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[Living Lab](#)



Students Wyatt Sidley (left) and Gautam Muralidharan sit in the midst of their indoor ecosystem located in their Living/Learning Center suite. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

Waking up in the middle of the night with escaped beetles crawling all over wasn't part of the project proposal of the five students. Neither was nearly getting arrested by campus police for taking some sand, or the violent death of a lizard at the toes of a pet store frog gone wild after being re-introduced to wilderness — as wild as a college dorm with a pond, rubber plants, orchids and baby palm trees can get, anyway.

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[Narrative](#) Since leaving journalism and joining the university, I have written almost nothing in a first-person voice. Professor Robert Nash, whose latest book *Liberating Scholarly Writing* (Columbia Teachers College Press) is, among other things, an argument for the intellectual and personal rewards of a form of writing he calls the "scholarly personal narrative," might say that is my loss — and yours.

THE WEEK IN VIEW

Feb. 24, 4:30 p.m.
Reading: Award-winning writer Bill Roorbach will read from his newest non-fiction book, *Temple Stream.* John Dewey Lounge, Old Mill. Information: 656-3056

Feb. 24, 5 p.m.
Reception: The Fleming Museum will hold an opening reception for its spring exhibits, which include "Miniature Worlds: The Art of India." Fleming Museum. Information: [Fleming Museum](#)

Feb. 25, 2:30 p.m.
Lecture: "Fleeing Nazi Germany: Exile and the Art of Memory," with Johannes Evelein, Trinity College. Waterman. Information: 656-3430.

Feb. 25, 7:30 p.m.
Lane Series Concert: "String Trio of New York." UVM Recital Hall. Tickets \$25. Information: [Lane Series](#)

Feb. 26, 7:30 p.m.
Concert: "Vermont A Cappella Summit: Raising Voices" with four professional a cappella bands. Tickets \$15 in advance, \$20 at the door. Ira Allen Chapel. Information: 734-1739

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NEWS BRIEFS

English Wins Approval for New Film and TV Major

Responding to student demand and faculty interest, the Department of English is launching a new major in film and television studies next year. The program, which recently received final approval from the board of trustees, will extend and replace the program's existing film minor.

"Film and television are hugely important in our culture, and we see the mission of English studies to focus on all kinds of texts," says Robyn Warhol, professor and chair of English, who says the new major will build on the work of Frank Manchel, a popular professor emeritus of film.

Todd McGowan, assistant professor of English, will direct the program; other core faculty include Assistant Professor Hilary Neroni, whose planning work was instrumental in launching the new major, and colleagues Sarah Nilsen and David Jenemann. Like the older film minor, the new major will also incorporate faculty from outside the department.

The new program will emphasize critical theory (many of the core faculty are experts in cultural studies) as it seeks to deepen students' understanding of film. But McGowan says the course requirements will combine to give students a historical sense of the medium, some background in production, and a strong sense of the vocabulary of the medium. The program, he says, is less flexible than a traditional English major.

"It can be more difficult to talk about film than literature," he says. "Literature has a form that is much more self-evident, but we often don't interact with film as a form, there can be this sense that we're seeing what actually happened... Hilary Neroni teaches a class that combines theory with production. Students read about the theory of, say, montage, and then they put their own shots together and make one. In some ways, that class encapsulates our major."

Neroni began working on the new major shortly after arriving on campus in 1999. Then, with support from Joan Smith, the late dean of the College of Arts and Sciences, an outside group of experts came in and evaluated a program outline. Eventually, after much discussion at the department and Faculty Senate levels, the new program was approved. The first students enroll next fall, and as many as five will graduate in the program in the spring by building on credits earned through the minor or independent study. McGowan expects the program to grow dramatically from there.

Pizzagalli Resigns From UVM Board

James C. Pizzagalli, chair of the University of Vermont board of trustees, has resigned from the board, effective immediately.

"Jim has brought boundless energy and enthusiasm to his duties, along with a high level of professionalism," said UVM president Daniel Mark Fogel. "While we respect his decision, I greatly regret the departure from the board of such a longtime friend of the university."

