

News for Alumni and Friends of the Department of Writing Studies

Spring 2009

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News from Alumni

From the Chair

Laura Gurak Ph.D., Professor and Chair of the Department of Writing Studies



Warm greetings to the friends and alumni of the Department of Writing Studies. It seems as if the spring semester has just ended, and yet we are already into the month of August and planning our instructor orientation and the start of the fall term.

We have been busy in the department and want to share some of the highlights with you here. A big part of last year was spent reflecting on who we are and where we want to go. We asked, what is writing and what is communication in the early 21st century, and what kinds of leadership can the department offer? The result of our many discussions is our new departmental Stra-

tegic Plan. In the plan, we state the following:

Writing in the 21st century is global, social, and digital. The literacies of this new century are culturally diverse, socially powerful, and technologically sophisticated. Writing Studies is an area of organized and sustained intellectual inquiry examining the nature, realities, and potential impacts of writing practices. Drawing together scholarly methods from the humanities and social sciences, the field of Writing Studies seeks to understand and enrich the ways people use written texts to shape the world.

You can read the entire plan by going to our web site and clicking the “about” button in the left margin.

To become the kind of department we describe in the plan, we are making changes to our degree programs. As you may know, the department currently offers a Bachelor of Science in Scientific & Technical Communication. We are working on a new de-

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Writing Studies Hosts Two Major Conferences

The CPTSC Conference 2008

Some highlights from the CPTSC program with contributions from Merry Rendahl, CPTSC Assistant Co-chair and Ph.D. Candidate.

The department had the privilege of hosting the 2008 Council for Programs in Technical and Scientific Communication (CPTSC) conference October 2-4, 2008, at the University of Minnesota—where CPTSC began. This was the 35th anniversary celebration, reflected in the conference title, Programs in Context: Past, Present, and Future.

The University of Minnesota is proud to be the birthplace of CPTSC. The Minnesota Elmer L. Andersen Library holds the archives of CPTSC, including the initiating letter from Tom Pearsall,

then Head of the Department of Rhetoric. But our history goes back further than that: the University of Minnesota was also celebrating 100 years of rhetoric—a long perspective that covers many contexts for technical and scientific communication, from our beginnings on the agrarian St. Paul campus to our newest incarnation as the Department of Writing Studies in the College of Liberal Arts. We were able to showcase the University’s commitment to technology and learning through tours of the Smart Classroom, the Student Writing Center, the Babbage Institute, and the state of the art Usability Testing Center.

The conference brought together over 150 participants from around the country, including many graduates of our Ph.D. program in Rhetoric and

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Farewell Advice from Finishing Ph.D.s

Paul Anheier

Thanks in large part to outstanding academic, administrative, and otherwise social support of the people in Writing Studies, I'll reach departmental escape velocity late this summer and hurtle an hour eastward on I94, eventually careening into UW-Stout's Department of English and Philosophy in Menomonie, WI. There, I'll do my best impression of an Assistant Professor in classes like Freshman Composition, Writing for the Web, and Rhetoric of Technology, and I'll get my hands dirty helping develop the new M.S. program. Rest assured that I'll still carry my UW-Madison travel mug to every class, just as I did at



Minnesota for the five years I taught, though now the students shouldn't glare at me as much (Go Badgers). Goodbye urban jungle, hello green pastures.

As much as I'm looking forward to Stout—and as difficult as it is to get nostalgic while I'm still dissertating—I'll undoubtedly miss regular, healthy doses of grad student camaraderie, explaining the phrase

"writing studies" to the uninitiated, and exploiting the Twin Cities for its music and food scenes. It's ludicrous to think I've been here six years—I guess time flies when your head is buried in mountains of reading. For newcomers—befriend the more experienced grad students! Even half-baked grad student wisdom can make life a bit easier when the work piles up. That, and don't be shy with the faculty or staff—the people here are the Department's greatest asset, and I will miss them more than anything. (Yes, even more than Mesa Pizza.)

Anthony Arrigo

It's hard to believe that I'm at the end of my graduate school career and the beginning of my actual career. I thought this time would never come, but it's actually here and it's very exciting. The past few years for me have been tremendously busy, and although it has been hectic and stressful, my years at Minnesota have been some of the best of my life. Brilliant, kind, and generous people are what first comes to mind when I think of Minnesota. I owe my success to those who supported and helped me the most: my friends, my wife Sarah, my family, and my advisor Richard Graff.

I'll be starting in the fall as Assistant Professor of Rhetoric in the English Department at the University of Massachusetts Dartmouth. I'll be teaching writing/rhetorical theory, and visual rhetoric and document design courses. In the spring I'll also be teaching an American popular culture course I developed and taught for the U of MN American Studies department last year.

My comment to grad students is to keep in mind that you are not expected to do this on your own, nor should you try. From oral and written exams, to prospectus writing and defense, to dissertation writing and defense, to job searching, it's nonstop deadlines and high-stress for two to three years. But keep in mind that your classmates are going through the same things and experiencing the same stresses that your family and even your spouse won't understand unless they've been through it themselves. If I were to give any practical advice it would be to form help groups in the service of two main tasks: exams/dissertation, and job search.

First, studying for oral and written exams took up an entire summer. Maintaining focus through a summer in the Twin Cities with so many activities to distract you from reading *De Oratore* yet again is a very difficult thing. Luckily, I was in a study group with two other colleagues: Greg Schneider and Krista Kennedy. We met weekly, or bi-weekly, for several months to discuss different books, theorists, and debates in rhetorical studies. More importantly, we were there to commiserate with one another about the exam process, and to congratulate each other upon our successful completion of exams while acknowledging that we owed each other much of the credit. The same can be said for the dissertation. Support groups (no matter how informal), if merely to keep you on track and know others are going through the same thing, are key.

