Insects offer clues to climate variability 10,000 years ago

By Diana Yates
Life Sciences Editor

An analysis of the remains of ancient midges – tiny non-biting insects closely related to mosquitoes – opens a new window on the past with a detailed view of the surprising regional variability that accompanied climate warming during the early Holocene epoch, 10,000 to 5,500 years ago.

Researchers at the UI and the University of British Columbia looked at the abundance and variety of midge larvae buried in lake sediments in Alaska. Midge larvae are highly sensitive to summer temperatures, so changes in the abundance of different species over time give the scientists a reliable marker of temperature fluctuations over the last 10,000 years.

Northern high latitudes are thought to have been warmer than today during the early Holocene, a time of heightened solar irradiation as a result of Earth’s axial tilt and orbit around the sun. The period is often referred to as the Holocene Thermal Maximum. Scientists hope to understand the ecological impacts of climate warming during that time to make better predictions about the effects of future warming. But several decades of research have yielded only ambiguous evidence of climate conditions in Alaska at that time.

The new analysis, conducted by UI doctoral student Benjamin Clegg with UI plant biology and geology professor Feng Sheng Hu, who led the study, offers the first detailed record of temperature variation over the last 10,000 years in Alaska. The analysis reveals that the region was significantly cooler than expected during the early Holocene.

“This study shows that early Holocene warming did not occur everywhere in high latitudes, and exhibited important regional exceptions, even though the driving force behind it – solar input, in this case – was geographically uniform,” said Clegg, who is now a postdoctoral researcher in Hu’s lab. The drivers of climate change during the early Holocene “were different than the greenhouse gases responsible for global warming today,” Clegg said. “So we should not expect to see exactly the same spatial patterns of temperature anomalies in the next few decades as during the early Holocene.”

The researchers hypothesize that solar warming during the early Holocene spurred atmospheric circulation patterns that contributed to extensive sea-ice off the Alaskan coast. That, and a treeless tundra over more of the land area than at present would have increased surface reflectivity, potentially contributing to the observed cooling, Clegg said.

“This study has important ecological and societal implications,” Hu said. “Nonlinear responses such as those identified here constitute a major source of potential climate ‘surprises’ that make it more difficult to anticipate and prepare for future regional climate scenarios.”

The findings appear in the Proceedings of the National Academy of Sciences. The National Science Foundation funded this research.

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Illinois could recoup billions by upping casino license fees

By Phil Cunice
Business and Law Editor

Instead of increasing income taxes on its citizens, the cash-strapped state of Illinois should look to dramatically raise casino licensing fees, which are conservatively calculated to be worth $250 million and $500 million apiece, not the $100,000 they were valued at in the gambling expansion bill recently voted down in Springfield, says a leading national gambling critic.

“From 1991 to 1993, the state of Illinois charged only $25,000 plus minimal background fees for each of its 10 casino licenses,” said Kindt, a professor of business and legal policy at the UI. “In retrospect, those 10 licenses were given away for peanuts. In current dollars, there is a $2.5 billion giveaway. These licenses are worth a lot more than what the state is charging for them, and they’ve basically been giving them away to political insiders.”

“If the state is looking for money, they need only look to the licenses they already gave away as well as bumping up the price for any new gambling licenses,” he said. “Licenses for new slot machines would also be an easy target for new revenue, says Kindt, a senior editor of the United States International Gambling Report, a multi-volume series released between 2008 and 2010. “The state could also charge a lot more for each slot machine position the casinos have,” he said. “In Cook County, the proposed charge is $25,000 per machine; outside of Cook County, it’s $12,500. That’s still millions of dollars that the state is leaving on the table.”

Kindt says the state could pass a law that would allow them to go back to, and re-actively, assess billions of dollars in lost licensing fees from casinos and other gambling facilities.

“If you legalize them, you can also criminalize them,” he said. “All the state would have to do is pass a bill saying casino owners now have to pay fair market value for their licenses, like they do in many other states.”

If casino owners were to balk at paying such a hefty price tag and threaten to leave town, Kindt says both the building and the land could be used for something else.

“In fact, they already did this in Nebraska, where they changed a disused racetrack into an educational facility,” he said. “They had a racetrack that was going out of business in Omaha, but the owners wanted to convert it into a racetrack-casino. Instead, Warren Buffett and government officials ensured that the land was sold to investors, who bulldozed the racetrack to build a high-tech office park with classrooms for the University of Nebraska at Omaha. “So the former Ak-Sar-Ben racetrack became Aksarben Village. Since then, they have added an entertainment complex, townhouses, recreational facilities and – ironically – the new business school for the University of Nebraska.”

According to Kindt, retrofitting or repurposing disused facilities isn’t all that uncommon.

“Look at what the city of Atlanta did after the Olympics,” he said. “You can pick these buildings up for pennies on the dollar afterward and turn them into something useful, something that would be a net-gain for society.”

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Academic retirees

Two past, 198 academic professionals and faculty members retired from the UI. Two share their stories.

