The CTL Newsletter is distributed electronically every month during the academic year.

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Faculty News: If you would like to send an entry to “Faculty News,” the deadline for the January issue is January 7. We prefer that you email the information to CTL@stjohns.edu. Please have your entries follow the style presented in “Faculty News.”

Remember: The best places to look for faculty-related information are the CTL Webpage and the CTL Teaching and Learning Forum.
Teaching Victorian Literature and Science

Amy King (St. John’s College of Liberal Arts and Science, kinga@stjohns.edu)

The Faculty-Growth Grant that I received through the Center for Teaching and Learning enabled me to attend the joint meeting of British Association for Victorian Studies (BAVS) and the North American Victorian Studies Association (NAVSA). The conference and workshop was held in the summer of 2009 at Churchill College, Cambridge University. The influence on my research was paramount, but I’ve been interested to discover how much my continued engagement in the intellectual issues raised by researchers at such a conference has affected my teaching, both at the undergraduate and graduate level. This conference was of particular interest to me as I thought about my teaching at St. John’s because this special joint conference was given over in part to an innovative format of faculty-led workshops. The particular workshop I took was entitled “Prehistory for Victorians.” It was led by Professor Jim Secord, Director of the Darwin Correspondence Project and Professor of History and Philosophy of Science, Cambridge University, and Adelene Buckland, Research Fellow, Cambridge Victorian Studies Group, University of Cambridge. Our goal was to learn new approaches to teaching and research, and we did this not by reading about or listening to a lecture about new teaching methodologies, but by entering back into the role of student. The workshop, thus, was a mini-class. It differed from classes I have taken in the past in being populated by experts in the classroom seats, as well as at the ‘head’ of the room. The workshop was advertised as being “aimed at people at all levels of their career, who either have or seek expertise in bringing into the Victorian Studies field new disciplinary material and methods that will help Victorianists better understand the intellectual context within which the Victorians themselves worked but which are now increasingly alien to our own sensibilities.” This fairly describes the people who participated in the workshop and the work that was done in it.

What stood out for me in this class was the way in which the history of science has rendered the period leading up to and including Darwin’s epochal On the Origin of Species much more diverse than I had previously imagined. As a literary scholar with a broad interest in the history, culture, and literature of the Victorian moment, the workshop updated my understanding of the early Victorian moment. Our subject, the reconstruction of earth history in the first half of the nineteenth century, looked at the way earth history was imaginatively and intellectually fashioned across a number of fields and by a heterogeneous group of people: geologists, biologists, Biblical literalists, fossil collectors, artists, writers, showmen, educators, etc. In particular, as the conveners noted, we tried to pay attention to how “our twenty-first century familiarity with the images that emerged from those discoveries, of dinosaurs stalking for prey, or of violent and humid primeval landscapes, can often threaten to obscure the shocking nature of nineteenth-century earth science for a Victorian public weaned on the notion of mankind’s lordship over a six-thousand-year-old earth.” The conveners in advance of the workshop had us read two major (but generally unread today) texts from this period, and we discussed them; they also brought with them and shared a number of texts with which I had not been familiar from the library at Cambridge. As such, the workshop was both a high-level discussion of the subject at hand as well as a practical sharing of research that could impact my teaching.

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At St. John’s, I regularly teach an undergraduate class entitled “ENG 3250, Victorian Literature;” it fulfills one of the divisional requirements for the English major, and it also seems to attract students more generally interested in literature from the near historical past. After taking the seminar at Cambridge, I have been much more willing to teach excerpts from Darwin’s *Origin*, as well as bring my expertise into the lecture component of the course; I’ve found that students are particularly engaged with thinking about what it might have been like to live in a moment before cognizance of dinosaurs or deep geological time, and how we can see through engagement with texts the impress of the psychic change when such things became more commonly understood. One of the most canonical texts I teach—Lord Alfred Tennyson’s *In Memoriam*—has been enlivened by my willingness to direct students towards unpacking the scientific references in the text, which has enabled them to think deeply about the relationship in the poetry between the personal expression of grief (the poem is an elegy) and the broader grief and anxiety produced by the cultural storm of new scientific discoveries (such as the new understanding of the age of the earth). In my graduate teaching there has been a noticeable change in my course ENG 540 “Victorian Science, Poetry, & Prose.” Not only are we reading more primary materials from the history of science, but we’re reading a more diverse group of texts. The workshop “Prehistory for Victorians” has taught me that I should better integrate scientific materials that would encourage students to think beyond Darwin’s influence on mid-nineteenth century literature and culture to a more diverse understanding of science’s impact on culture. When I last taught “Victorian Science, Poetry, and Prose” I felt as if I was leading the seminar in a way that reflected the newer approaches in the field, the result of which were students who had a more subtle sense of the broader cultural and religious landscape of the early nineteenth century. The Faculty Growth Grant facilitated my continued growth as an intellectual and scholar, which has had a noticeable positive effect on my pedagogy.