My job-search group of Salma Monani and Kenny Fountain was also invaluable. We met weekly to share job postings, and review each other's application letters, teaching portfolios, research statements, and the scores of other documents required for job applications. Most importantly we shared beers, snacks, friendship and camaraderie while we lamented the months of work it takes to find a job! Once on the job market, it was great having Greg, Krista, Salma, Kenny, and Richard to share stories, rumors, strategies, advice, annoyances, and misgivings about the job-search process.

It's been a long road, but a rewarding one. Minnesota was a great place to be, and I miss it already. Good luck everyone!

Krista Kennedy

Since I'm about to start missing the Twin Cities, my advice is to enjoy your time here. The UMN campuses are little cities full of smart people doing interesting things. Be sure to meet them and see what they're up to. Even though you're busy, find a few hours to attend Parlor and public talks and the Weisman. When you have a chance to take an interesting seminar in another department, go do it and find out what they think about things over there. Our professors here in Writing

Studies are at the top of their games and you'll want to work closely with them, but there are so many other perspectives you'll want to be aware of.



As you devote yourself to your studies, be sure to also make time to soak up the wonderful things Minneapolis and St. Paul have to offer. Nearly every music tour comes here, and

there's never a shortage of great live music at smaller venues. You don't necessarily have to spend a lot of money for culture, either. In the summer, free outdoor music series are everywhere. Both the Minneapolis Symphony and the St. Paul Orchestra offer great package deals on tickets, and it's possible to see performances for as little as \$10 each. Thursday nights are free at the Walker Arts Center, and the Minneapolis Art Institute permanent collections are always free.

I'm headed off to Syracuse University, where I'll work in the Writing Program and the Composition & Cultural Rhetorics Ph.D. program. This fall, I'll teach two sections of the Advanced Studio in Professional Writing, which is somewhat similar to our own 3562W. In the spring I'll teach a split undergrad/grad course in Writing in Design & Development Environments and a Ph.D. seminar in Digital Authorship. I'll be able to build on several of the preps I taught here, and am glad to have had the chance to teach in my specialty while still a grad student.

Greg Schneider

Oh-So-Close to done and Oh-So-Sad to go, I am inclined toward advice and reminiscing. But my memories are not your memories, so I'll save you those stories (suffice it to say, that I will always fondly recall COB [Classroom Office Building on the St. Paul Campus] and the spirited conversations that taught me to trust myself as an instructor).



So Words of Wisdom! Five of em! First, get involved. Your peers here will

be your colleagues for much longer than your professors, so get to know them: hang out, panel up, co-author. Second, don't use your classes to just finish your coursework. Use them to move

you closer to a career and a research program. Third, you know that good idea you had in that one class that time? You should turn it into your dissertation. Really. Fourth, your dissertation will not be brilliant; it will be done. It's the result of time sitting, alone, typing. Finally, the job search professionalizes you for the job search. You might never feel prepared for the job market, but at the end of your search, you will find that you were ready all along. You'll see.

I'm off to Kettering University in Flint, MI, this fall to join their Liberal Studies department. Keep in touch, and we'll see you at many future conferences!

Erin Wais-Hennen

I have accepted a position as an Assistant Professor at Lindsey Wilson College in Columbia, Kentucky. It is a small liberal arts college nestled in an area surrounded by state and national parks. At LWC I will be the "rhetoric person" in the undergraduate "rhetoric and writing" major. I will be putting more rhetoric into the composition courses, and building an undergraduate rhetorical theory course. My husband and I are excited about the change from city life to living in an area with more livestock than people! Thanks so much to all of the people in the department that have been so kind to me (and Beagley) since we got here seven years ago.

And to those students coming behind me I'd say be sure to look for and take courses in other departments...UMN has a lot to offer beyond the Writing Studies Department.

Brett Werner

According to the Most Interesting Man in the World, "It's never too early to start beefing up your obituary." After finishing the RSTC Ph.D. this summer, I'll be beefing up mine with a Mellon Postdoctoral Fellowship in Environmental Studies at Centre College in Danville, Kentucky. There I'll be teaching courses on environmental ethics, discourse, and justice. Besides bourbon and horse races, I'll distract myself with writing, whiskey, and wetlands. Wait, you say bourbon is whiskey? Okay, besides horse races then.

Before going any further, I want to thank everyone for their support, from professors to administrators, from COB 69 to Wesbrook 201, and from Rhetoric to Writing Studies.

Parting thoughts? Start writing now. Go to small conferences in places you'd like to visit anyway. Join a writing group. Enjoy the beautiful weather of Minnesota, but always leave in early January. Attend the parlor talks and the informal gatherings. Beef up your CV and obituary. And "stay thirsty, my friends."

Kudos

Congratulations to **Greg Schneider**, winner of the COGS Leadership Award Honorable Mention! Greg is honored for his leadership on behalf of the graduate students in Writing Studies. He has served as a graduate student representative to the Director of Graduate Studies Advisory Committee, instituted a graduate student assembly, worked to redesign and expand the Writing Studies Parlors, ensured that the graduate students' perspective was represented well in the curriculum, and helped redesign the way the department conducts preliminary doctoral examinations.

Congratulations to **Carol Berkenkotter** on the publication of her new book, *Patient Tales: Case Histories and the Uses of Narrative in Psychiatry*. It is available from the University of South Carolina Press (<http://www.sc.edu/uscpress/>).

