications.

Cyberinfrastructure is a system that integrates data management, visualization, high-performance computing and human elements to tackle complex problems. This type of supercomputing power could address many GIS scenarios where current software falls short.

Led by Shawen Wang, a professor of geography and also a senior research scientist at the National Center for Supercomputing Applications, an interdisciplinary team of researchers will work to develop CyberGIS, a comprehensive software framework that will harness the power of cyberinfrastructure for GIS and associated applications. Computer science professor Marc Snir chairs the project steering committee.

“The overarching goal of this project is to establish CyberGIS as a fundamentally new software framework encompassing a seamless integration of cyberinfrastructure, GIS, and spatial analysis and modeling capabilities,” Wang said. “It could lead to widespread scientific breakthroughs that have broad societal impacts.”

The project is part of NSF’s Software Infrastructure for Sustained Innovation program, which aims to promote scalable, sustainable, open-source software elements. In addition to the advanced problem-solving capabilities, the researchers hope that CyberGIS will enhance sharing among researchers and facilitate cross-disciplinary interaction through multiple-user, online collaboration.

“CyberGIS will empower high-performance, collaborative geospatial problem solving,” Wang said. “For example, it could dramatically advance the understanding of disaster preparedness and response and impacts of global climate change.”

The project involves partnerships among academia, government, and industry with an international scope. Partners institutions include Arizona State University, the Computer Network Information Center of the Chinese Academy of Sciences, Environmental Systems Research Institute, Georgia Institute of Technology, Oak Ridge National Laboratory, University College London Centre for Advanced Spatial Analysis (England), University Consortium for Geographic Information Science, University of California-San Diego, University of California-Santa Barbara, University of Washington, the U.S. Geological Survey, and Victorian Partnership for Advanced Computing (Australia). The five-year project began in October 2010.

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Grant to further sustainability in ornamental crop production

By Jennifer Shike

The U.S. Department of Agriculture’s National Institute of Food and Agriculture has awarded a $1.5 million grant to help UI researchers establish guidelines for increasing environmental, social, and economic sustainability in ornamental crop production systems.

Lead researcher Ryan Stewart, a UI professor of crop sciences, said a major concern of greenhouses, nurseries and other ornamental crop production systems is waste generation because of the use of plastic pots.

“Unfortunately, the main source of material to make these pots is petroleum,” he said. “Biocontainers appear to be an excellent sustainable alternative to petroleum pots. Also, growers love the idea of marking up the retail price of a plant by having it available on the shelf in a garden center.”

Biocontainers utilize plant-based fibers, plant or animal proteins and recycled by-products. Examples include containers made out of sterilized cow manure, wood pulp, coconut coir, rice straw, peat moss, rice hull and proprietary bioplastics developed by horticultural companies.

Stewart is collaborating with researchers at seven other U.S. universities on the project. Their first task is to generate a life-cycle analysis for each biocontainer, he said.

“We’re going to measure all the energy inputs and outputs related to their processing, production and distribution,” he said. The biocontainers will then be evaluated in greenhouses and containerized nurseries to see how they fare in automated planting and filling stations. After plants are inserted in them, researchers also will evaluate how the biocontainers are affected by overhead irrigation.

“In a conventional production system, plants and the containers that hold them experience a lot of stress,” he said. “These biocontainers, particularly in a nursery setting, need to be tough to withstand the mechanical damage they’ll be subjected to. We’ve done some preliminary work and it appears that some of the biocontainers might not make the cut. However, many appear to be very promising.”

After studying the pots and the plants grown in them in the greenhouses and nurseries, researchers will evaluate how the plants perform after being transplanted into the landscape. Can these plants grow normally in a biocontainer? How do they degrade in the landscape?

“A huge issue surrounding these pots is whether they can be planted directly into the ground without impairing plant growth,” he said. “If these pots allow the root to grow down through the container, that’s a win-win situation for all.”

In the end, it will come down to the numbers. Economists collaborating on the project will study the data generated and evaluate the economics and sustainability of these biocontainers to form recommendations.