**Faculty Growth Grants**

The upcoming deadlines to apply for a Faculty Growth Grant are:

- January 24, 2011
- April 11, 2011

If you have any questions regarding the application procedures look at our website under [Growth Grant Program](http://www.stjohns.edu/academics/centers/teach/growth/past.stj) or email us at CTL@stjohns.edu.

**Past Growth Grant Projects**

If you would like to view what your colleagues have done with their Faculty Growth Grants, visit the CTL webpage at: [http://www.stjohns.edu/academics/centers/teach/growth/past.stj](http://www.stjohns.edu/academics/centers/teach/growth/past.stj)
Faculty News

Dr. Dolores L. Augustine (History, augustid@stjohns.edu) presented the papers: "Cold Memories: Germany Memory Culture Confronts the Cold War" at the conference, "Cold War Cultures: Transnational and Interdisciplinary Perspectives," held at the University of Texas at Austin (October 2010), "Cultures of Technology and the GDR Economy" at the annual meeting of the German Studies Association in Oakland, CA (October 2010), and "The Peace and Anti-Nuclear Movements in German Print Media During the New Cold War" at the conference, "Accidental Armageddons: The Nuclear Crisis and the Culture of the Second Cold War, 1975-1989," at the German Historical Institute in Washington, D.C. (November 2010); participated in a panel discussion on the film, "Rat der Götter" ("Council of Gods"), at the Woodrow Wilson Center in Washington, D.C. (November 2010).

Dr. Blase Billack (Pharmaceutical Sciences, billackb@stjohns.edu) was a keynote speaker and gave the talk, "Breast Cancer and the BRCA1 Gene," at the NJ Science and Engineering Festival (October 2010).

Dr. Zhe-Sheng Chen (Pharmaceutical Sciences, chenz@stjohns.edu) published an article, "Apatinib (YN968D1) Reverses Multidrug Resistance by Inhibiting the Efflux Function of Multiple ATP-Binding Cassette Transporters," in Cancer Research; was selected as an Editorial Advisory Board Member by Metal Based Drugs.

Dr. Maura C. Flannery (Computer Science, Mathematics and Science, flannerm@stjohns.edu) published an article, "Leaves of Stone," in Palette, the newsletter of the Dominican Institute of the Arts (Fall 2010); three quilts in her Plant Ovary series are included in the Uncommon Threads exhibit at the Carter Burden Center in Manhattan (November-December 2010).

Mr. Jared Littman (Director, Office of Grants and Sponsored Research, littmanj@stjohns.edu) was elected for a two-year commitment to be the Chair of the National Council of University Research Administrators (NCURA) for Region II.

Faculty News:
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A Faculty Writing Retreat
The Faculty Writing Retreat, to be held on Monday, December 20 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m., in the Institute for Writing Studies, Library room 150, offers you the opportunity to commit to a day of writing surrounded by your colleagues who will have made the same commitment as you. Published research – and our colleagues at other institutions who regularly host faculty writing retreats – all tell us the positive energy of being around faculty peers who are also writing (and struggling to write) helps faculty get substantial work done, even in one day.

As to the schedule for the retreat, you will arrive and begin writing. We are certain there will be much writing advice to be shared during lunch, which will be served at 12:30pm. We hope you will be able to join us for the day. Please remember that participation is limited; please RSVP at ctl@stjohns.edu or ext. 1859. If you have any questions, email Anne Geller (gellera@stjohns.edu) or Maura Flannery (flannerm@stjohns.edu).

If you would like to learn more about writing retreats or you are interested in research about faculty writing productivity, go to the CTL Forum Writing Page at http://stjohns.campusguides.com/acontent.php?pid=71651&sid=589816.
Joanne Carroll (College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions, carrollj@stjohns.edu)

In this series, Vincentian Research Fellows from across the university share their experiences in actualizing the mission through their research, teaching and service. Below, Dr. Joanne Carroll describes her method of presenting scientific material and motivating students from the perspective of social justice. She points out that scientific knowledge is certainly not the only expertise health care providers must acquire. One of her goals is to encourage students to identify and evaluate the many and various additional factors that determine the health risks and outcomes of certain populations and individuals, especially those at the margins.

The words of St Francis of Assisi, “Preach the gospel at all times, use words when necessary,” apply to integrating the Vincentian mission into teaching, research and service at the university. While I do not explicitly speak about Vincent or his work in my science and public health classes, I think the values of social justice and advocacy for the marginalized, espoused by Vincent and his followers, inform my thinking and analysis of issues. While these values are not unique to Vincent, Christianity or the Catholic Church, he is an exemplary model for the St. John’s community.