In a letter of resignation addressed to Fogel, Pizzagalli, who is also co-chairman of Pizzagalli Construction Company, said he felt it was in his firm's best interest in relation to potential bids on future construction contracts at the university for him to remove himself from the board.

"Jim has been a valued and trusted colleague on the UVM board," said vice chair Martha Heath, who will serve as interim chair until the May board meeting, when a new chair will be elected. "We could count on him for hard work, a practical approach, and a high level of civility and professionalism. We also understand the rationale that led him to resign, although we regret his departure. I am sure I speak for my fellow board members in thanking Jim for the many and significant contributions he has made to the university through his service as a trustee and board chair."

Pizzagalli, a 1966 graduate of the University of Vermont, will continue to serve the university as a member of the National Campaign Steering Committee.

"I am pleased that Jim will continue his work with the committee, providing important leadership and support for the university's \$250 million comprehensive campaign," Fogel said.

Pizzagalli had served on the UVM board since 2000. He was elected chair in May 2004.

Demos of Possible New E-Mail Systems Set

UVM has used essentially the same e-mail architecture since the mid-1990s — but in the years since, the number of users on the system has increased ten-fold, messages have risen 50,000 percent, and spam has proliferated. In that time, electronic calendars have also become common, but the various systems around campus often don't work with each other effectively.

"There has been a groundswell of student interest. Every year, many of the film minors say they would have majored in film if that was an option," he adds. "I think this is going to be very popular."

Poetry Contest Seeks Student Manuscripts

The James and Mary Brigham Buckham Poetry Prize is seeking submissions from students currently enrolled at UVM. The winner will receive \$500 for the best original manuscript of poems written in English and a featured reading in the Writers' Workshop Reading Series.

Submission guidelines follow:

- Manuscripts must be seven pages maximum and only one poem per page. They may be single- or double-spaced, and all pages must be numbered. Please do not staple or bind your manuscript.
- Do not put your name on your manuscript. Instead, make two title pages — one with the manuscript title, your name, address, phone number, email, major, year in school, and a second with only the manuscript's title.
- Entrants must be currently enrolled at the University of Vermont.
- Manuscripts will not be returned. Please keep copies of your work.
- Submissions will be accepted until March 28. The winner will be announced April 25.
- Send manuscripts to Associate Professor Major Jackson; Department of English; 419 Old Mill.

An advisory committee for e-mail and electronic calendars has been investigating a variety of solutions to the issues posed by technological change (including enhancing the status quo). After evaluating vendor proposals, they have invited four companies to campus to demonstrate their products in detail. The demos are open to everyone; especially IT support personnel. After the sessions, participants will have a chance to offer feedback with an evaluation form.

The schedule of demonstrations is as follows:

- Feb. 24, CommuniGate Pro, 1 p.m., Waterman Grace Coolidge Room.
- Feb. 25, Microsoft Exchange, 1 p.m., Hall B, Given
- March 3, Mirapoint, 1:00 - 3:00 pm, Waterman Grace Coolidge Room.

Time and location for a demonstration of the Oracle Collaboration Suite has not yet been set.

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EVENTS

Shakespeare Play Concludes Theatre Season

The Department of Theatre's production of "A Midsummer Night's Dream" by William Shakespeare comes to the Royall Tyler Theatre March 2-13. Tickets are available on-line at [UVM Theatre](#), at the box office or by phone. All evening performances are at 7:30 p.m. with a matinee on Sunday, March 13 at 2:00 p.m.

Associate Professor Peter Jack Tkatch will direct the cast of 23 actors, one of the larger groups to grace the Royall Tyler stage. The performers include Ted Szadzinski, Melissa Quine, Shawn Ross, Lizzie Chazen, Maggie Contompasis, Joel Jukosky, Adam Yeager Gould, Harper Reitenkopf, Will Kemp as the couples in love; Tim Fairley, Alex Bone, Michael Rushia, Aaron Robinson, David Aspro and Justin Tucker as the rustics; Christopher Cohen, Eboni Booth, Emily Ginter, Molly Cameron, Jen Moulton, Nicole Staudinger, Caitlin Bayer as the fairies; and John Pourshadi as Puck.