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Divorce education

Researchers stress weaknesses with online divorce education programs.

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Core research

UI plant biology and geology professor Feng Sheng Hu collected core samples from Alaskan lakes. The abundance and diversity of midges buried in sediments offer a reliable record of temperature fluctuations over time.
Faculty senate approves revised calendar for 2012-13

By Mike Helenthal
Assistant Editor

revisions to next year’s academic calendar were approved at the 7th Annual Urbana Academic Senate meeting.

But some senators urged leaders to revis- it and improve the university’s calendaring process to avoid regularly making changes in the future.

The 2012-13 calendar was revised to allow university officials to meet a federal student-aid disbursement deadline.

But the revision has caused a number of less-than-ideal consequences, including the addition of Saturday final exams and a condensed grading period at the holiday break. However, it does provide additional time for the administrative process used to deter- mine student academic status.

Gay Miller, a professor of pathobiol- ogy and the chair of the Educational Policy Committee, said the changes were neces- sary and adopted as the “least damaging” options.

The change “needed to be made very carefully,” she said, noting the calendaring process is complicated and affects everyone.

“Every person on the committee had something to say,” she said. “We’re making what we think is a sensible recommenda- tion.”

The 2012-13 calendar already had set the start of the school year a week later on Aug. 27 and had reduced the winter break by a week.

But those changes also affected the abil- ity for officials to meet the student-aid dis-bursement deadline and the system used to assess student performance status.

Senators said the scheduling problem was anticipated and will recur in the future.

Next year’s revisions were touted as a “one-time” correction that would bypass a provision prohibiting final exams from being held on Saturday or Sunday.

Senate Executive Committee Chairman Matt Wheeler, a professor of animal sci- ences, said the implications of the revision were less onerous than not acting at all.

“This is critical,” he said. “If we miss this (disbursement) deadline, students are going to be much more impacted.”

“It divided the burden as equally as pos- sible,” said Sen. Bettina Francis, a member of the Educational Policy Committee and a professor of entomology. “This particular option is one … that requires sacrifice from students, faculty and staff.”

Sen. Abbas Aminmansour, a professor of architecture, said the current academic cal- endar was approved years in advance and that the processes included input from all sec- tors of campus.

“We looked at pretty much any idea you might come up with,” he said of the Sen- ate’s calendaring process. “There was a lot of discussion that went into this issue.”

He said he was confident the revisions would correct the problem with the least hardship.

“This may or not be the solution in the future,” he said.

Miller said the issue would continue to be brought up in the future.

Several student senators voiced concern over the previously approved changes in calendar as well as the adoption of Sat- urday finals. They argued next year’s new timeline adversely affects study time, travel and work plans for the winter break, and

even students who worship on Saturdays.

Francis said students experiencing test-scheduling difficulty could employ the univer- sity’s “conflict exam” process to identify alternate exam times. Senate bylaws also restrict the number of tests students can take in a 24-hour period.

Student senators also asked that the student body be better informed of any future calendaring changes.

Senate considers public statement on Illinois Senate Bill 512

By Mike Helenthal
Assistant Editor

o Nov. 7, UI senators backed away from a proposal putting the Urbana Academic Senate on re- cord as advocating against pend- ing legislation aimed at overhaul- ing the state’s pension system.

The debate on whether to draft a formal statement encompassed much of the sen- ate’s November meeting, an exercise that eventually doomed a vote on the issue after a quorum call showed not enough senators remained to take action.

The discussion followed a presentation by John Kindt, a business and legal policy professor and chair of the senate’s Commit- tee on Faculty and Academic Staff Benefits, who urged senators to follow ethics guide- lines if they desired to privately contact leg- islative representatives and voice concern over Illinois Senate Bill 512.

Kindt said the legislation includes “Dra- conian measures” negatively affecting the pensions of university and other state em- ployees, including calls for a revised sys- tem of higher employee contributions and reduced benefits.

An Illinois House committee sent SB 512, with amendments, forward to the full House Nov. 8. Final recommendations are for a three-tier pension system, including a cap on current contributions of 10%. The new system would cap earnings used to calculate benefits and raise the pension age to 67 for new hires.

In addition, those hired prior to 2011 would have to choose one of three revised benefit plans in 2013, which include caps on benefits and employer contributions.

“We have not had a chance to go through this (amended) bill,” Guy Glick, said, noting his committee would be “extremely active in the coming months” as state legislators look to public-employee benefits as a way to solve Illinois’s financial morass.

Kindt said UI President Michael J. Ho- gan had been a strong voice on the pension issue.

Kindt provided copies for senators of Hogan’s opinion piece on pensions appear- ing in the Oct. 30 edition of the Chicago Sun-Times, as well as a widely circulated Hogan email asking employees to privately contact legislators concerning SB 512.

“The likely effect of Senate Bill 512 in its current form will be a brain drain from these public universities and their surround- ing communities,” Hogan said in his state- ment to the Sun-Times. “Such an exodus would erode our ability to meet the U of I’s teaching, research, public service and health care missions, and would slam the

brakes on what has consistently been a vi- brant economic engine for this great state.”