Krista Kennedy (RSTC Ph.D. 2009) Received the *Kairos* Graduate Student and Adjunct Scholarship Award for 2008. As noted on the *Kairos* web site, "The Scholarship Award is given to a person whose research and scholarship is already excellent and/or also shows future promise for having an impact on our field. Three \$500 awards will be given to graduate students and/or adjuncts in the field of computers and writing. These awards are based upon the three areas that guide our professional lives: Service, Scholarship, and Teaching."

Amy Koerber (RSTC Ph.D. 2002) recently took over the editor position for the Technical Communication Quarterly (TCQ) journal. Amy is an Associate Professor at Texas Tech University in the Department of English. Her research interests in-

clude health communication, rhetoric of science and technology, women's studies, and internet studies. For more information on TCQ, check out the newly revised author's guide at <http://tcqwiki.pbworks.com>.

Congratulations to **John Logie** for being a co-principal investigator on a recently funded National Science Foundation grant with colleagues from the Computer Science department titled "Understanding and Supporting Online Question-answering Sites." The grant also provides funding for a graduate student assistant on the project.

Bernadette Longo was selected as one of five Office of Information Technology/Digital Media Center Faculty Fellows. Dr. Longo will be exploring opportunities in emerging learning environments and asking how we can incorporate these innovative environments more intentionally into UMN courses and programs.

The July 2008 edition of *Journal of Business and Technical Communication* was a special issue on *Business and Technical Communication in the Public Sphere*. It featured an article by **Professor Mary Lay Schuster** and **Amy Propen** (RSTC Ph.D. 2007) titled, *Making Academic Work Advocacy Work: Technologies of Power in the Public Arena*. It also featured an article by **Amy Koerber** (RSTC Ph.D. 2003), along with E. Jonathan Arnett and Tamra Cumbie, titled, *Distortion and the Politics of Pain Relief: A Habermasian Analysis of Medicine in the Media*.

Conferences:

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Scientific & Technical Communication. These alumni also participated in a round table for our current students and talked about the particular types of work that they're now doing as teachers throughout the world.

Department Chair, Laura Gurak, participated in another popular panel which brought together representatives from industry and academia to discuss future directions of technical and scientific communication programs. The sessions and all conference activities ran smoothly thanks to volunteers from the Society for Technical Communication Student Chapters at the University and at Metropolitan State University.

In addition to fostering these current connections, the conference also provided the opportunity for friends, colleagues, and past students to remember faculty member, Professor Victoria Mikelonis, who was instrumental in those early days of CPTSC and who passed away from cancer in 2007. Professor Mikelonis's family was presented with a memorial piece during the opening dinner and some of her former graduate students presented a session about their rich experience working with her during their U of M studies. The conference was truly a celebration of the past, present, and future of Scientific and Technical Communication at the University of Minnesota.

Council of Writing Program Administrators Conference

by *Tim Gustafson*, Assoc. Director First-Year Writing Program and Local Conference Chair

The Department of Writing Studies was the local host for the 2009 Conference, Workshop, and Institutes of the Council of Writing Program Administrators. Gathering under the theme "Discerning WPAs: Discourse/Diversity/Accountability," over

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270 registrants from across the country attended plenaries and panels focused on the varied intellectual and administrative work involved in running writing programs.

Plenary speakers included Deborah Brandt of the University of Wisconsin-Madison, Lynn Priddy of the Higher Learning Commission of the National Communication Association, and Michele Eodice of the University of Oklahoma. Laura Gurak, Professor and Chair of Writing Studies at the University of Minnesota-Twin Cities, welcomed everyone to the University and to the Twin Cities.

An intensive three-day Workshop for new and returning WPAs was led by Chris Anson of North Carolina State University and Carol Rutz of Carleton College. Nancy Sommers of Harvard University led a day-long Institute on “Writing Program Admin-

istrators as Writers.” Participants worked on their own writing skills in the computer lab and seminar room of the Center for Writing. Susanmarie Harrington of the University of Vermont, Doug Hesse of the University of Denver, and Duane Roen of Arizona State University led a Renewal Institute for mid-career WPAs.

Tim Gustafson, Associate Director of the First-Year Writing Program, served as local chair, assisted by a large and dedicated group of volunteers. Sixteen members of the department, including faculty, staff, and graduate students, helped plan and carry out the details of the conference. It proved to be a great venue for people to get to know each other better in a still-new department, as well as a valuable opportunity to meet leading scholars from across the country.

Alumni Spotlight: Dan Sorvik

B.S. in S&TC, 2006

Current Role: User Experience Consultant – London, England

Since graduating from the U, I took a leap across the pond to pursue a career in the field of usability, more specifically User Experience. It’s an expanding field, despite the current economic climate. Combined with a background in Marketing, I was able to find my calling at a small agency called Foolproof (fitting name, right? See <http://foolproof.co.uk> for more about the company). I’d like to share with you some of my thoughts on my experiences at the U, how S&TC helped me hit the ground running, and my current occupation.

Making the transition from college life to agency life was relatively easy. While I was studying at the U, I took an internship at Usability Services. I looked at this as an opportunity to do more than gain a few credits, I also explored the field. I had the chance to discover new methods, gain exposure to project life cycles, and even run a project myself (great for the portfolio, by the way). This experience was invaluable for migrating to the ‘real world.’