“We want to help industry leaders make critical decisions on the use of sustainable practices related to container choice and irrigation management based on solid data and research,” Stewart said. “There is great interest in producing ornamental crops more sustainably. If a biocontainer made of cow manure or other biodegradable materials can survive in an automated production system, growers will be able to sell both the plant and the pot.”

NIFA awarded more than $46 million through the Specialty Crop Research Initiative, which was established by the 2008 Farm Bill to support the specialty crop industry by developing and disseminating science-based tools to address the needs of specific crops.

The collaborating researchers: Guihong Bi, Mississippi State University; Robin Brunsfeld, Rutgers University; Michael Evans, University of Arkansas; Tom Fernandes, Michigan State University; Robert Geneve and Rebecca Schnelle, University of Kentucky; David Kovacic, UI; Genhua Wang, Texas A&M University; and Sven Verlinde, West Virginia University.

UI, CUMTD receive clean diesel grant from IEPA

A collaborative effort between the UI and the Champaign-Urbana Mass Transit District has resulted in the largest clean diesel grant ever issued by the Illinois Environmental Protection Agency through its Illinois Clean Diesel Grant Program. The grant of $445,000 will be used to retrofit 43 buses for online version

Doug Scott, the director of IEPA, announced the grant Oct. 13. He commended Wang began working with the CUMTD in 2006. He applied for and received a $50,000 grant from the U.S. EPA that allowed the district to install filters on four of their buses in a pilot project.

“The filters lived up to and surpassed our expectations, which gave us the confidence to try and expand the project to as many buses as possible,” said David Moore, the director of maintenance for the CUMTD. “We don’t change things on the fleet on a massive scale without that confidence, so we were very happy with the results.”

Doug Scott, the director of IEPA, announced the grant Oct. 13. He commended Wang and the CUMTD for their persistence and commitment to the project.

“Dr. Wang worked with CUMTD staff and wrote two grants directly to the EPA to fund the project. Those grants were not successful, in part, because he was competing against us (IEPA) for the money,” Scott said. “Our staff was very impressed with the work Dr. Wang was doing and the commitment he and the CUMTD staff had for this project, so we worked with them on an application for our Illinois clean diesel grant program that we were able to approve and fund.”

Bill Volk, the managing director of the CUMTD, said the district also has purchased several hybrid electric buses. “When all 43 filters are installed and running, in conjunction with the hybrid buses that are now in service, 80 percent of our fleet will have clean emissions. We hope to obtain another 21 vehicles over the next two years, and at that point, 100 percent of our fleet will have emissions as clean as they can be under current technology.”

According to Wang, the filters will remove 5.7 tons of pollutants each year, with 81 tons reduced over the life of the buses.

“This project will make Champaign-Urbana MTD a national leader in clean fleet bus operations,” Wang said. “It not only ensures that the MTD will continue to provide reliable community transportation, it proves they are committed to a safe and clean environment.”

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Inside Illinois
How did the new laws, such as the Differential Response Act, change the state’s procedures for handling cases? Previously, when a report would come in for an allegation of child maltreatment, the agency’s response would essentially be the same for all families that warranted an investigation – a sort of one-size-fits-all model of child protection.

Differential response, which has been implemented only in other states, although not necessarily rigorously evaluated – establishes a two-tier system for the state’s response – one for low-risk cases and one where the risk of harm to the child is higher.

For low-risk cases, not cases of serious physical abuse or chronic neglect, the families engage with local community partners as a way to get their needs addressed. The idea was to try and work without compromising child safety, such as of a community-based advocacy center, rather than a professional case manager.

States that have been using differential response for a while – such as Kentucky, Minnesota and Missouri – what’s been their experience as far as the number of kids taken into substitute care and recurrence of abuse/neglect among children left in their households? Minnesota – which has been using differential response for about 15 years – seems to have a successful program.

Part of the fear is their risks for subsequent maltreatment might increase, and there will be high recurrence rates. That has not been the case so far.

The new demonstration/research programs put into effect in Illinois and other states were aimed to rigorously test the differential response model and see if it really works without compromising child safety.

