In this semester’s newsletter, you will find a number of new features. We have shared field reports from current students doing independent research and/or travel projects. We also have a special column on innovative approaches to teaching, so that you can see what some of our students are doing inside the classroom. Of course, there’s news from some of our faculty, and updates on their work and newest research projects. Then there’s our section devoted to “Anthropologists at work”: alumni career and job opportunities, current alumni success stories, and ways to network with fellow Anthropologists. These pages give you an idea of what we’re up to today and what we’re looking forward to in years to come. We want you to be a part of it, so please get in touch, whether by email or in person. We are always excited to hear from you and learn about your continued interest in and support of Anthropology at UVM.

This semester in UVM Anthropology department is like no other in many ways. With record numbers of majors, new courses, new syllabi, and new research opportunities, our students are getting an incredible undergraduate education.

But in economic times like these, we are often driven to ask how our degrees can be put to work. Today our alumni have an amazing range of careers that help them use their special familiarity with human cultures and human diversity every day. In this newsletter we are shining a special spotlight on our current and former students “at work”, whether on a dig, at a field site, with a non-governmental organization, or owning their own small business. Check out our special information about career opportunities for our alumni, and ways of connecting with other UVM anthropologists out there!

We hope you will be inspired to share your story of Anthropology “at work”, and ways in which your degree has made a difference in your post-college life. We can’t wait to hear from you!
Thanks to our Staff

Many of you probably know our administrative assistant Cindy Longwell, who sits in the Anthropology office in Williams 501. She’s the person who might hand back your exam, help you find out your professor’s office hours, or get a form signed and on its way to the right office. The department runs smoothly with her help, so if you haven’t had the opportunity to chat with her, stop by and introduce yourself, and thank her for the great job she does every day in keeping Anthropology running.

Students in Professor Eastman’s Anthropological Theory course use tinkertoys in their “playing with structuralism” exercise.

Tinkering with Teaching in Anthropology

Teaching Anthropology at UVM isn’t just about textbooks and chalkboards. Our students are spending more and more time doing hands-on exercises, venturing outside the classroom together, and performing semester-long research projects. Each semester in this space we will feature some of the teaching techniques faculty are using to bring Anthropology to life for our students, whether that is designing and curating a real exhibit for the Fleming museum, writing and judging grant proposals, performing independent research, writing opinion pieces on current events, or simply playing with toys! Each of these exercises demonstrates the unique approach of a teacher making abstract concepts a little easier to understand, and sometimes helping students gain valuable experience in real-world activities.

Exhibit on Women in Vermont

Anthropology Professor Jennifer Dickinson assisted in the curation of the new exhibit opening at the Fleming Museum this spring entitled “Storied Objects: Tracing Women's Lives in Vermont”. The exhibit aims to explore the experience of women’s lives in Vermont through objects they have used, made, and treasured. In joint work with the Vermont Folklife Center, the exhibit features objects, audio, and documents in an attempt to shed new light on the lives of women in Vermont’s past. Visit the exhibit from February 3 - September 16, 2010.
Each newsletter we try to feature the research our students are undertaking in the department. This month current senior Anthropology major Sarah Miller describes her Honors Thesis research right here in Burlington, VT.

I’ve spent the past semester observing at the VNA Family Room for my senior thesis. It has been a great experience and I’ve really enjoyed getting to know the children and families involved in the program over the past months. The VNA has been really welcoming and their programs are a great resource for the local community. My research project examines linguistic patterns between refugee caregivers and their children in Burlington, Vermont. The purpose of this research project is to gain further understanding about the role language plays for refugee children living in a primarily English-speaking city. I have been observing interactions between children, their caregivers, and staff at a program of the Visiting Nurses Association (VNA), a local program composed of both refugee and non-refugee families and their children. My research has focused on observations of specific aspects of language such as the quantity of child-caregiver interaction, the use of verbal discipline between adults and children, and the use of accommodation techniques during interactions. I have also observed more general patterns such as how refugee caregivers’ language patterns might change with their transition to a new culture composed of different linguistic styles and norms. Through my research I hope to gain insight into how linguistic patterns are dictated and reinforced by culture, and how these patterns might change for refugee caregivers and their children in a new cultural environment. Ideally, the research will allow for increased understanding of linguistic patterns and roles for non-native speakers of English. Through my research, I hope to gain a greater understanding of how children’s interactions vary with different languages and hopefully gain insight that will benefit both the center and the greater Burlington community.