The basic goal of a user is to get from a to b, with as little hassle or ‘noise’ as possible. This ‘noise’ can be captured in usability evaluations as user errors, however, User Experience (UX) takes a step back from the specific pages or website. We explore the path leading to the site, users’ goals, their past experiences, and their motivations to conversion (e.g. to purchase, apply, bid, etc.). The tasks are often user-generated to get a better idea of what would happen in real life.

My current role as a UX Consultant is a blend of project management, moderating fieldwork, report writing, and client presentations. The work is fast paced, and some days can be very long—evening focus groups are the bane of my existence! On the other hand, we are encouraged to keep up with web trends (a.k.a. surf facebook) and always maintain an open mind. Plus, in

England, it’s a 37.5 hour work week with 25 holidays!

In closing, I’d just like to say that I really found my calling back in 2005/6 [when I heard about the S&TC program]. I enjoyed our little department (even though it was tucked away on the St. Paul campus back then). Good luck, future students, and thank you, professors. If you find yourself in London, give me a shout and we’ll go for a pint!



Jobs/Internships

The department maintains a general e-mail listserve that we use to share job and internships opportunities along with other departmental information. If you’re looking for a job or thinking about changing employment, you may e-mail us at writ@umn.edu and ask to be added to the list.

Employers: Are you looking for a technical communicator to fill a position? Could you use an intern? Just let us know; we are happy to post your opportunity to the list.

Alumni Spotlight: Smiljana Antonijevic

Ph.D. in Rhetoric and S&TC, 2008



Tell us about your postdoc position that you took after completing your Ph.D.

I'm a Postdoctoral Researcher at the Virtual Knowledge Studio for the Humanities and Social Sciences (VKS), a research institute of the Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences (KNAW), located in Amsterdam, the Netherlands. VKS-KNAW supports scholars who experiment with digital technologies, and it facilitates the creation and dissemination of new methods, practices, resources and techniques related to e-research. As a scholarly group, VKS-KNAW combines virtual ethnography, simulation, and Web analysis in 'collaboratories' set up with national and international scholars from other research institutes and universities (for instance, the VKS scientific advisory board comprises a group of international scholars such as Christine Hine, Wiebe Bijker, David Goldberg, and others).

What research are you working on?

Drawing on the results of my dissertation research, I completed a post-doctoral project, *Techniques of the Virtual Body*, which explored digital nonverbal communication as a product of interaction between the interface-designers' decisions and the users' ability to reconcile the physical, the social, and the technological requirements imposed on their virtual bodies. Currently, I am working on the *Aljalab* project, a collaborative endeavor of five KNAW institutes, which aims to disseminate knowledge about digital instruments and data applied in the humanities research; build digital instruments for the community of humanities researchers; explore the application of digital instruments in the humanities; and investigate how these instruments can support and stimulate collaboration. Within the VKS-KNAW research team, I will explore and assess developments in digital humanities by surveying existing tools for humanities research. I will also pursue an ethnographic research project focused on the use of digital tools in humanities research; in particular, I will seek to identify problems that emerge as researchers renew their research practices with the aid of technology.

What's been the biggest adjustment in your first year?

It has been challenging, and at the same time rewarding, to work in an institution that is exclusively research-based, since my activities at the U of M included a combination of research and teaching assignments. Initially, it was relaxing to have a break from teaching, but over time I have started to miss the classroom. Apart from that, it was easy to fit in at the VKS-KNAW, which is a vigorous and professionally stimulating research group.

What's the nicest surprise about living in Amsterdam?

Amsterdam is a beautiful, old city, often called "the Venice of the North" due to many canals that interlink the city's archipelago of ninety islands. Amsterdam is home to the Van Gogh Museum, the Anne Frank House, the Rembrandt House, the Royal Palace, and many other renowned institutions of culture, but also to the Red Light District and the Hash Marihuana Museum, which reflect the city's liberal attitude towards prostitution and soft drugs. Such a coexistence of "irreconcilable differences" is the most prominent feature of Amsterdam and, for me, it is the nicest surprise of living in this city.

Anything else you'd like to add?

Keep in touch (smiljana.antonijevic@vks.know.nl) and, should you have a chance to visit Amsterdam, please make sure to contact me. I would be more than glad to show you around Amsterdam and VKS-KNAW.

Links:

The Royal Netherlands Academy of Arts and Sciences
<http://www.know.nl/>

The Virtual Knowledge Studio for the Humanities and Social Sciences
<http://www.virtualknowledgestudio.nl/>

VKS Ethnography
<http://vksethno.wordpress.com/>

Smiljana's VKS staff page
<http://www.virtualknowledgestudio.nl/staff/smiljana-antonijevic/>

Special thanks to those individuals who provided news for this edition. We'd love to feature your latest updates in the next edition. Please send your news to writ@umn.edu.

This newsletter was prepared by Shannon Klug and Mary Wrobel with the help of numerous editors. Special thanks to Merry Rendahl. Send feedback to writ@umn.edu.

Alumni Spotlight: T. Kenny Fountain

Ph.D. in Rhetoric and S&TC, 2008



Tell us about Case Western Reserve University (CWRU), the department you're in, and your role in it.

Known mostly for research in science, technology, and medicine, CWRU is a private university with about 9,800 students (4,300 undergraduate and 5,500 graduate and professional students). I'm an Assistant Professor in a friendly English Department of 18 full-time faculty, which offers a B.A. and M.A. in English and a Ph.D. in both Literature and Writing History & Theory (or WHi'T). Primarily I teach graduate and undergraduate courses in WHi'T.

What's been the biggest adjustment in your first year on the faculty?