Tickets are \$15 for adults and \$12 for seniors, UVM faculty and staff and non-UVM students. UVM students can purchase up to two tickets at the box office for \$5 each. The March 10 performance will be ASL interpreted for people with hearing impairments and the March 11 show will have audio narration for those with sight impairments.

Indian Art Exhibition Opens at Fleming

A new exhibition, "Miniature Worlds: The Art of India," debuted at the Fleming Museum on Feb. 22. The exhibit presents a diverse selection of Indian paintings and thematically related votive sculptures from The Art Complex Museum in Duxbury, Mass. The Fleming will hold an opening reception for its spring exhibits on Feb. 24 from 5-7 p.m.

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"India figures regularly in current events, whether in its growing role in a globalized work force or in the devastation of the tsunami," says Professor John Seyller, curator of the exhibition. "But India, a vast and ancient land, obviously transcends these very recent developments. This exhibition of Indian paintings can open our eyes to India's marvelous mythology and artistic traditions, forces that have sustained India's rich culture over many centuries."

The Art Complex Museum assembled its collection in the 1960s, when Indian painting was still little known in the West. Selections from this collection, representing most of the major genres and schools of Indian painting, are complemented by works borrowed from private collections and drawn from the Fleming Museum's collection, including two large cloth paintings used in popular storytelling and ritual worship. The paintings on view offer visitors matter-of-fact observations of everyday activities and the natural world, express the subtleties of human love, evoke musical melodies, and recount legendary exploits of heroes and gods. The exhibition runs through June 5.

Much of the work included in Miniature Worlds is from the Leland C. and Paula Wyman Collection at The Art Complex Museum, a collection of 300 paintings. This portion of the exhibition is a program of ExhibitsUSA and was curated by Alice R. M. Hyland, of Trinity College, Hartford, Connecticut, in collaboration with Catherine Mayes, senior curator at The Art Complex

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Information: [Fleming Museum](#)

Writers Series to Feature Bill Roorbach

Award-winning writer Bill Roorbach will read from his recent work on Feb. 24 at 4:30 p.m. in John Dewey Lounge, Old Mill.

Roorbach is the author of *Big Bend*, a collection of stories, and *The Smallest Color*, a novel, as well as several books of nonfiction. *Temple Stream*, his newest nonfiction book, will be published in July by Dial Press. Roorbach has also written for *The Atlantic*, *Harper's*, *Playboy*, *The New York Times Magazine* and *Granta*.

"Roorbach is as raw and engaged a writer as you'll ever read... He rivals James Baldwin in his

Museum.

Information: [Fleming Museum](#)

Roster of March Events Will Celebrate Women's 'HerStory' Month

The Women's Center will mark Women's HerStory Month in March with a roster of events on the theme, "Generations of Women's Activism." Over the past few years a national dialogue has developed around the gaps — based on age, ethnicity, socioeconomic status and other issues — between women working for gender equity. The theme seeks to start a dialogue in Vermont about these gaps and how individuals can work to bridge them.

Highlights will include a lecture by Amy Richards, who is co-founder of the Third Wave Foundation, a New York-based and nationally recognized activist organization dedicated to developing young women's skills in social justice activism. Richards was named one of six Women of Distinction in 2004 by the American Association of University Women. She and Mia Herndon, Third Wave's outreach coordinator, will speak on the process of building bridges, the history of women's activism and the challenges still facing women today March 16 at 7 p.m. in the Campus Center Theatre, Billings.

On March 3, UVM alumna Shontae Praileau will return to campus to discuss her activism. Praileau is known on campus for her two-month hunger strike in 1991 to raise awareness of what she perceived as the university's history of insensitivity and unresponsiveness to minority students, staff and faculty. She will speak informally on March 3 at 7 p.m. at the ALANA Student Center.

Additional events throughout the month will include films, an art show, and many events co-sponsored with other campus offices and organizations. All events are free and open to the public, but pre-registration is required for some. Get complete details online at [Women's Center](#). Information: 656-4637

Fleeing Nazi Germany

Johannes Evelein, an associate professor of modern languages and literature at Trinity

ability to miraculously open up rivers of male sentiment," says *Los Angeles Weekly*. A resident of Maine, Roorbach is the recent winner of an O. Henry Award, a grant from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Kaplan Furthermore Fund. He currently holds the Jenks Chair in Contemporary American Letters at the College of the Holy Cross in Worcester, Mass., where he is a visiting professor.