In the field: My project

In the field: Ghana

Matt Claesys is in Ghana this semester, and had this to tell Professor Deborah Blom about his adventures:

Transportation is great over here! They have these vans called TroTro’s that squeeze in about 24 people. There is a driver who does nothing but just drive, and his mate, who sits hanging out the window calling out the destination to people on the street as well as collecting the fare from each person already in the TroTro. Exchanging money in Ghana is not like in the US. When you pay for something here and need change returned it is not uncommon for them to start talking to someone else, tending to another matter, looking for change, or simply just taking their time to get you the change. You would never see someone holding out their hand in anticipation for change. The driving over here is also pretty absurd. Most of these guys have NASCAR potential for sure...

“Technically I would have to say that I’ve made about 20,000 friends over here thus far...”

Last Sunday I visited a Liberian Refugee camp here in Ghana. It was pretty fascinating to see how these people were living. Some of them have been here for close to 20 years. It is still hard for many of them to make a living and/or return to their country. There are tensions with Ghanaians about the lengthy extent of their stay. The camp is also a UN camp, yet, it seems that the UN has lost interest in the camp over the last several years. The refugees are left to pay for almost everything themselves (water, electricity, education). I have met up with a Liberian man who runs a non-profit organization in the camp to provide scholarships for the children in the camp to go to school. I have off from class every Wednesday and have decided to dedicate the time to teach at the camp. I will be teaching basic English, math, and the like to 3-10 year olds.

This weekend I am going to the Cape Coast to see some historical places, like Ghana’s most famous slave trade castle. I will also venture north to the city of Kumasi later on. When I can I am absolutely looking forward to doing some additional traveling, maybe to Togo, the Ivory Coast, or Burkina Faso. After the semester ends I have decided to stay here an additional two weeks before flying home!
The Career Center at UVM

Anthropology is lucky to have one of its own alumnae working in the Career Center. Recently Anna Smiles-Becker ('00) visited the Anthropology faculty to let us know what the Career Center has to offer current students and (yes!) even alumni. Anna wanted us to spread the word: the Career Center is interested in working with those who are many years out of their BA as well. Are you thinking about changing careers? Or are you looking to improve your employment situation in an industry you already know? Perhaps you want to network with other alumni at events here in Burlington or in a major US city? Or find a way to use your Anthropology degree to advance your career? Whatever your interest or employment situation, feel free to contact Career Services or check out their page especially for alumni: http://www.uvm.edu/~career/?Page=alumni.html. For inspiration, ve sure to also look at the last page of this newsletter, where we feature recent alumni news!

Anthro Alumni on campus

Believe it or not, you can find a lot of Anthropology Department alumni just looking around the University of Vermont campus! In addition to Anna Smiles-Becker ('00) in the Career Center, you might also see Aileen Lowrie working as a collection assistan in the Fleming Museum (she will be continuing in a graduate program in Museum Studies next year) and Max Tracy ('09) working in the UVM Admissions office. Stop in an say hello to our alumni on campus if you are in town!

Anthropologists at Work: Where to from here?

Have you checked out the American Anthropological Association’s page on Careers in Anthropology? There is a wide range of work that takes advantage of your specialized knowledge of human cultures, human social lives, and physical and material culture.

Look through the material at http://www.aaanet.org/profdev/careers/ if you are on the job market, or perhaps merely curious. Did you know, for instance, that the Federal government is the largest employer of Anthropologists? You’ll find links on this page to articles and information sheets on careers and jobs in literally hundreds of fields, including tips for job seekers, and power points for potential employers. Other resources include this link to an FAQ specifically for careers in Archaeology in the US: http://www.museum.state.il.us/ismdepts/anthro/dlcfaq.html. We hope that you can make use of these resources irrespective of your current employment situation.