Hogan’s advocacy was allowed, while the legislators privately. She said she assumed voting for something when we don’t even have all the facts.”

Virtual chair Joyce Tolliver, a profes- sor of Spanish, recommended faculty sena- tors follow Hogan’s suggestion to lobby legislators privately. She said she assumed Hogan’s advocacy was allowed, while the faculty senator’s may not be, because the UI president is registered as a lobbyist with the state.

While at least two motions for votes came to the floor, in the end none was con- sidered after the quorum call.

IMPoRtANT dAteS FoR the 2012-13 ACAdeMIc YEAr*

Aug. 27 Classes begin
Aug. 29 Thanksgiving break begins
Nov. 26 Instruction resumes
Dec. 14 Final exams begin
Dec. 15 Saturday exams
Dec. 20 Grade-submission deadline
Jan. 4 Academic Standing Review completed
Jan. 5 Fall semester disbursement deadline
Jan. 14 Spring semester starts
*Bold terms were revised

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Inside Illinois is an employee publication of the Urbana-Champaign campus of the University of Illinois. It is published on the first and third Thursday of each month by the News Bureau of the campus Office of Public Affairs, administered by the associate chancellor for public affairs. Distribution is by campus mail.

News is solicited from all areas of the campus and should be sent to the editor at least 30 days before publication. Entries for the calendar are due 15 days before publication. All items may be sent to insideillinois@uiuc.edu. The campus mail address is Inside Illinois, 507 E Green St., Room 345, Urbana, IL 61801. The fax number is 217-244-0611.

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http://news.illinois.edu/ii

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Ads removed for online version
Law student profile data inquiry complete

The UI issued a final report Nov. 7 upon the conclusion of its investigation into inaccurate class profile data shared by the College of Law. The report concluded that the intentional inaccuracies were limited to six of the 10 years reviewed, that one person was responsible for these inaccuracies, and that the college lacked adequate controls to prevent, deter and detect such actions.

In addition to its findings, the report included a set of eight recommendations, including correction of the erroneous data, implementation of “best practice” processes and controls that include data monitoring, auditing and segregation of duties as well as steps to ensure a continued university culture of integrity and ethical conduct. During the course of the investigation, the college’s assistant dean of admissions was placed on administrative leave and subsequently resigned.

The investigation found that admissions decisions, including scholarship awards, appear to have been made based on the true data originally provided by the Law School Admissions Council, the national admissions data clearinghouse. And it doesn’t appear that any students whose data were changed had any knowledge of those changes. In other words, there is no information indicating that changes to individual Law School Admission Test scores or the grade-point average of any students affected any admissions decisions on particular applicants to the College of Law. The 114-page report (available online) is the culmination of an investigation that began Aug. 26 after the University Ethics Office was alerted about the allegations.

As for work, she’s happy to keep adding responsibilities to her job description and said she’s never regretted coming to the UI.

“I’ve got a great boss, amazing coworkers and an office with a great view,” she said. “You don’t get that at many places.”

On the Job features UI staff members. To nominate a civil service employee, email insidel@illinois.edu.
Faculty members, academic professionals retire

By Mike Holenthal
Assistant Editor

Between Aug. 16, 2010, and Aug. 15, 2011, 198 faculty members and academic professionals retired from the UI, according to the Office of Academic Human Resources. Those who retired during that time were honored last spring at the campus’s Academic Service Recognition Luncheon. Also honored were employees celebrating an employment milestone (10, 20, 30, 40 or 50 years) during that time. The list of academic retirees is posted online.

Retired senate clerk enjoying time with family

By Mike Holenthal
Assistant Editor

It’s likely you know the name Bob Damrau, even if you’ve never met him.

Since 1994, Damrau has been a behind-the-scenes mainstay of Urbana Academic Senate life — the clerk responsible for schedules and meetings and paperwork and everything else necessary to make campus academic governance go smoothly. He retired in August.

“The position is kind of unique on campus because you touch all of the units,” he said.

Damrau, originally from Chicago, learned about the clerk’s job after attending the UI’s library school in 1992 and earning a master’s degree in library science the following year.

“I was just browsing ads when I saw the clerk position was open,” he said. “I had no idea what the position was. I had no idea what the senate was.”

Damrau said it took some time to figure out the senate’s complicated and sometimes bewildering procedures.

“There was a pretty steep learning curve,” he said, which included adapting to a new chairman and new senators each year.

“Each would have their own style and way of doing things,” he said. “It’s been interesting to see how each person has approached their role in the senate.”

Damrau said he had a natural predisposition to working within the political realm that is the Urbana senate.

“Being from Chicago, I was already a political animal,” he said.

It didn’t hurt either that he had a business background, including a bachelor’s in marketing from DePaul University and an MBA in 1991 from the Illinois Institute of Technology.