Though I absolutely love my job and my life in Cleveland, my first year at CWRU has been overwhelming. The biggest adjustment has been stepping into a research-heavy position with a graduate program. Trying to balance teaching new courses, being a good departmental citizen, working on my research, and doing what I can to mentor Ph.D. students, all the while learning a new academic culture, keeps me isolated from the outside world at times.

What classes did you teach this first year?

In my first year, I taught Visual Rhetoric, Race & Gender in Medicine, and a graduate seminar in Theories of New Media, focusing on digital literature, new media art, and video games. This coming year, I will teach Rhetoric of Science, Language & Gender, the introductory course for the WHi'T Ph.D. concentration, and a course on Scientific Visual/Verbal Authorship.

What research are you working on?

I am slowly writing a book proposal from my dissertation on the rhetoric of anatomy labs. In it, I examine how the discourse system of anatomy, by way of visual and verbal texts and embodied practices, carries a persuasive and ontological force that operates as both socialization and perception-formation, thus enacting a particular type of body. I am retooling the project for an academic audience interested in science and technology studies and critical theories of the body, in order to foreground the rhetorical concerns in ways that speak to readers outside our field. More immediately, I am finishing up a few articles—on the visual and embodied rhetoric of the lab, on medical students' adjustment to dissection, and, with Bernadette Longo, on the rhetoric of Vesalius's 1543 anatomy text.

What is the most pleasant surprise about your move to the Cleveland area?

Despite the cruel and misleading epithet, "Mistake on the Lake," Cleveland has so much to offer—good restaurants, world-class museums, great parks, and strong music, cinema, and theater scenes. What isn't surprising at all is how infrequently I take advantage of them.

Alumni Spotlight: Salma Monani

Ph.D. in Rhetoric and S&TC, 2008

Tell us about Gettysburg College, the department you're in, and your role in it.

Gettysburg College is a small liberal arts college located in the borough of Gettysburg, PA, which in turn is surrounded by the Gettysburg National Military Park where Lincoln gave his famous address. The college's value of the liberal arts tradition is exemplified by its commitment to interdisciplinary studies, and I am a faculty member of the Environmental Studies department. I was hired in a newly created tenure-track position devoted to the environmental humanities. Thus, my humanities focus complements the current department's strengths in the social sciences and sciences.

What's been the biggest adjustment in your first year on the faculty?

The biggest adjustment in my first year was designing and teaching a variety of new classes. While most graduate students in the humanities have plenty of teaching experience, at a liberal arts college where teaching is paramount, the institution's expectations are high. Not only must your classes be exceptionally engaging but your commitment to students outside of class-time is also highly valued. This is a change from graduate school where research takes top priority and often one teaches fewer classes. I thought I was prepared for the change, but it still proved challenging, especially as I was teaching these classes for the first time!

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What classes did you teach this first year?

I taught a 100-level class called Introduction to Environmental Humanities, which is required for the Environmental Studies major and introduces students to the way disciplines in the humanities (e.g., rhetoric, literature, and history) help articulate and uncover how ideas of nature and environment are conceived and affect action. I also taught a first-year seminar class, Food: Fuel for Thought and Action, that approached environmental issues through the topic of food systems; an upper-level class, Environmental Film; and two sections of an introductory geology class for non-majors called Natural Catastrophes and Geologic Hazards! All in all, a nice mix of topics, class sizes, and types of audiences.

Chair:

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gree: a Bachelor of Arts in Writing Studies. With this new degree, we will retain our long-standing leadership in the field of technical communication and also offer an attractive option for students with a more liberal arts focus.

Our Master of Science and post-baccalaureate certificate continue to attract new students, with many of the courses now available online or in late afternoons. Our M.A. and Ph.D. remains one of the top programs of its kind in the country; we are working on expanding the focus so that we attract students not only in scientific & technical communication but also in broader studies of writing.

The Center for Writing, part of the department, also had a successful year, providing both face-to-face and online student writing support. And our First Year Writing program continued its outstanding efforts teaching almost every entering first-year student at the University.

What research are you working on?

I am currently continuing my dissertation work on articulating the practice and theory of environmental film, particularly as it relates to issues of social justice. In addition to reworking chapters in my dissertation for publication, I am co-editing a special issue of Environmental Communication: The Journal of Nature and Culture, which is titled "Coloring the Environmental Lens: Interdisciplinary Perspectives on Cinema, New Media, and Just Sustainability" (2011, vol 5, issue 1).

For summer research, I received an internal college grant to also begin a project that engages issues of social justice and environmental sustainability through a case study examination of the local Adams County food justice movement. This project will explicitly involve undergraduate student researchers.

What's the nicest surprise about Gettysburg?

There are a number of things I expected when I moved to Gettysburg, PA, and when I joined a small liberal arts college, and these have been very pleasant indeed. I have especially enjoyed the shorter, warmer winters and the long, beautiful springs, which we don't quite get in Minnesota.

However, one of the nicest surprises about the college itself was its proactive engagement with the local community. I am impressed by the college's Center for Public Service, which helps students and faculty tie their research and pedagogical activities to understanding social and environmental issues within the local area and globally. My current summer research on food justice issues is a direct outcome of this aspect of college life.

In May we enjoyed another successful Industrial Affiliates colloquium, where we talked about writing in the 21st century workplace. The department also hosts a student chapter of the Society for Technical Communication. More information on both programs is available on our web site (click on the "about" button and then on "centers and programs"). If you would like to attend next year's colloquium or would like to learn more about either program, please let us know. It's an excellent way to network and stay in touch. We are always interested in alumni who would like to mentor a student, visit a class, or give a guest presentation. Just call or send an email to writ@umn.edu.