Tami Fuller, the director of the Children and Family Research Center at the UI, will lead the evaluation in Illinois, an impressive statewide, randomized clinical trial of differential response.

Since differential response helps reduce the state’s caseload, there must be some economic benefit. Certainly. If differential response can effectively serve lower risk families in a community based and largely volunteer run setting, one could only expect to see a reduction in costs.

Another law that went into effect this year was the Foster Child Successful Transition Into Adulthood Act, which allows emancipated youth to continue to receive assistance from DCFS until they’re 21. Why extend services beyond age 18?

Joseph Ryan, a professor in the Children and Family Research Center in the School of Social Work at Illinois, recently discussed the new laws and the proposed merger with News Bureau arts editor Sharron Forrest. Ryan conducts research on the experiences and outcomes of families involved with the state’s child welfare system.

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UI Flash Index indicates slow recovery continuing

The economy in Illinois continues to be headed in a positive direction, but the pace of recovery remains slow, according to a key measure of the state’s economy.

The UI Flash Index climbed to 93.8 in October, up from 93.5 in September. The improvement was considerably more modest than the 1.5 point jump between August and September and the index remains below 100, which marks the division between a growing and declining economy.

The Flash Index’s performance in recent months is consistent with the national pattern of slow recovery from the recent recession, said economist Jim Fred Gieritz, who compiles the monthly index for the university’s Institute of Government and Public Affairs. The reading of 93.8 is the highest since May 2009, when the index was 94.1 on its way to the recession low of 90 in September 2009.

The recovery form the 2007-2009 recession is among the slowest on record, Gieritz said. “This has been attributed to the problems associated with the financial crisis that put unusual pressure on the economy, unlike the past two recessions that were relatively mild.”

Illinois’ unemployment rate continues to improve, falling to 9.9 percent in September. That is near the national rate of 9.6 percent.

“So despite the lingering bad economic news, there appears to be a genuine recovery in Illinois,” Gieritz said. “But the state is still a year or more away from returning before-recession unemployment rates.”

The Flash Index is a weighted average of Illinois growth rates in corporate earnings, consumer spending and personal income, as measured by tax collections. In real terms, individual income and sales tax collections increased from the same month last year, while corporate tax was down slightly.

Tax receipts from corporate income, personal income and retail sales are adjusted for inflation before growth rates are adjusted. The growth rate for each component is then calculated for the 12-month period using data through Oct. 31, 2010.

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El Salvador in the aftermath of peace

By Robert Kisting
News Bureau Intern

El Salvador’s civil war, which left at least 75,000 people dead and displaced more than a million, ended in 1992. The accord between the government and the Farabundo Martí National Liberation Front has been lauded as a model post-Cold War peace agreement. But after the conflict stopped, crime rates rose. The number of murder victims surpassed wartime death tolls. Those who once feared the police and the state became frustrated by their lack of action. Peace was not what the people had hoped it would be.

In “El Salvador in the Aftermath of Peace: Crime, Uncertainty and the Transition to Democracy” (University of Pennsylvania Press), Ellen Moodie, a professor of anthropology and of Latin American and Caribbean Studies, explores the violence that engulfed El Salvador after the end of the war.

“My attachment to El Salvador and its people has roots in my involvement in solidarity movements and protest against U.S. foreign policy during the late 1970s and 1980s,” Moodie said. “When I finally went to El Salvador in the spring of 1993, I quickly realized that I was witnessing a fragmented postwar staging of frustrated hopes. What I found there was not peace. It wasn’t war, either. It was something else, something somehow more sinister, less knowable.”

In 1995, the murder rate in El Salvador was among the highest in the world at the time – 138.9 per 100,000 people – and yet, Moodie reports that El Salvador’s peace process is still represented as a “success case.”

“My book attempts to grasp the dissonance between the globally circulating narratives of peace and democracy and the locally shared anxiety over a new, almost incomprehensible reality that wasn’t war, but also wasn’t the imagined peace,” Moodie said.

She said that the high crime rates in El Salvador were first explained as residues of war, or as unfortunate but expected problems in an impoverished post-conflict setting.