“I’ve always enjoyed the aspect of seeing how organizations work from the inside,” he said, “and I’ve always been good at getting along with people and dealing with custom- ers, even those who weren’t always happy.”

He said the job entailed prioritizing many functions simultaneously to meet various deadlines, though the elections process was the most frenzied feature of his position.

“It helps that I’m a pretty laid-back person,” he said. “Plus, there is a lot of dedicated and very responsive people I was working with. The people I’ve worked with here have been great.”

As the years went by, more duties were added to the position and Damrau found himself on call for special meetings, weekend and out-of-town events.

He said he didn’t mind the unusual schedule and enjoyed the limited travel because of the learning experiences they offered.

“I’ve gotten to meet my counterparts at other universities, which was very valuable,” he said. “We would swap stories about putting out fires.”

Another perk to the job was that Damrau worked side-by-side with his wife, Christa, for the last seven years. She served as the senate secretary starting in 1983 and transferred to a new campus position upon Bob’s retirement.

“We had a great working relationship,” he said. “I really do miss that.”

Together, they said, they’ve seen the senate’s good, bad and ugly sides.

“We often joke that we could write a book someday — but just leave the names out,” he said.

Prior to the UI, he worked in sales and marketing for several companies in the Chicago area. He decided to attend the UI’s yearlong library school after becoming a library volunteer for a Chicago regional branch, an activity he found he greatly enjoyed.

“I was in a transition period in my career and I’d been thinking about the library program for a while,” he said.

He’s glad he did it because it led to the end of his career “transition” and to the start of his new career. Now he’s ready to transition again — though the “what’s next” path isn’t so clear.

See DAMRAU, Page 5

Lamb continues research, enjoys more travel in retirement

By Mike Holenthal
Assistant Editor

University physics and astronomy professor Susan Lamb’s approach to retirement is similar to the colliding galaxies she studies — it’s simply a matter of merging and evolving.

Lamb is still in the evolution phase of retirement, having stepped down this summer following a career at the university that was once thought to be unchanging: “Things are never static for in the universe that were once thought to persist.”

While Lamb continues research, enjoys more travel in retirement, she still keeps at Loomis Laboratory. “I had been thinking about (retirement), but I didn’t have the usual build-up, said Lamb.

Susan said she had been thinking about (retirement), but I didn’t have the usual build-up, she said. “It feels like an evolution rather than a clear, she said.

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See DAMRAU, Page 5
Exploring the history of the written page

By Christian Gollayan
News Bureau intern

Within the past two decades, technological advances have changed the way readers consume text, from online blogs to e-readers. Some critics and scholars have suggested that we were embarking on a radically new age of information.

Bonnie Mak, a professor of library and information science and of medieval studies, addresses these ideas in “How the Page Matters” (University of Toronto Press), saying that this “digital revolution” is part of a long tradition of graphic exchanges of written ideas that stretches back to the Middle Ages.

“The same kind of language had been used to posit a ‘printing revolution’ in the 15th century,” Mak said, “and similar claims about an age of information had been made for the period following the advent of the printing press.”

Chapters include “Architecture of the Page,” “Reading the Page,” “The Paratext and the Page,” “Reading the Library” and “The Digital Page.”

Her book covers the genealogy of the written page through the manuscripts of the Middle Ages and the printed books of the early modern period to the digital resources of today. By looking at the history of text, Mak found that how the written word is presented — whether as a book or an e-reader — affects its meaning.

“It is not only that books and similar kinds of resources are historically situated and culturally produced,” she said, “but they also travel through time and space. A medieval manuscript may have had a range of meanings and uses in the 15th century, but the same item might engender a different range of meanings and uses now in the 21st century.”

Mak uses genre books as an example of how written text is packaged to shape its meaning.

“It is no accident that romance novels look the way they do,” she said. “Their look is the result of careful decisions by authors, editors, publishers and designers. Romance novels have a clear graphic identity that shapes the ways in which they are treated — whether as a book or an e-reader — and understood by readers, librarians and booksellers alike.”

Because her book covers a wide range of topics that go beyond the divide between manuscript and print, and between book and computer, Mak hopes the book appeals to scholars of art history, communications, cultural studies, graphic design, history, library and information science, literature, and new media.

“It is often difficult to grasp the complicated processes of production that underpin these materials, but my work illustrates how online resources are — just like their traditional counterparts — produced at a particular time and place and are therefore subject to myriad pressures that may be political, economic, social or cultural in nature.”

Mak wants readers to come away with a better understanding of how they formulate knowledge through exploring these different pressures.

“By understanding how both form and content influence the reception of information, whether printed word on paper or digitized image on computer, we can begin to imagine more vibrant ways of communicating with new technologies that are sensitive to the entanglement of materiality and meaning.”

She recently was reminded on a trip out West — where the stars are fuller and brighter because of lower levels of light pollution — just how beautiful the night sky is.

“When you work on something all of the time, you tend to take it for granted,” she said.