It's nice to look through this newsletter and see so many stories about our alumni and friends. Please keep sending the updates our way. Stop by any time or give us a call if you'd like to come to the department for a tour, to meet with students and faculty, or to learn more about what's up in Writing Studies.

Best wishes for the rest of summer!

News From Alumni

Matt Abe (B.S. 1984) The company where I work, MacDermid ColorSpan, was acquired by Hewlett-Packard in November 2007. Since then, the business has changed, and jobs have changed (some eliminated) to align with how HP does business. We went from being a small self-contained unit of a medium-sized corporation to an integrated team in one of the world's largest corporations.

While operating in the current economic environment is challenging, we are targeting markets that will represent major growth opportunities once the recovery begins. To support our R&D, we have access to one of the world's largest intellectual property portfolios, and some of the best engineers and scientists in our industry. Innovation is a highly valued business strategy here.

I have new challenges that include learning to maximize reuse with XML-based content management, localizing some of our documents into over a dozen foreign languages, and working with our worldwide manufacturing, distribution, support, and marketing groups. I interact with an experienced and accomplished HP technical communication community, one that I have strived to emulate as an outsider since admiring the HP LaserJet Series II manual (and printer!) early in my career.

We in our group continue to do what we have always done through good times and bad: strive to create maximum business value in whatever role we play. That is the only true job security in the face of layoffs and economic uncertainty.

Kim Borman-Krinhop (B.S. 2002) To update you on the excitement in my life, I have to say that the Technical Communication field has provided a whirlwind of opportunity to me. After graduation, in 2003, I was hired as a laboratory technician at the Quality Assurance Laboratory for the Metropolitan Council, where I worked as a technician. Lab management took advantage of my degree by asking me to participate in a monthly newsletter for staff in the lab, as well as learn to write Standard Operating Procedures. With some experience writing Standard Operating Procedures, I was hired within my first year and a half at the Council, as their first Technical Writer. My first project involved writing procedures for a newly developed Wastewater Treatment Plant, which I continue to write today. Within two years I, along with four others, was promoted to Program Supervisor to write procedures and develop the training program for plant operations staff. Since these positions were newly created and with eight plants in the organization, I can only say that we have a much bigger plate than anyone anticipated. I can see my position further progressing into either plant management or providing technical guidance to the Council in authoring documentation. In more ways than one, I have been blessed with "fertile" career opportunities at the Council!

Elena Chapeton (B.S. 2002) The market for technical writers is pretty strong here in the D.C. metro area. This is mostly due to the surge in government contracting over the last few years. It's a little challenging to find a technical writer with a relevant degree! So in that respect, the S&TC program was great because it's really given me a leg up on the competition.

I'm currently working for a government contractor called Harris Corporation as a Lead Technical Writer/Editor.

Hope all is well over in Minneapolis/St. Paul.

Cristina Hanganu-Bresch (Ph.D. 2008) I'm a visiting professor for now in the Writing and Rhetoric program of the University of the Sciences in Philadelphia. Hopefully, it will be more than that, but I can't talk about it yet!

On April 22, 2008, I presented at the History for Women's Health on "Gardasil, Cervical Cancer and Moral Puritanism."
http://www.uphs.upenn.edu/news/News_Releases/2009/04/history-of-womens-health-conference.html

Back in February, 2008, I had a short non-fiction essay entitled "The Two Bucharests" published in the collection "Down the Block" (<http://tinyurl.com/lbabww>). And forthcoming, after years in the making, a chapter in the collection "Entertaining Fear," which is going to be published, like, yesterday. (Seriously, it's been about 4 years since I was first contacted...and about two since my "final" version of the chapter...and about 2 weeks since the "final-final" version; the project was dropped by a publishing house, and picked up by another eventually.) The chapter is entitled, "Mall of America: Consumption in the Social Wilderness." I probably should not even be talking about it ... yet; I've probably just jinxed it!

A review of mine was published in *The Review of Communication* last summer (2008): "Architecture as Psychiatric Treatment: The History of the Asylums in the United States."

I have numerous articles in a (very) small magazine of local interest, *The Rittenhouse Sq. Revue*. Not so many this year, because of the academic load, but a lot from 2006 until, say, 2008, roughly speaking.

The job market in the Philadelphia area is dismal, as usual. There were a few positions, but they filled quickly, and most of them were non-tenure track anyway.

Since my husband (David) and I got a house, I've discovered gardening as a MAJOR hobby and I'm happy I can pursue that now that the semester is over! I'm also looking forward to some

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News from Alumni:

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travel over the summer and I'm hoping to see some familiar faces at the Rhetoric Society of America Institutes in June.

Nell Kauls (M.S. 2005) I am a web writer and information designer at Seward Inc. going on my 5th year. I have been developing my web writing skills as we started to get more clients that just need content development. I have been reading Gerry McGovern and Ginny Redish's books about content development.

Seward Inc. has been doing a lot of international education development in the Sultanate of Oman and Samoa. We also have been developing learning software for children needing to develop their vocabularies. Check out our blog for more details (blog.sewardinc.com).

James Mathewson (M.S. 2008) works for IBM Marketing and Communications as editor in chief of ibm.com. In his job, he identifies best practices and develops standards, education, and enablement to help teams produce more effective Web content for ibm.com. As chair of the IBM Search and Syndication Council, James works with subject matter experts from all over IBM to create education and enablement that improves IBM's presence on Google and other search engines. Two initiatives he's especially close to include Smarter Planet (<http://www.ibm.com/ibm/ideasfromibm/us/smarterplanet/>) and Green and Beyond (http://www.ibm.com/ibm/green/index.shtml?cm_re=masthead-business_-green).