The students I teach are preparing for careers in health professions or biomedical research. I provide the basic science foundation on which their understanding of physiology, health, disease and therapy will develop during their education and throughout their professional careers as innovation and new discoveries emerge. Often, as was the case when I was a biology student, the excitement and promise of new discoveries and the power of technology make it seem as if science will, given enough time and money, solve all problems and provide more resources to those in need. New pharmaceuticals, genetic testing, robotic surgery, nanotechnology and other exciting technological advances will surely bring worldwide health. Scientific research and technology make major contributions to health but are they enough? As a health professional or researcher, is one’s scientific expertise sufficient?

In the public health course I teach, one is challenged to evaluate additional factors that determine the health risks and outcomes of populations and individuals. There are obvious and undeniable inequities and disparities in health status. Why do they exist and persist even in affluent countries? Why do common infections preventable or treatable by low tech, readily available solutions, e.g. clean water, nutritional foods, antibiotics still account for a high burden of disease globally? These questions provide an opportunity in a heavily science laden curriculum to step back and explore the context in which science and medicine are done and include the impact of economics, politics, culture, socioeconomic status on health. Case in point is the recent outbreak of cholera in Haiti. Why almost a year after the devastating earthquake are people still living in squalid conditions with no sanitation or clean water, well known conditions for cholera and other epidemic outbreaks? These are issues of political will, commitment and logistics, not new technology.

If one tackles the complex debate about access to health care, there is an opportunity to explore the fundamental principles from which our points of view are developed. If one starts from a premise that health is a human right, certain priorities drive the design of a health care system. It will differ significantly from a system which values health care as a commodity, a business venture with cost effectiveness and profit necessary measures of its success. If one sets a “preferential option for the poor” as a baseline, again priorities will be ordered differently than if one begins with the goal to make the business of healthcare profitable. Those on either side of this often contentious debate do not differ in wanting to contribute to better health for people, it is a matter of emphasis. Without explicitly discussing Vincentian tradition in the class, I challenge students to step into the shoes of those left out of the system and to ask who are these people and why are they in these circumstances? I would like students, and my-
self, to look beyond the simplistic assumptions or partisan positions and delve into the complex issues with a view to establish a solidarity with those in need whether here or abroad. I do not preach about what anyone else should do, or what is the perfect system. Rather, I attempt to expand the scope of the thinking and vision of these complex public health issues through rigorous examination of factual material, reflection and discussion.

Jeffrey Sachs, an economist leading the Millennium Project at the U.N., addressing an audience of eager young students, told them that solving poverty was their generation’s “homework.” He added that our generation is leaving them with many daunting problems. I think guiding students to questions and promoting informed discussion is in the spirit of St. Vincent. We must provide students the tools to engage in discussion across disciplinary lines to explore and examine root causes, question prevailing attitudes, redesign systems and develop a world view that includes the majority of the world’s population currently mired in poverty. Only through this type of engagement will more just solutions be possible.

Using the Web to Engage Students Part III: Getting Organized

Maura C. Flannery (College of Professional Studies, flannerm@stjohns.edu)

Using technology is a lot of work, especially when you are learning a new tool or application. However, it is wondrous what technology can do for you in terms of making your academic life more organized and perhaps even less frustrating. As with other areas, there are such a variety of tools that I can only mention a handful of them. I’ve selected ones that I find easy (or relatively easy!) to use and are available for free. They may not seem to be directly related to teaching, however an organized teacher is a better teacher. Also, you could share these tools with students and help them get organized.

Delicious is social bookmarking software, meaning that instead of bookmarking websites using your browser, you store them on an external site which means they are available no matter where you are. This feature alone makes it useful, and in addition, you can bookmark under several categories or tags and easily share some or all of your bookmarks with others (that’s the social part).

Refworks is web-based bibliographic software available through the University Libraries website, whether you are on or off campus. It will format your bibliographies in a variety of styles, and very importantly, you can change from one format to another. Also, since the data is stored on the web, it is available to you no matter what computer you’re using.

Zotero is my new passion. Now that I’ve told you about Delicious and Refworks, both of which I love and have been using for several years, I come to Zotero, which made me switch away from the other two. It has the features of both and is much easier and faster to use. This is free, open-access software that at the moment only runs on Firefox, but will soon be available for several platforms. Since I find Firefox faster than Explorer, using it is not a sacrifice for me. Visually, Zotero doesn’t seem quite as organized as Refworks, but it has so many advantages, that I am willing to deal with this. No software is perfect, but this one is great.