And she plans to take that lesson to heart upon retirement. She said she plans to be diligent in ensuring the personal connections she’s made at the UI stay intact.

“You have to make an effort to stay connected to people,” she said.
Of the 27 EU countries, 17 use the euro as common currency and so are tied together in the eurozone. News reports suggest that a default by Greece – and even more so Italy – could bring down the entire eurozone system. Why and how would this happen? How does a relatively small nation like Greece pose such a threat?

Global financial markets are so integrated that a Greek default would spill over to other countries – what financial economists call “contagion.” Banks from across Europe hold Greek debt. That debt represents part of the banks’ assets – returns that the banks have been counting on. In the most recent bailout agreement, the banks accepted that they would have to take a significant loss on those assets, a “haircut” in financial jargon. That leaves the banks in a precarious position, making it more difficult for them to lend to the private sector or to purchase government debt from other countries.

As a result, other countries will be affected. Less lending will prolong the economic slump in Europe and the world. Governments in high-debt countries, such as Italy, which count on borrowing to pay their bills, will have a more difficult time finding banks to purchase their debt. In a worst-case scenario, some of these large banks may go under, which could precipitate a significant banking crisis and even the collapse of the single currency.

Austerity measures in Greece, required for it to obtain bailout funds, have produced massive street protests, along with complaints these measures are destroying the Greek economy. Just how severe are these measures? And is there no alternative?

Austerity measures require cutting social spending, chopping public employment and raising taxes. These are significant policy changes that require Greeks to rethink their relationship between the market, government and citizens. For a long time, the Greek government has provided for many citizens, insulating them from the risk and volatility of global markets. The government will no longer be able to do that.

The response of the Greek people is not surprising – they had been counting on those policies for their quality of life. Here at home, think about the controversies generated by proposals to change social security or the pension system in Illinois – the beneficiaries of those policies have made plans assuming certain policies would be in place. It would be traumatic to pull the rug out from them.

Interestingly, polls suggest that Greek citizens detest the austerity requirements of the recent bailout agreement, but want to remain within the eurozone – a very difficult circle to square. These conflicting attitudes create credibility issues with markets, which question whether the Greek government will actually have the will to follow through with its commitments. In turn, Greek politicians have been searching for ways to convince markets and other EU leaders have been counting on a “firewall” to contain the problem, but details and funding have remained uncertain. William Bernhard is the head of the political science department at the UI and is an expert on central banking and the link between politics and markets in the European Union. Bernhard was interviewed by News Bureau social sciences editor Craig Chamberlain.

A Minute With … ™

Editor’s note: Every day seems to bring new headlines in the Europe-

an L’rion’s sovereign debt crisis. A potential default by Greece had put that country at center stage, but the spotlight recently shifted quickly to Italy. Both countries’ leaders have stepped down as a result. EU leaders have been searching for a firewall” to contain the problem, but details and funding have remained uncertain. William Bernhard is the head of the political science department at the UI and is an expert on central banking and the link between politics and markets in the European Union. Bernhard was interviewed by News Bureau social sciences editor Craig Chamberlain.

The government will no longer be able to Insidellinois

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It could be solution for high-performance solar cells

By Liu Ahlberg

Promising development

Professor Xiuling Li’s group developed a method for growing semiconductor nanowires (shown above) on silicon wafers that holds promise for advanced device applications, including solar cells.

Micro and Nanotechnology Laboratory, the Frederick Seitz Materials Research Laboratory and the Beckman Institute for Advanced Science and Technology at the UI.

Li believes the nanowire approach could be applied broadly to other semiconductors, enabling other applications that have been deterred by mismatch concerns. Next, Li and her group hope soon to demonstrate nanowire-based multi-junction tandem solar cells with high quality and efficiency.

The Department of Energy and the National Science Foundation supported this work. Other faculty involved in the project are materials science and engineering professors Juan-Max Zuo and John A. Rogers at the UI, and professor Cun-Zeng Ning at Arizona State University. Jae Cheol Shin, a former postdoctoral researcher with Li, is the first author.

Assessment of online divorce education finds weaknesses

By Sharita Forrest

In many states, including Illinois, married couples with children who want to unite the knot must complete court-mandated educational programs – either in group settings or through online classes – before judges will finalize their divorces.

While online programs provide a convenient means for some parents to satisfy court mandates, there have been no formal assessments of the programs’ quality and effectiveness, a research team at the UI found when it reviewed six popular online divorce education programs utilized by courts throughout the U.S.

Divorce requirements and educational provisions vary from state to state, and within states, much is left to judges’ discretion in each county, said Jill R. Bowers, one of the study’s co-authors and a doctoral student in each county, said Jill R. Bowers, one of the study’s co-authors and a doctoral student in each county, said Jill R. Bowers, one of the study’s co-authors and a doctoral student in each county, said Jill R. Bowers, one of the study’s co-authors and a doctoral student in each county, said Jill R. Bowers, one of the study’s co-authors and a doctoral student in each county, said Jill R. Bowers, one of the study’s co-authors and a doctoral student in each county, said Jill R. Bowers, one of the study’s co-authors and a doctoral student in each county, said Jill R. Bowers, one of the study’s co-authors and a doctoral student in each county, said Jill R. Bowers, one of the study’s co-authors and a doctoral student in each county, said Jill R. Bowers, one of the study’s co-authors and a doctoral student in each county, said Jill R. Bowers, one of the study’s co-authors and a doctoral student in each county, said Jill R. Bowers, one of the study’s co-authors and a doctoral student in each county.