His reading is co-sponsored by the UVM English Department and the James and Mary Brigham Buckham Scholarship Fund. Information: 656-3056

College in Hartford, Conn., will give a lecture titled "Fleeing Nazi Germany — Exile and the Art of Memory" on Feb. 25 at 2:30 p.m. in 427 Waterman Building.

Evelein's talk is sponsored by the Department of German and Russian and the Center for Holocaust Studies.

"Virtually the entire German intellectual community was expelled and uprooted during Nazi rule — a human drama of immense proportions," Evelein told the *Trinity Reporter* in 2001, discussing his general scholarly interests. "My research looks into the experiences these writers describe and how those experiences influenced their writing. The very fact that so many German writers found refuge in the United States makes this topic even more appealing, because their being and working here has become part of American intellectual history."

Evelein, a native of the Netherlands, has taught at Trinity since 1997. He studied in the Netherlands, Norway, Germany, and the United States, receiving his doctorate in German literature and linguistics from the State University of New York in Albany.

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NOTABLES

February 23, 2005

Awards and Honors

Jill Mattuck Tarule, dean of the College of Education and Social Services, received the Edward C. Pomeroy Award for Outstanding Contributions to Teacher Education at the 57th annual meeting of the American Association of Colleges for Teacher Education in Washington, D.C., held Feb. 20-23. The award recognizes service either to the teacher education community or to the development and promotion of outstanding practices in teacher education at the collegiate, state or national level.

The Vermont Association of Professional Horticulturists presented three of its highest awards to university recipients during ceremonies at the association's annual meeting on Feb. 9 in Rutland. Plant and Soil Science professors **Leonard Perry** and **Mark Starrett**, and the Common Ground student-run educational farm, took home the honors. Starrett was awarded the New England Nursery Association Young Nursery Professional of the Year Award. Perry received VAPH's Horticultural Achievement Award. Common Ground organic farm received the Environmental Awareness Award in recognition of its practices contributing to the protection of the environment. Former farm manager **Matt Leonetti** received the award on behalf of current farm manager **Yarrow Collins** and the Common Ground students.

On Feb. 4, the **College of Medicine** held the first annual Celebration of Foundations, an event that marked the transition of second-year medical students from the preclinical education phase -- called the Foundations Level -- to the clinical education phase -- called the Clerkship Level -- of the new Vermont Integrated Curriculum. The class of 2007 is the first class to complete this phase of the Vermont Integrated Curriculum. Foundations award winners, which were elected by the members of the class, are as follows:

- American Medical Women's Association Gender Equity Award: Dr. **Paula Tracy**, professor of biochemistry and medicine
- American Medical Students Association Golden Apple Award: **Bruce Fonda**, lecturer in anatomy and neurobiology
- Outstanding Foundations Course Award: Neural Science
- Foundations Course Director Award: **Cynthia Forehand**, professor of anatomy and neurobiology
- Foundations Teaching Award (award recipient will hood members of the Class of 2007 at their graduation): Dr. **William Hopkins**, associate professor of medicine
- Foundations Integration Award, which is given to the faculty member whose teaching best captures the spirit of the Vermont Integrated Curriculum: **Gerald Silverstein**, lecturer in microbiology and molecular genetics
- The Silver Stethoscope, also known as "Inspirational Cameo of the Year," for the faculty member who had few lecture hours, but made a substantial contribution to students' education: Dr. **John Lunde**, associate professor of medicine and pathology
- Above and Beyond, which is awarded to the faculty member who went above and beyond the call of duty to help the students in their learning objectives: Dr. **Masatoshi Kida**, associate professor of pathology.
- Best Support Staff (non-teaching): **Michael Cross**, custodian, physical plant department.

Publications and Presentations

An article by **James Sinkula**, professor of business administration, has been recognized as one of the top five articles (based on a citation analysis) published in the *Journal of the Academy of Marketing Science*. The article, "The Synergistic Effect of Market Orientation and Learning Orientation on

Organizational Performance," was written with William Baker of San Diego State University and published in 1999.