James is also writing a book, *Audience, Relevance, and Search: Writing Relevant Content for Web Audiences*, based on his M.S. thesis. The book is on track for December 2009 publication with IBM Press/Pearson.

Jean McMahon (M.S. 1996) is employed in the data center at Thomson Reuters as a Technology Project Manager. Her role is to determine hardware requirements and deliver them to several internal customer teams. She has her Project Management Professional (PMP) certification through the Project Management Institute (www.pmi.org). Jean is also a 2008-09 Buckman Fellow at the U of M College of Design. The fellowship is designed to provide training in philanthropy and fundraising. Jean plans to make great use of this training in her role as president-elect for the Textile Center.

Thomas Nordlum (B.S. 2004) The last time I wrote I was working as an Instructional Designer in Minneapolis. All the while I was making preparations to immigrate to Québec and now here I am. I have been here for almost two months and by a stroke of networking luck, I found a good job as an editor for a company here in Montréal called Rio Tinto Alcan. It is only a

three month contract, but a great first experience here and a good fit for the moment. I speak French mostly (the main reason I wanted to live here) and I am slowly getting situated. Moving is difficult!

Darren Pierson (B.S. 2003) I am a marketing professional with the bulk of my career involved in writing to specific audiences. Most recently, I worked at Emerson Process Management as a Technical Writer where I created, edited, and updated all technical documentation and marketing collateral for the Rosemount Flow Division and Rosemount Nuclear Instruments, Inc. Prior to that, I managed the communication efforts for eleven different candidates seeking government office in Minnesota.

In the process industries that Emerson served, a significant amount of project business was put on hold due to the economic downturn. This resulted in a decrease in revenue of about 10%, which put the company at risk for missing commitments to investors. As a result, the company went through a workforce reduction and my position was impacted.

I learned a tremendous amount about how successful companies are managed during my almost four years at Emerson and was fortunate enough to have worked for and with some very talented marketing executives. My plan is to bring the skills I learned at Emerson to a new organization.

I find that wherever I have worked, I bring three key strengths to the table: a passion for communicating information to the public, dedication to the art of being concise and accurate, and a strong work ethic. At this time, my future plans are to continue my work in marketing to drive the development of technical documentation that helps to increase sales and to promote products and technologies.

Gregg Reed (B.S. 1976) From May 23 to June 7, I was the artist in residence at Beaver Creek Valley State Park near Caldonia, Minnesota. Because the State of Minnesota asks park volunteers to submit the documents they produced at the state park at the end of their residence, I am making a counter-top book to donate to the state park office.

I started to develop the drawing and speaking skills I used at the state park in the technical communication program circa 1976, when Inga Platou, Ph.D., helped guide my independent study of scientific illustration as a part of my technical communication major.

I will exhibit some of my drawings from the park and the book in Crosslake, Minnesota, from August 6 to 8 at the 25th Annual Art Show of the Crosslake Art Club and in Maple Grove, Minne-

sota, at the Maple Grove Art Center's *Black and White Show* from August 7 to September 11.

To review a draft of Gregg's book, contact him through the web site. http://www.mnartists.org/Gregg_S._Reed

Nick Rosencrans (M.S. 2008) After I graduated, I started working for Usability Services in the Office of Information Technology, Digital Media Center. As a usability consultant, I help designers build products that are as easy to use as possible by helping them understand the users' perspective.

Lynn Shuler (M.S. 2005) After a sabbatical to finish Grad school, I've re-entered my long-time field of technical writing as a consultant. I just completed a contract where I used my message design, interviewing, and internet skills. In my free time, I'm walking the city lakes, writing/reading poetry, finishing writing a book, attending the Mill City Museum, seeing low-budget movies with friends, and attending venues where my son Don Shuler (see the Mill City Museum, Bedlam Theater, Guthrie, and South High Community Band among other places) and daughter Byrd Shuler (see Walker and Intermedia Arts among other sites) perform. I've also been re-reading Vickie Mikelonis's text *Grant Seeking In An Electronic Age*, where the chapters on persuasion can be helpful in self-marketing as well as in grant proposal writing. I'm also mentoring emerging writers as the opportunities present themselves. The times have never more called for ethical experts in Rhetoric, whether it be applied in financial contracting between businesses and consumers, green user guides, bio-scientific journals, informational twitters, or responsible blogs. I am ever mindful of your work and its value in this 21st century. Best wishes to the department and other alumni!

Keira Thrasher (M.S.) I transitioned a few years ago from tech writing to designing and developing eLearning programs. Over the last few years, I have worked (positions and contract) for Lawson Software, Deluxe Financial Services, Eschelon and Integra Telecom, and Boston Scientific. Currently I'm working on a contract for the Military Health Services (Department of Defense) to develop elearning modules on medical management topics. (I am telecommuting from Minneapolis.) It has been a truly fascinating and rewarding experience. My Special Material Experts (SMEs) are military nurses and doctors, and I am in complete awe of the dedication, talent, and energy they bring to their jobs and my project!

Kristina Keller Blank (B.S. 2004, M.S. 2009) I don't know if anyone wants to know this, but especially in a tough economy it may be good to remind students: Be open/look for jobs outside the standard title of "Technical Writer." For example, I am now a "Product Manager," but my job mainly involves writing software feature functional descriptions, test scenarios for QA, and training information presentations. Also, I make really good money, so it's not a step down—more of a step to the side. So, students may have better luck in the job market if they cast a wide net!