Online resource

Doctoral students Elissa Thomann Mitchell, left, and Jill R. Bowers were co-authors of the study that evaluated online educational programs mandated by many family courts when parents divorce.

Bowers were co-authors of the study that evaluated online educational programs mandated by many family courts when parents divorce.

Together as co-parents is a great suggestion if it’s an amicable situation, but that’s not always the best recommendation, to encourage contact between the parents when there’s a potentially dangerous situation,” said doctoral student and co-author Elissa Thomann Mitchell. “The programs didn’t pass.

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Division.


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NEW faces 2011

Mireya Loza
an assistant professor of history and of Latino/Latina studies in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Education: Ph.D. (American civilization) and M.A. (public humanities), Brown University; M.A. (anthropology), University of Texas at Austin; B.A. (anthropology and Latino/a studies), University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

Research Interests: The Bracero Program (the guest worker agreement between the United States and Mexico) and its legacy.

"We are thrilled to welcome back professor Loza to Illinois," said Isabel Molina-Guzmán, the chair of the department of Latina/Latina studies. "She was a groundbreaker when she graduated as the first Latina/Latino studies major in 1996, and she continues to be a pioneer today in Mexican-American history. From her work on the Bracero History Project at the Smithsonian Institution, she brings with her a wealth of research experience in public history and the digital humanities. She’s already hard at work making her archival collaboration with DePaul University on Mexican American Chicago community organizations digitally accessible to the public."

Courses: HIST 396, "Oral History: Theory, Methods, Practice." LLS 296 “Race and Ethnicity in Chicago”

Why Illinois? "I chose Illinois because the department of Latina/Latina Studies and history both serve as great homes for the kind of scholarship I do," Loza said. "It is also exciting to work alongside colleagues who are producing stellar scholarship in their respective fields. I am both thrilled and proud to return to Illinois where I first encountered the Latino/Latina studies program."

Dov Weiss
an assistant professor of religion in the School of Literatures, Cultures and Linguistics in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences.

Education: Ph.D. (history of Judaism), University of Chicago Divinity School; M.A. (modern Jewish history) and B.A. (political science), Yeshiva University, New York City.

Research Interests: Weiss’ newest study focuses on hierarchical inversions in ancient Judaism.

"Weiss is an outstanding new addition to our faculty who is doing innovative research on rabbinic (early Jewish) writings, in particular offering new insights into the ways the rabbis empowered people to question traditional, even biblical formulations of divine authority," said David Price, chair of the department of religion. "While his research focuses on rabbinic writings, the subjects of his courses range over the entire history of Jewish culture."

Courses: RLST 120A, "History of Judaism" and RLST 289, "Jewish Sacred Literature."

Why Illinois? "I chose to start my career at Illinois because of its reputation as a leading research institution and for its well-known commitment to support young scholars," Weiss said. "I walked away from my campus visit last year struck not only by the caliber of scholarship among the religious studies faculty members, but also by their openness, warmth and genuine friendliness. I am so thrilled and honored to be part of this amazing community."
Cray to provide supercomputer for Blue Waters project

The National Center for Supercomputing Applications at the UI has finalized a contract with Cray Inc. to provide the supercomputer for the National Science Foundation’s Blue Waters project. Cray replaces IBM, which terminated its contract in August because, IBM said, the technology required more financial and technical support than originally anticipated.

Cray will begin installing hardware in the UI’s National Petascale Computing Facility within the next few weeks, with an early science system expected to be available in early 2012. Blue Waters is expected to be fully deployed by the end of 2012.

This new Cray supercomputer will support significant research advances in a broad range of science and engineering domains, meeting the needs of the most compute-intensive, memory-intensive and data-intensive applications. Blue Waters is expected to deliver sustained performance, on average, of more than one petaflops on a set of benchmark codes that represent those applications and domains.

More than 25 teams – including four from Illinois faculty members – from a dozen research fields, are preparing to achieve breakthroughs by using Blue Waters to model a broad range of phenomena, including: nanotechnology’s minute molecular assemblies, the evolution of the universe since the Big Bang, the damage caused by earthquakes and the formation of tornadoes, the mechanism by which viruses enter cells and improved climate change predictions.

“We are extremely pleased to have forged a strong partnership with Cray. This configuration will be the most balanced, powerful and useable system available when it comes online. By incorporating a future version of the XK6 system, Blue Waters..."
ACES
Celebrate Illinois agriculture on Nov. 19

The College of Agricultural, Consumer and Environmental Sciences will host “Salute to Ag Day” at 9 a.m. Nov. 19 at the west side of Assembly Hall inside the circle drive, prior to the UI football game.