Chigee Cloninger, executive director of the Center on Disability and Community Inclusion, presented "Valued Life Outcomes: The Foundation for Functional IEPs," at the National TASH Conference in November in Reno, Nevada. TASH is an international association of people with disabilities, their family members, other advocates, and professionals fighting for a society in which inclusion of all people in all aspects of society is the norm.

Susan Yuan, associate director of the CDCI, and Sharon Henault of the Green Mountain Family Support Project, presented at the November, 2004 Association of University Centers on Disabilities National Conference in Bethesda, Maryland. Their talk focused on the center's work on building its capacity to support parents with disabilities.

February 16, 2005

Awards and Honors

Leonard Perry, Extension professor of plant and soil sciences, was recently awarded the Horticulture Achievement Award of the Vermont Association of Professional Horticulturists at their annual meeting in Rutland, on Feb. 9. This is the most prestigious award bestowed by the association, which represents all aspects of the environmental horticulture industry in Vermont.

Burton Wilcke, associate professor and chair of biomedical technology, was invited by the Institute of Medicine to serve on a committee that will evaluate the President's Emergency Plan for AIDS relief. He was asked to serve because of his global health experience with laboratory surveillance systems. The appointment is for two years and will culminate with an IOM report.

A July 2004 *Cancer Research* article titled "Genotoxicity of therapeutic intervention in children with acute lymphocytic leukemia" has been selected to be abstracted in the 2005 Year Book of Oncology. Led by 2004 College of Medicine doctoral degree recipient **Sederick Rice**, the study's senior author was Dr. **Barry Finette**, professor of pediatrics. Co-authors included **Pamela Vacek**, biostatistician in medical biostatistics and research assistant professor of pathology; Dr. **Alan Homans**, associate professor of pediatrics; **Terri Messier**, senior researcher in the Vermont Cancer Center; and **Heather Kendall**, a graduate student in the department of microbiology and molecular genetics. Article abstracts featured in the *Year Book of Oncology*, which is published by Elsevier, were selected from more than 500 journals worldwide that reported the year's breakthrough developments in oncology.

Publications and Presentations

A number of members of the Department of Communication Sciences presented peer-reviewed papers at the annual convention of the American Speech-Language-Hearing Association, which was held in Philadelphia last November. The UVM authors who presented were: **Maria Short**, **Gayle Belin**, **Brooke Bitner**, **Barry Guitar**, **Rebecca McCauley** and **Patricia Prelock**.

Dr. **Polly Parsons**, professor of medicine, was lead author of a January *Critical Care Medicine* article titled "Lower tidal volume ventilation and plasma cytokine markers of inflammation in patients with acute lung injury."

February 9, 2005

Awards and Honors

A paper by **Bruce Beynnon**, associate professor of orthopaedics and rehabilitation, has earned the 2005 American Orthopaedic Society for Sports Medicine O'Donoghue Sports Injury Research Award. The award is given to the best overall paper that deals with clinical research or human in-vivo research. Beynnon and colleagues will receive the award and present the paper on rehabilitation of the knee following anterior cruciate ligament reconstruction at the AOSSM Annual Meeting Scientific Session in Keystone, Co., in July. The paper is co-authored by numerous Department of Orthopaedics and

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UVM HOMEPAGE

Living Lab

By Jon Reidel

Article published Feb 23, 2005

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Students Wyatt Sidley (left) and Gautam Muralidharan sit in the midst of their indoor ecosystem located in their Living/Learning Center suite. (Photo: Bill DiLillo)

Waking up in the middle of the night with escaped beetles crawling all over wasn't part of the project proposal. Neither was nearly getting arrested by campus police for taking some sand, or the violent death of a lizard at the toes of a pet store frog gone wild after being re-introduced to wilderness — as wild as a college dorm with a pond, rubber plants, orchids and baby palm trees can get, anyway.

Such is life in the experimental jungle of Living/Learning, where junior Gautam Muralidharan and his suitemates have built a miniature indoor ecosystem in the common area of their rooms.