CampusGuides has been featured in the CTL Newsletter before, and it will be again. It is great software for creating websites that are simple and easy to update. Again, this is software that is provided by the University Libraries, and you can get an account by sending an email to campusguides@stjohns.edu. If you want to see what a CampusGuide looks like, just go to the Libraries website where there are dozens of examples or go to the CTL Forum site.

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IGoogle is essentially a personal homepage you set up with a Google account. You can have your browser set to open to it, and you can include on it a host of “gadgets” and RSS feeds (see below). The gadgets I have include the local weather, GoogleMaps for getting directions, Amazon to look up books, and the National Science Library to search for disciplinary information. None of these might interest you, but you can get stock quotes, sports scores, TV listings, etc., etc. Besides IGoogle keeping you organized and informed, you can choose from a large number of header designs to brighten the page and your day.

RSS Feeds automatically inform you when websites of interest to you are updated. For example, on my IGoogle page, I have an RSS feed for the Information Is Beautiful blog (see last month’s Web Resources article). Every time a new post appears, I just have to click on the title and I can see it. This can also be done through what is called a RSS reader, which you can also get from Google, but that seems to me to be for those who want updates on a lot of websites. I just follow a few, and I like to have everything on my IGoogle page.

### Research Month
April 2011

**CTL Fellows’ Presentations on Research in Teaching and Technology**
*Thursday, April 7*
*2:30 to 4:30 p.m.*

**Faculty Research Forum**
*Wednesday, April 13*

**Grants Reception**
*Wednesday, April 13*

**Reception for Faculty Book Authors**
*Wednesday, April 13*

**Student Film Festival**
*Thursday, April 14*

**Student Research Day—Queens Campus**
*Friday, April 15*

**Annual Undergraduate Applied Social Justice Research Essay Competition**
*Friday, April 15*

**Research Day—Staten Island Campus**
*Monday, April 18*

**Interdisciplinary Research Roundtable Luncheons**
*Mondays, April 4, 11, and 18*

More details will follow in the coming months with specific invitations to participate in each event. Please keep an eye out for notices regarding them.
Collaborative Research: A Growing Trend

Jared Littman (Office of Grants and Sponsored Research, littmanj@stjohns.edu)

Adapting to the changing grant environment is essential to sustaining and elevating the level of research at St. John's University, and in each individual lab. As many of you know, there is a growing trend among grant sponsors to encourage collaborative research among investigators from diverse fields. We in the Grants Office at STJ are hoping the University can capitalize on this development and we've decided to host a series of luncheons to foster collaboration among project directors from various disciplines.

The first meeting was held on October 29th. The attendees were faculty researchers from the Physics, Pharmaceutical Sciences, Chemistry and Biological Sciences departments. Ninety minutes flew by as these researchers engaged in conversation about the possibility of collaborating on future research proposals. The meeting was even more productive than I had anticipated. To get an idea of the luncheon’s impact, here is what the attendees had to say:

“What a great initiative this luncheon was! I feel that collaboration is the key to success in science these days. I think, in general, the most interesting work comes out of these collaborations. It’s also very helpful to know what projects are underway in the other labs here at St. John’s. Finally, that informal exchange of grant writing war stories can be helpful too. Thank you for including me and please keep me in mind for any related events!”

Sandra E. Reznik, M.D., Ph.D.

“The Research Collaboration Luncheon was a great idea. Thanks for the invitation to participate this afternoon. I’m going to follow-up with Dr. Vancura on the epigenetic research, as this may be a pathway of common interest.”

Frank A. Barile, Ph.D., R.Ph.

“I think it is a great opportunity to know what other scientists are doing and open opportunities for collaborations. Thanks a lot.”

Rachel Zufferey, Ph.D

“I think it was a great idea and the meetings should be periodically repeated (every couple of months or at least once a year). I did not know that Frank Barile is also interested in epigenetics. I have already met with Frank to discuss our mutual interests.”

Ales Vancura, Ph.D.

“I think the research collaboration luncheon was a great opportunity for us to exchange information, share our research interests with each other, and explore possible collaboration opportunities. I really appreciate your efforts to put this together and look forward to more meetings like this in the future. Thanks a lot!”

Huizhong Xu, Ph.D.

The Office of Grants and Sponsored Research (OGSR) will host more of these meetings in the upcoming semester, including faculty as well as administrators from various units and departments. The objective of these meetings is to increase collaboration across diverse disciplines to expand and strengthen sponsored project proposals at St. John’s University.

Visit the OGSR website at http://intranet.stjohns.edu/about/departments/provost/grants for updates, workshop or session information, policy and forms. Please don’t hesitate to contact our office at 718-990-6276.