“Salute to Ag Day” is our opportunity to celebrate the importance of agriculture in Illinois and thank our agricultural partners who allow us to fulfill our mission in the college,” said Kendra E. Courson, the college’s assistant director of marketing.

A select number of tickets will be available at the door: $10 for adults and $5 for children under 12. Ticket availability is on a first-come, first-served basis.

National Radio Hall of Fame inductee Orion Samuelson will emcee the event with appearances by athletics director Michael J. Thomas and the Marching Illini band.

The event also provides an opportunity for the college to recognize the Alumni Association, Illinois 4-H Foundation and the Illinois AgriNews Farm Family of the Year.

“Our focus in the College of ACES is still driven by the land-grant concept of working with partners throughout the state, including state agencies, legislators, local communities, agribusinesses, commodity groups, producer organizations and the many others who are involved in the Illinois food and agriculture industry,” Courson said.

Illinois Informatics Institute
Informatics Ph.D. now available

The UI is now offering a doctoral program in informatics—a relatively new field that melds the information sciences with other areas of inquiry. The program will be administered by the Illinois Informatics Institute, a campuswide unit that has been administering an undergraduate informatics minor and a multi-disciplinary bioinformatics master’s degree program since 2007.

Guy Garnett, newly appointed director of the institute, said this advanced degree program will allow doctoral candidates to work with faculty members from almost any discipline to define an individual research challenge.

“This degree allows faculty and students the utmost flexibility and support to design and conduct innovative, computationally informed research at the cutting edge of many fields, and to lead in the creation of entirely new fields of study,” Garnett said. “We are driven to solve human problems, to enrich and expand human cultural and social experience, and to meet global challenges through a blended approach to research and education that will transform academia to meet 21st-century needs.”

Applications will be accepted through Dec. 15. Fellowships and assistantships are available for the most qualified applicants. For more information, visit www.informatics.illinois.edu.

Benefit concert
Hobson to perform Dec. 9

Ian Hobson, professor emeritus in the School of Music, will host a benefit concert followed by a dessert reception at 7 p.m. Dec. 9 at Wesley United Methodist Church, 1203 W. Green St., Urbana. The solo piano performance will feature works by Chopin and Schumann. Hobson will provide commentary on the evening’s musical selections.

Tickets should be purchased in advance online at www.campusms.org or by telephone at 217-840-7762. Tickets are $30 for the concert and $40 for the concert and dessert reception. A limited number of concert tickets (not including reception) will be sold at the door. Proceeds will support the Campus Middle School for Girls, a private, non-sectarian middle school for girls.

Radio documentary
Disabled students and the UI explored

“When people have faced barriers to achievement, those barriers always have a breaking point, says Kevin Fritz, who graduated last May from the UI. “It just takes the right people and the right fights and the consistency to break them down,” he said.

Radio documentary
Disabled students and the UI explored

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“The Rare Book and Manuscript Library is observing the 400th anniversary of the King James Bible with an exhibition illustrating the complex history of the version that has endured as the English-language touchstone since its publication in 1611,” Garnett said. “Those scholars described the ‘many good ones’ that they used to produce their version. Some of the earliest banned translations as well as authorized partisan translations created for the monarchs Henry VIII, Edward, Mary and Elizabeth are included in the display.

For this event, in place of the traditional exhibition catalog, the Library is offering a set of boxed notecards featuring images and text for $5.

Exhibition continues through Dec. 15. The library is open on weekdays from 8:30 a.m. to 5 p.m., and is closed on UI holidays.

The title page to the New Testament portion of the King James Bible

The title page to the New Testament portion of the King James Bible. The title page to the New Testament portion of the King James Bible.
achieve
tments

Schuyler S. Korban, a professor of molecular genetics and biotechnology in the department of natural resources and environmental sciences, and the director of the ACES Office of International Programs, was selected to receive the 2011 American Society for Horticultural Science Award for Outstanding Fruit Cultivar, for his work along with three collaborators on “GoldRush,” an apple variety that was developed and released from the cooperative apple breeding programs of Illinois-Purdue-Rutgers universities in 1994. The variety has excelled in retail farm and roadside markets and continues to gain popularity. In 2007, GoldRush was adopted as Illinois’ state apple.

Korban also used the apple variety in his genomics research to generate more than 180,000 expressed sequence tags, genomic libraries and an integrated physical and genetic map that aid in identifying, studying and isolating genes of economic interest. The society is dedicated to advancing horticultural research, education and application.

BOARD OF TRUSTEES

Christopher G. Kennedy, the chair of the UI Board of Trustees, was appointed to the Association of Governing Boards of Universities and Colleges, an authority on higher education governance.

The council serves as an advisory body to the association’s board and president. It is made up of 22 chairs of boards of trustees of American universities and colleges.