Projects like these have inhabited the themed floors of Living/Learning since its opening in 1973. L/L's mission is to provide a residential environment that integrates formal and informal learning experiences and encourages students to be responsible for their own education. And that it does: more than 40 programs currently exist in the maze of brick residence halls, ranging from clusters of students interested in topics including foreign languages, art, Japanese animation, documentary filmmaking and emergency medicine.

John Sama '84, the center's director and alumnus of the emergency medicine program, says graduates often point to the lifetime connections they made by living there. Some even parlay their experience into a profession. One graduate of the mime and circus arts program went on to work for Ringling Bros. and Barnum & Bailey before teaching physics in a clown outfit to students around the country. Another graduate of a sign language dorm is now an ASL interpreter.

"People often tell me at alumni weekend how they made lifetime connections with people of similar values at Living/Learning," Sama says. "I know I did."

Welcome to the jungle

When you walk into Room 370 in Building E of Living/Learning, the first thing that hits you is the warm blast of humidity. It's balmy for February, especially afternoons, when the sun hits the Mylar wallpaper on the wall above the 36-square-foot oasis below, warming the trees, edible plants and pond stocked with frogs and minnows.

The interior ecosystem came about after Muralidharan, and partners William Wheeler, Wyatt Sidley, Joe Cosmides and Benjamin Kruse submitted a formal project proposal through Living/Learning's "Walking the Walk: Applying Your Natural Resource Education" program. That initiative is designed to provide students with opportunities to blend formal coursework in natural resources with a living environment that emphasizes applying that knowledge to day-to-day life.

Embracing Constraint

Donna Rizzo, assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering, says seriousness almost prevented her from pursuing a faculty career. Not the lack of it, but the excess.

Don't Knock Narrative

Since leaving journalism and joining the university, I have written almost nothing in a first-person voice. Professor Robert Nash, whose latest book *Liberating Scholarly Writing* (Columbia Teachers College Press) is, among other things, an argument for the intellectual and personal rewards of a form of writing he calls the "scholarly personal narrative," might say that is my loss — and yours.

The resulting common area has become a popular destination for students looking to escape from the dreariness of the Vermont winter. Some visitors say it looks like a giant terrarium or compare it to one of Professor John Todd's living machines.

"Most people aren't sure what to make of it and just think it's cool and that the air is really clean in here," Muralidharan says.

"I thought it was the coolest thing I ever saw," says first-year student Oliver LaFarge, who was inspired to start his own ecosystem in his room one floor below. "I moved my bed out of my room and sleep on the floor to make room for it. I get a lot of enjoyment out of it — tending my garden so to speak. It's amazing how happy it makes people just to walk in here and see it."

For Muralidharan, the project has become a way to put his classes in ecosystem management and ecological design into practice. "This is a living lab that I can try out things that I've learned in class," he says. "I'm seeing what happens up close when I allow for structure and function in an ecosystem. We get to sit right at the foot of nature so we can constantly interact with it. It's also been keeping us sane during winter."

Walking the walk

The project has also put the students in contact with people they normally wouldn't have interacted with, and helped to create new alliances. Aside from meeting campus police, who thought the students were stealing sand for a beach party but now ask them "how their jungle is doing," the students received free gravel from Pizzagalli Construction; roofing from Evergreen Slate; rocks from the geology department and plants from the UVM Greenhouse.

That's all part of the plan, says Professor John Shane, chair of forestry and director of Walking the Walk.

"It's incorrect for us to believe that there is a magic separation between what students do in school and what they do after class," Shane says. "We as educators are missing the boat if we're not engaging them in the other two-thirds of their existence. We ourselves know that the majority of real learning we did in college wasn't in the classroom. Geometry, for example, doesn't mean anything until you try to build a lean-to."

Muralidharan says he hopes his indoor ecosystem will motivate students to take part in the university's push to become a "green campus."

"There's been a lot of talk about making this a green campus, but we're actually doing something about it. We broke some rules, bypassed some red tape and apologized later, but we got it done. We took quite a bit of heat and I know that L/L has taken a little heat as well, but John Sama deserves credit for going to bat for us. Experimental education is what Living/Learning is all about. That's the main reason I'm living here."