“My research joined other studies at the time revealing that similar violence has accompanied transitions to various forms of neoliberal democracy throughout the global south,” she said. “People narrated postwar danger in terms of personal, individual feelings and consequences, rather than in terms of the public, more communally experienced, violence of war.”

Moodie believes her book is important for helping public understanding and awareness of the situation. “I wrote the book with a broad intellectual audience in mind,” she said. “I hope to stimulate critical public conversation, as well as to offer new perspectives on how larger political-economic processes affect on-the-ground subjectivities. Anyone concerned about violence, conflict and political transition would learn something from this book.”

ON THE WEB: www.upenn.edu/pennpress/
Gay Talese to receive lifetime journalism achievement award

By Craig Chamberlain
Social Sciences Editor

Gay Talese, the author of recognized books and articles on topics as varied as the Mafia, sports, immigration, the sexual revolution, The New York Times and Frank Sinatra, will be this year’s recipient of the Illinois Prize for Lifetime Achievement in Journalism.

The prize will be awarded Nov. 5 at the Levis Faculty Center. The conference is sponsored by the Program on Ancient Technologies and Archaeological Materials and by the Illinois State Archaeological Survey, a division of the Institute of Natural Resource Sustainability at the UI.

In its broadest sense, archaeological science, or archaeometry, is the interface between archaeology and the natural and physical sciences. The field includes the study of early technologies and analyses of archaeological materials using modern instrumental techniques. Applications from biochemistry, soil science, medicine, geophysical prospecting and computer imaging have expanded the field. Today, scientists and archaeologists work together to reconstruct early environments and diets using isotopic analyses of bones and teeth, trace the migration of peoples using mitochondrial DNA, identify fibers in ancient textiles, map sites and focus on a single book as a voluntary, extracurricular activity.

The conference will include papers on the analysis of human remains, early wine production, Chinese porcelain and Italian loom weights, microwear analysis of stone tools and advanced imaging of museum artifacts. Portable X-ray fluorescence and infrared instruments will be demonstrated on site.

There is no registration fee. People interested in attending the conference should contact Sarah Wiseman at 217-333-2474, e-mail ovp@illinois.edu or search online at http://union.illinois.edu/ovp/.

ON THE WEB
http://union.illinois.edu/involvement/oboc

Preparation Future Faculty
Support sought to develop courses

The Graduate College seeks departments interested in developing courses for their graduate and postdoctoral students. Preparing Future Faculty courses help students better prepare for faculty careers. For more information about PFF courses, see http://www.preparing-faculty.org/.

Faculty members from participating graduate programs on campus will meet with Mary-Ann Winklemes, campus coordinator for programs on teaching and learning and an administrative provost fellow in the Office of the Provost, and Andrea Gelato, an associate dean in the Graduate College, to discuss state-of-research and models for how such courses are constructed at comparable institutions and to receive guidance on completing a proposal for a new graduate course. Participating faculty members must be nominated by their department. Each faculty member receives a small stipend for participating. Participating programs so far include art history, chemistry, political science, sociology and the Division of Biomedical Sciences. The college is still looking for interested departments to participate during spring 2011. For more information, contact Golato, 217-333-6715 or ogolato@illinois.edu.

GSLIS
Exploring the role of information in society

The “Information in Society” lecture series will feature two lectures in November. On Nov. 8, Eden Medina, a professor of informatics and an adjunct professor of history at Indiana University, will discuss the history of a computer system known as Project Cybersyn, a national computer network built in Chile between 1971 and 1973 to further the economic program of Salvador Allende. For more information about PFF courses, see http://www.preparing-faculty.org/.

Gay Talese will be presented the Illinois Prize on Nov. 5.

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A personal exploration of America’s sexual landscape in the era before AIDS, and “Unto the Sons,” a historical memoir about his family’s immigration from Italy to the U.S. in the years before World War II. Other books include “The Bridge,” about the building of the Verrazano-Narrows bridge between Brooklyn and Staten Island; “A Writer’s Life,” a memoir about the intersection between writing and experience; and, most recently, “The Silent Season of a Hero,” a collection of his sports journalism.