Ronald P. Toby, a professor of history in the department of East Asian languages and cultures, received the 2011 National Institutes for the Humanities Prize in Japanese Studies for outstanding contributions to Japanese studies by a foreign scholar.

Toby is recognized for his research in the history of early modern Japanese foreign relations and for his career-long accomplishments in the advancement and promotion of Japanese studies abroad.

It is expected that most units will be closed and most employees will not work these three days. Since the reduced-service days are not official holidays, employees who are required to work and those who choose to work will be paid their regular hourly rate of pay. For payroll time reporting purposes, non-exempt staff employees who are required to work on one or more of these days should not record anything for the days they work, since they record only “exception time” (for example, vacation or sick leave usage).

Employees may use floating holidays or vacation to cover this time if they do not work. In addition, non-exempt (eligible for overtime) employees may use accrued compensatory time or take the time excused without pay. Units that plan to be closed during this time and have employees who want to work during this period should contact the appropriate Human Resources office by Dec. 2 and must be nominated by their departments. Each department is limited to two nominations.

For details, see the online fellowship opportunities database at https://www.grad.illinois.edu/fellowship/listing/3523 or contact the Graduate College Fellowship Office by Feb. 9. Award winners will be announced by March 2.

The program was created in conjunction with the National Clean Energy Education workshop on campus last month. Academic year awards cover up to two years of study at the doctoral level starting August 2012. Up to five awards will be made.

Nominees can be current students or incoming students and must be nominated by their departments. Each department is limited to two nominations.

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By Dusty Rhodes
Arts and Humanities Editor

The lineage of every Greek god and every Roman god, along with the complex connections among them, was first spelled out in a set of 15 books written more than 600 years ago. Called Genealogia deorum gentilium, the massive compendium of more than 700 deities was assembled at the request of King Hugh IV of Cyprus by the Italian poet and scholar Giovanni Boccaccio.

To a classicist like Jon Solomon, the Robert D. Novak professor of Western civilization and culture at the UI, this rich resource seemed ripe for researchers. One hitch: It was in Latin. “It was such an interesting and influential text, I couldn’t believe that it had not been translated,” Solomon said.

He undertook the task himself, and the first of Solomon’s three-volume series, “Genealogy of the Pagan Gods,” recently was published by Harvard University Press. A review in Open Letters Monthly described Solomon’s translation as “a mighty undertaking” and a “long overdue monument to its beloved author.”

Solomon said the job suits his professional niche. He has taught courses in mythology for more than 30 years, and has focused on the precise slice of literary history that Boccaccio’s magnum opus inhabits. “Renaissance scholars are more interested in the Italian language products of Boccaccio’s output, while classicists are more interested in his scholarly writings in Latin. My specialty is really in classical reception – so this is right up my alley,” he said.

Boccaccio was best-known for his famously bawdy allegory “The Decameron.” His Genealogia comprised 723 chapters in 15 volumes, but the only portion commonly studied was the section in which Boccaccio outlined a defense for Christians who wanted to study the poetry of ancient pagans. Solomon’s edition is published by Harvard’s I Tatti Renaissance Library – an imprint that provides the Latin text on the left and the English translation on the facing page. He plans to finish the second volume during the summer of 2012, and then start on volume three.

Ad removed for online version

By Emily Banas
News Bureau Intern

The city’s problems are effects of what Hamer calls “systematic abandonment.” This phenomenon resulted from industry leaving the city, which was dependent upon it for jobs and tax revenue. East St. Louis was a prosperous industrial city with prime riverfront property until the manufacturers left in the 1950s and 1960s to avoid paying high union labor costs and property taxes, Hamer said.

When manufacturers left and took resources needed to maintain infrastructure, many of its citizens left, too. In 1960, East St. Louis had a population of 82,000; today it is home to fewer than 30,000.

The first people to leave were those affluent and mobile enough to find a new hometown that could provide them with the necessities of life, leaving the poorer segment of the population, primarily African Americans. In 2000, African Americans made up 98 percent of the city, compared with 45 percent in 1960.

Residents who stayed were left to struggle to find the means to maintain a decent quality of life without sustainable wages, health care or even waste disposal. “Abandoned in the Heartland” takes a sociological approach to the challenges, emotions, roles and values of East St. Louis residents. Hamer examines these as well as historical conditions, changes in demographics, and the city’s circumstances within a broader political context by way of anecdotes from East St. Louis residents, whose own voices can be heard discussing the everyday issues they face, from parenting to police discrimination.

Hamer acknowledges that there is a tendency to focus on the negatives and pinpoint steps that can be taken to remedy some of the city’s difficulties, citing education, living wages with benefits, and rebuilding of infrastructure as crucial for East St. Louis and similar-city suburbs such as Cincinnati, Cleveland and Gary, Ind.

“There is nothing romantic about being poor or working class,” Hamer says. “Those living in East St. Louis are people who want the same basic things as everyone else: education, jobs, quality housing, to feel proud of their community, to be socioeconomically mobile and to reach that American dream.”