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Embracing Constraint

Environmental engineer's research modeling groundwater problems draws on her entrepreneurial career

By Jon Reidel

Article published Feb 22, 2005



Donna Rizzo (center), an assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering, has interests that extend from the academy to private industry, from field research to abstract computational models. (Photo courtesy of Donna Rizzo.)

Donna Rizzo, assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering, says seriousness almost prevented her from pursuing a faculty career. Not the lack of it, but the excess.

"When I thought I might want to teach, I took engineering so seriously in the sense that if a building or a bridge collapsed or people drank contaminated water, it was almost too much pressure for me to think that I was going to teach this to students. They are going to be signing off

on plans that lives depend on. That's why a lot of our classes are lab oriented and are very hands-on. I need to see their feedback. I think engineering classes have to be taught this way."

Rizzo wears a reminder of the seriousness of her and her students work on her right hand: An Order of Engineers ring made of steel from a bridge and Quebec City that twice collapsed, killing 89 people.

The professor, who received UVM's first-ever doctorate in civil engineering in 1994, is an expert in geostatistics and arcane computational processes like artificial neural networks. Her computational expertise lets her create models of complex problems, like the pattern of flows of toxins through groundwater. Rizzo has been interested in groundwater issues for years — in fact, she recalls visiting Turkey as a teenager and sitting on the banks of river and wondering what would become of the people in the area if the water they relied on became contaminated.

Rizzo's interest in water continued through her undergraduate career at the University of Connecticut, where she studied civil engineering. After graduating, she worked for state government conducting environmental impact assessments and working on computer modeling and analysis of stream data. That led to graduate school at the University of California, Irvine, where she juggled academic studies with professional work at a consulting firm performing site inspections; designing storm drainage facilities; and doing flood-plain analysis.

Becoming an entrepreneur

Then Dave Dougherty, her faculty adviser, left Irvine for UVM — and Rizzo followed him, earning UVM's first-ever Ph.D. in civil engineering. She then took a hiatus from academic life to apply her research by co-founding Subterranean Research, an environmental consulting firm, with Dougherty in downtown

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Waking up in the middle of the night with escaped beetles crawling all over wasn't part of the five project proposal of the five students. Neither was nearly getting arrested by campus police for taking some sand, or the violent death of a lizard at the toes of a pet store frog gone wild after being re-introduced to wilderness — as wild as a college dorm with a pond, rubber plants, orchids and baby palm trees can get, anyway.

Don't Knock Narrative

Since leaving journalism and joining the university, I have written almost nothing in a first-person voice. Professor Robert Nash, whose latest book *Liberating Scholarly Writing* (Columbia Teachers College Press) is, among other things, an argument for the intellectual and personal rewards of a form of writing he calls the "scholarly personal narrative," might say that is my loss — and yours.

Burlington.

One of the firm's key goals was to speed the diffusion of research and new technologies from universities and national laboratories into environmental practice. The firm did this (and still does it — Subterranean Research is still in business in Massachusetts under Dougherty's leadership) by helping companies clean up water or land to come into compliance with EPA regulations. The work posed interesting challenges for the engineers. While Rizzo and Dougherty respected their clients' desire for expediency, they also wanted to do a great job, and they started looking at optimization in different ways.

"Instead of trying to give someone the least-cost solution to their problem, we thought we should find out how much money they have to spend on the problem and do the absolutely best job of characterizing the site and remediation it for a given cost," Rizzo recalls. "That changes your whole objective function. Somebody's not going to buy my innovative solution if it's a lot more expensive."

The practical perspective sparked by meeting those kinds of challenges continues to inform Rizzo's research.

"I think engineers like constraints," she says. "The fun part of my job is trying to figure out a solution given that you've got a whole bunch of these real-world limits. That's what makes it really exciting. We could clean up any site if we had an unlimited supply of money. Where's the fun in that?"