ON THE WEB
http://media.illinois.edu/journalism/illinois-prize

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socialist president Salvador Allende. Medina’s lecture aims to broaden historical understandings of computers, cybernetics and political change and explore the difficulties of embedding political values in the design of technological systems.

Then on Nov. 15, Kathy Peiss, a professor of American history and chair of the history department at the University of Pennsylvania, will speak about the role of librarians in intelligence gathering during World War II. Peiss will explore the information economy in such places as wartime Lisbon, Portugal, and consider how intelligence came to have value and meaning through the social life of its acquisition and circulation.

Both lectures will be from 4 to 5:30 p.m. in Room 126 of the Library and Information Science Building. Peiss also will be available for lunch and an informal discussion from noon to 1:30 p.m. on Nov. 15 in Room 242 LIS Building. Contact Linda Smith if you have questions or to let her know you will attend the lunch. Lunch will be provided for the first 10 participants.

Sinfonia da Camera

Concert celebrates two composers

The Sinfonia da Camera will perform several of the composers’ most famous works, including Schuman’s “American Festival Overture,” Peizy said. “People were sharing their thoughts and feelings with their friends on Facebook. They were attending virtual vigils, joining groups, doing many of the same kinds of things they would do in the non-digital world.”

“Two months later, a fair amount of students were still suffering from significant symptoms, but many had recovered pretty considerably,” Vicary said. Depressive symptoms still affected 30 percent of respondents (down from 71 percent), and PTSD was still an issue for 22 percent of them (down from 64 percent). Most of the students reported that their online activities related to the shootings made them feel better, Vicary said. But the analysis revealed that the degree to which students engaged in online activities or communications about these tragedies had no discernible effect on their ultimate recovery from depressive or PTSD symptoms.

“With the Internet providing a place to grieve, students experienced a long-term change. The findings are instructive, however, because they show that the students’ online activities were not harmful to their psychological health, Vicary said.

“Whenever a tragedy like this occurs, there is a debate in the news concerning students and their reliance on the Internet,” she said. “Is it harming them? Is this doing something detrimental to their well-being?” And in terms of what we found with grieving behaviors after these tragedies, the answer is no.”

BIOFUEL, CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

greater production of grasses than of corn and soybeans. This is because miscanthus has a much higher yield of grasses is much higher, we only have to consider when deciding to cultivate biofuel grasses. Ultimately, the study found that biofuel grasses could be a viable crop in the U.S. under certain conditions.

A farmer’s decision to cultivate biofuel crops means making a tradeoff. For example, Miscanthus has a longer lifespan, but the yield of corn and soybeans is low, so planting Miscanthus would be less frequent. These are tradeoffs farmers would have to consider when deciding to cultivate biofuel grasses.

In addition, the costs vary between switchgrass and Miscanthus. Miscanthus has a much higher yield, but also a much higher initial cost. Miscanthus is planted from small sprouts called rhizomes, which are much more expensive than switchgrass seed. However, Miscanthus has a longer lifespan, so planting would be less frequent. These are tradeoffs farmers would have to consider when deciding to cultivate biofuel grasses.

The research was supported by the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Energy, and the UI Energy Biosciences Institute. Other co-authors are atmospheric sciences researcher Matthew Erickson and search associate Haixiao Huang, of the Energy Biosciences Institute.

We clearly found that even if the yield of grasses is much higher, we need to think about the cost of producing them. That’s the bottom line,” Jain said.

The research was supported by the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Energy, and the UI Energy Biosciences Institute. Other co-authors are atmospheric sciences researcher Matthew Erickson and search associate Haixiao Huang, of the Energy Biosciences Institute.

The research was supported by the National Science Foundation, the U.S. Department of Energy, and the UI Energy Biosciences Institute. Other co-authors are atmospheric sciences researcher Matthew Erickson and search associate Haixiao Huang, of the Energy Biosciences Institute.
Cultural attitudes toward power shape consumer sentiment

By Phil Ciciora

Nov. 4, 2010

In the battle of egos, Donald Trump vs. Hugo Chavez might be a draw. But as symbols of power, each resonates differently with different cultures, as cultures nurture different views of what is desirable and meaningful to do with power, according to new research by a UI marketing expert.