Do you want to reach out to current Anthropology students at UVM? Perhaps you are able to offer students an internship opportunity through your employer or organization, or you have information on entry-level positions that a newly graduated Anthropologist could fill? Get in touch with us and we will pass your details on to the group of students with the right qualifications!

Careers in Anthropology
Deborah Blom recently completed the first phase of major residential, ceremonial and mortuary excavations for her project, Proyecto Jach’a Marka in the Mollo Kontu barrio of Tiwanaku, Bolivia. The project, co-directed with Nicole Couture (McGill) and Maria Bruno (Smithsonian), was generously funded by the Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada and involved close collaboration with archaeologists from Canada, Bolivia and the US. They celebrated the close of excavations with a symposium at the Society of American Archaeology meeting, where Deborah also presented a summary paper in the symposium Being Tiwanaku: New Perspectives on Social Identity in the Middle Horizon. Co-authoring one of the papers was UVM Anthropology major Shannon Wilson (2009), who excavated and worked with Deborah in the lab at Tiwanaku in 2007. Deborah is now working on publishing the project’s results and, this November, began exploring her new focus of study at the third annual meeting of the Society for the Study of Childhood in the Past. In Vermont, Deborah has begun working with cases at the Office of the Chief Medical Examiner. This experience has been especially valuable for two of our current students with an interest in forensic anthropology, Jennifer LeBlanc and James Allen, who is currently writing his honors thesis on evidence of childhood illness from dental remains. Along with Jeanne Shea, Deborah developed a new, innovative and challenging 6-credit advanced seminar for the department; it is entitled Anthropology of Lifecycles and the Body: Perspectives from Biological and Cultural Anthropology.

Jennifer Dickinson is thrilled to be back teaching full time after a much-appreciated maternity leave in Fall’09. This spring, a longterm project will come to fruition when the exhibit “Storied Objects: Tracing Vermont Women’s Lives” opens at the Fleming Museum. The exhibit focuses on everyday objects, placed in historical context through personal narratives drawn from letters and diaries in UVM Special Collections and recorded interviews from the Vermont Folklife Center’s archive. An expanded online component to the exhibit will be added in March. The exhibit was a welcome chance to return to an earlier research interest in oral narrative and storytelling, and has sparked some ideas for a new research project. She is also working on several writing projects related to advertising, language, and public space in Ukraine.

Rob Gordon writes: “I spent last Spring Semester at the University of Cologne as a Fulbright Fellow. It was fantastic experiencing Europe again and I was sorely tempted to do an ethnography of the little village we lived in just outside the city. Instead, apart from travelling to research and lecture and attending Carnival I had to concentrate on my formal research, a biography of an obscure German political economist called Moritz Bonn. Then it was month’s fieldwork in Namibia, the highlight of which was a five day hike in the upper reaches of the Fish River Canyon (the second largest in the world) where I located several intriguing archaeological sites and picked up several hand-axes made more than a million years ago. The highlight of the Summer was undoubtedly my son’s wedding. The rituals they invented for the occasion would have done any anthropologist proud! I also managed to do a four day hike with Bill Mitchell in the White Mountains who some of the older alumni might remember. His joy de vivre continues to amaze and inspire. Research-wise its been busy. I published a long article on genocide and am currently trying to finish off three books: “Going Abroad: Traveling like an Anthropologist” which should be in your local Barnes and Noble in June and co-editing two volumes: “Fifty Key Anthropologists” due out at the end of the year and “Inventing First Contact: Expeditionary Anthropology” for the Smithsonian which will be sent to the publisher as soon as certain recalcitrant contributors deliver on their promises! Undoubtedly my professional highlight though was a generous cheque from alumnus Keir Kleinknecht, to be used to promote anthropology at UVM. We will use it to bring speakers to campus and have already lined up several major anthropologists, as well as subsidize students to present papers at the Northeastern Anthropological Association. Such gifts are always appreciated, especially in these times of financial stringency.”