And from our **Crookston Alumni:**

After serving a year in AmeriCorps, **Joe Karas (B.S. 2002)**, began working for SEI LLC, an in-bound helpdesk company. As the U.S. training supervisor, Joe is responsible for new hire induction training and the on-boarding of new clients. In this role, Joe recently had the opportunity to spend 3 months in Europe on-boarding a new client. Joe lives in Grand Forks, North Dakota.

Nicole (Krueger) Massmann (B.S. 2003) I am working for PRACS Institute/Cetero Research in East Grand Forks, Minn. PRACS/Cetero is a pharmaceutical research company based in Fargo that tests generic medications against their brand name counterparts for bioequivalence. My position is in the Quality Assurance department. My main duty is auditing the study conduct as it happens, to make sure that all standard operating procedures and FDA standards are being met. While it isn't necessarily what I pictured myself doing with my S&TC degree, the degree certainly helps! The education in S&TC and my familiarity with science writing has helped me to be able to understand study conduct protocols, FDA standards, and Good Clinical Practice procedures appropriately, all of which play a vital role in my department. The Quality Assurance department is also kind of the "go-to" for other employees with questions regarding FDA regulations and our internal procedures.

There is never a dull day in Quality Assurance. I get to observe studies as they happen and see that the medications that eventually get to us and to our families are of the highest standards.

I am living in East Grand Forks, MN, with my husband Brent Massmann (a 2002 U of M, Crookston graduate), our two children Anna (5½) and Luke (16 months) and our dog Ruby. (2009 update: Nichole and her husband had a baby girl.)

Carrie (Tollefson) Lovelace, Esq. (B.S. 2000) passed the Ohio State Bar examination following her graduation from Case Western Reserve School of Law in 2007. Carrie married Robert Lovelace of Cleveland on October 4, 2008. She recently passed the Connecticut Bar Exam and is now working at Yale in their Foundation Office.

Megan Tollefson, Ph.D. (B.S. 2002) successfully defended her dissertation, "Social Isolation Meets Technological Innovation: Towards Developing a Model of Communication Among Parents Who Homeschool," in December 2007 and graduated with her doctorate in communication and public discourse from the University of North Dakota. She currently teaches composition and public speaking courses for the University of Minnesota, Crookston and works as an editorial assistant at the University of North Dakota for the *Journal of Native American Aging & Health*

Elizabeth Tollefson (B.S. 2002) graduated with her master's degree in educational leadership from the University of North Dakota in 2004. After working for a number of years in alumni and development at the University of Minnesota, Crookston, she is currently the assistant director of communications.

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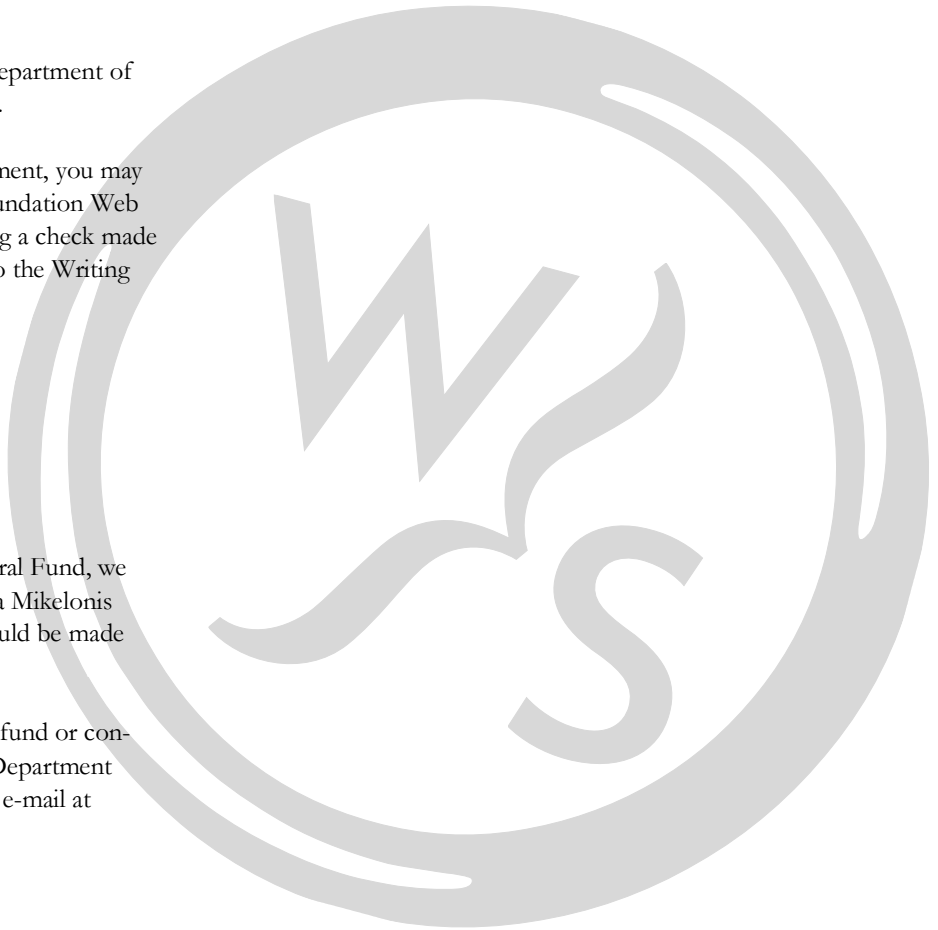
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180 Wesbrook Hall
77 Pleasant St SE
Minneapolis, MN 55455

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