Sharon Shavitt says the relation between culture and one’s concepts of power emerge from one’s cultural orientation, and how that culture shapes one’s beliefs, attitudes and goals.

“People’s views of powerful people and what powerful people are supposed to do, as well as what legitimizes power, differ by society and by cultural values,” said Shavitt, a professor of business administration.

The study, co-written by Carlos J. Torrelli, of the University of Minnesota, examined the role of culture in the meaning and purpose of power by examining the way people perceived, evaluated and responded to power-related stimuli.

The researchers categorized the reactions according to a four-category typology: horizontal versus vertical, and collective versus individual. Their findings highlight the value of advancing existing models of power relations by identifying a key role for cultural variables.

According to the research, the two most contrasting power relations were vertical individualism and horizontal collectivism. A vertical-individualistic cultural orientation was linked to conceptualizing power as something to be used for advancing one’s own personal agenda, thereby maintaining and promoting one’s powerful status. Shavitt says. By contrast, a horizontal-collectivistic cultural orientation was linked to conceptualizing power as something to be used for benefiting others.

“Cultures predict distinct power concepts, and those were the two groups that most strikingly contrasted with each other, the self-interested use of power versus benevolence,” Shavitt said.

In American culture, for example, it’s legitimate for someone who has power to use it for personal, status-oriented gains. Donald Trump, for example, could be seen as a symbol of such culturally nurtured power, because he’s “out for himself, and makes no bones about it,” Shavitt said.

But in other regions in the U.S., that attitude may not be looked upon quite so charitably. Trump may be popular in Manhattan, but he wouldn’t be nearly as popular in, say, North Dakota, Shavitt said.

“We’ve found that there are distinctions and gradations,” she said. “People of different ethnic backgrounds and different cultural orientations – that is, those who espouse different values – respond differently to these ideas of power.”

Nor would The Donald be quite so popular in other countries, where the native culture may promote the use of power for the benefit of others – for example, having higher taxes to subsidize health care and higher education – rather than for achieving status and prestige.

“In Latin America, for example, the power paradigm swings away from self-interested zeal for status in favor of more benevolent and less brazenly self-interested ways of conceptualizing power,” Shavitt said. “Powerful political leaders such as Hugo Chavez shape themselves in collectivism and are frequently idealized as benefactors whose primary goal is to protect helpless individuals.”

While other countries’ notion of equality is an equality of outcomes, in the U.S., “our notion of equality is equal opportunity – each one of us each has an equal opportunity to have a good outcome or a bad outcome depending, supposedly, on how hard we work,” Shavitt said.

Powerful views. Cultures nurture different views of what is desirable and meaningful to do with power, according to new research by UI marketing expert Sharon Shavitt.

Businesses can use this knowledge of cultural attitudes toward power.

“A vertical-individualist orientation predicted liking for brands that symbolized personalized power values of status and prestige, whereas a horizontal-collectivist orientation predicted liking for brands that embodied concerns for the welfare of others,” she said.

The study included groups commonly used in cross-cultural research (European Americans and East Asians, for example) as well as under-researched groups (Hispanic immigrants, students in Brazil and Norway), thereby increasing the potential coverage of vertical and horizontal cultures and allowing for findings across a broader range of cultures.

Out of the groups surveyed, Brazilians exhibited the highest horizontal-collectivist scores, liking brands that symbolized pro-social values better, while Norwegians scored among the lowest in vertical-individualism orientation, liking brands that symbolized personalized power values less than all the other groups.

In the U.S., with the demographic trend lines pointing to a more multi-cultural society, businesses can adjust their marketing and advertising accordingly by identifying a key role for cultural variables.

“What we’re doing is adding another element to the way that marketers can segment their markets – by emphasizing how ethnicity, geography and cultural values come into play in consumers’ power motivations,” Shavitt said.

Portions of the research were part of Torrelli’s doctoral dissertation, written at Illinois. ♦