Currently, Jeanne Shea has an article in press on her research on debates concerning the application of evidence-based medicine standards to traditional Chinese medicine. Developed over many months of back and forth linguistic collaboration with translator Cuixia Shi, the article will appear in the March issue of the leading integrativemedicine journal in China, The Chinese Journal of Integrated Medicine. This semester Jeanne is continuing to work on transcribing and writing about ethnographic interviews from her research on women, health, aging, and family relationships in northern China, and from her work on identity and cultural hybridity among Chinese immigrants living in Montreal. In conjunction with this research, she is mentoring several research assistants, including Simon Horowitz, Kelvin Chen, and Cynthia Wong, who are assisting with digitization and transcription of the interview materials. This spring she also plans to participate in several scholarly conferences, one on ageing at UVM, another
on global health at Yale University, and a third on social suffering at Harvard University. Coursewise, Jeanne is teaching two courses this semester, Culture, Health, and Healing and Foundations of Gerontology. In tandem with these courses, she is mentoring several undergraduate teaching assistants in pedagogical methods, including Anna Bresnick, Emily Clifford, Cecilia Ackerman, Amanda Barmash, and Jason Grau. She is also serving on the Institutional Review Board for the protection of human subjects, the public health transdisciplinary research initiative working group, and as faculty advisor to the student global health club MEDLIFE. Life is busy but good!

Alumni News

Cristina Haines (UVM class of 2008) has been accepted to the New School for Social Research in New York, NY. She will be pursuing an MA degree in the International Affairs Program as she looks to build on her UVM undergraduate training in anthropology and religion, bringing the tools of social research and critical theory to bear on issues of global inequality and injustice in order both to understand as well as engage them.

Lauren Weiss (2003) recently began a new position as a Project Coordinator for Rehab and Movement Science at the University of Vermont.

Sadie Richards writes: “I will be starting my first official semester as a BUSPH graduate student. I decided to apply to and remain in the Environmental Health department, and am very happy with this choice. My advisor, Wendy Heiger-Bernays, has worked in the field for a long time and one of her interests that is in line with mine is in soil remediation (e.g. using compost and low-cost strategies such as removing used railroad ties and pressure-treated wood from community garden plots to combat the high levels of PAHs and arsenic that can leach from these commonly-used materials). Last summer she taught an environmental health course in Kenya, and she is supporting my desire to travel to South Dakota for two weeks this summer to become certified in permaculture design on a Lakota Native American reservation. I will continue to work at my current job in the department full-time, so I expect to be a part-time student for at least another year and a half. Hopefully at that time I will have heard from (and perhaps received a placement with) the Peace Corps. I’m quite excited about it all, and hope to keep in touch as I get underway with my degree.

Zach Barbul writes: “I am still on the path to medical school, but it has taken me longer than expected. Having avoided the “hard” science classes at UVM like the plague, it was quite a shock to dive right in at Columbia. That being said, my brain has finally caught up to my body and I am now feeling comfortable and confident with the material. I’m currently taking a chemistry lab and the first semester of physics, as well as working part time at the VA hospital in the cardiovascular research department. I will take organic chemistry and biology next year and apply for medical school at that point. My main reason for writing, is that after reading a New York Times obituary for Claude Levi-Strauss, I was reminded of one of my favorite classes I took during my time at UVM, Anthropological Theory. What a fascinating class! I truly feel that it opened my eyes on so many levels and made the field of anthropology blossom for me. It made me think quite fondly of your role in my college years.

Emily Rak writes: “I am in my second semester of completing an MS at Tufts in Food Policy and Applied Nutrition. The program is excellent and I have very much been enjoying living in Boston, though I certainly miss Vermont often :) I’m hoping to do an internship this summer at Children’s Hospital as well. So in short, very busy!

Aileen Lowrie is currently working as the Collections Assistant at the Fleming Museum. She plans to attend a graduate program in Museum Studies starting Fall ’10.

"After reading the New York Times obituary for Claude Levi-Strauss, I was reminded of one of my favorite classes I took at UVM"