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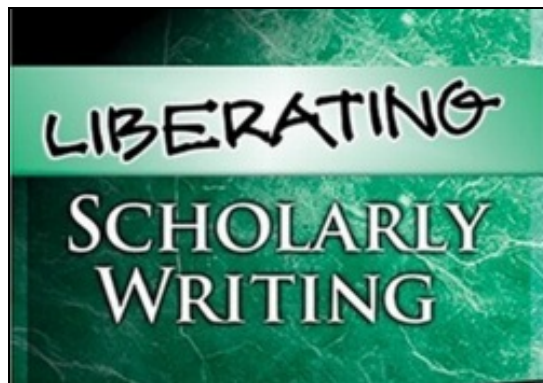
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Book Argues for Diversity in Scholarly Writing

By Kevin Foley

Article published Feb 23, 2005

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Professor Robert Nash's latest book seeks to find a place for personal narratives in academic writing. (Cover detail courtesy of Columbia Teachers College Press.)

Since leaving journalism and joining the university, I have written almost nothing in a first-person voice. Professor Robert Nash, whose latest book *Liberating Scholarly Writing* (Columbia Teachers College Press) is a passionate argument for the intellectual and personal rewards of a form of writing he calls the "scholarly personal narrative," might say that is my loss — and yours.

"The way you get a class's attention is to ask a question," says Nash, offering a general reflection on the power of personal narrative as we talk in a crowded Waterman Café. "The way you keep their attention is to tell your own stories."

The power of stories to inspire and inform both author and audience are at the core of what Nash's book is about, but before getting into why Nash feels these personal narratives have so much potential in academia, let's get the inevitable objections on the table.

Including personal stories in scholarly work might be seen as self-indulgent, distracting or "soft." Evaluating them poses real questions of rigor. And what's wrong with the status quo? Why isn't specialization something to celebrate, rather than decay? We appreciate the need for cardiovascular surgeon's proprietary techniques and vocabulary; why not a literary critic's?

But these aren't fights that Nash, who teaches in the College for Education and Social Services, wants to pick. The scholarly personal narrative, he says, is just another technique for academic writing. It's powerful, useful and relevant, but not a be-all, end-all for all scholars and all subjects. So Nash's book is not a polemic against standard academic writing. The professor, in fact, is a little uncomfortable with how the word "liberating" in his title might be read.

"I prefer the term freeing," he tells me. "I want to be able to free up students — who, for a variety of reasons, who are unable or unwilling to write in conventional qualitative and quantitative modes."

But is there such a thing as too much freedom?

"I'm an intellectual pluralist," he says. "I'm all about giving people more opportunities to do the kind of scholarship that is most compatible with their interests and talents."

Bringing stories into academia

In Nash's view, a scholarly personal narrative, or SPN — which he defines as a melding of scholarship, personal self-disclosure and narrative — is a powerful

Living Lab

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Embracing Constraint

Donna Rizzo, assistant professor of civil and environmental engineering, says seriousness almost prevented her from pursuing a faculty career. Not the lack of it, but the excess.

tool for intellectual and self-discovery. A strong SPN provocatively engages scholarly literature and builds a sound argument while simultaneously spinning a relevant personal story out in lucid, concise, emotionally resonant language; a difficult trick for any writer.

"It was more fun than any book or article I've ever written. But also more difficult," Nash says of working on *Liberating Scholarly Writing*. "I had to draw on all my intellectual resources and creativity. There's no formula."

What about rigor?

When guiding the graduate students he advises, Nash takes them through a process (including a semester-long seminar) of exploring the style to see if it fits their subject and skills. In questioning his advisees, Nash is looking for generalizability — does the narrative have something to say to people in the field, some wider importance? What literature informs a student's ideas? What are the arguments, and how strong are they?

"Students find that the process affirms their voices," Nash says. "In academia, you're taught to bury your voice — through the third person, through the passive voice, through qualifying, qualifying, qualifying. So there's a joy in speaking clearly."

Enough with the joy: What about the scholarship?

"Students become better scholars writing this way," Nash argues. "Instead of a traditional dissertation, which might open with a chapter of literature review, a scholarly personal narrative has references to key scholarly literature embedded in the work itself."

Becoming public intellectuals

Some of the inspiration for this project, Nash says, came from his reading of Richard Rorty, the famous Stanford postmodernist. Nash has long admired and read Rorty's work, but found powerful new insights in a short autobiographical essay by the professor, "Trotsky and the Wild Orchids." Nash finds the essay both particular and general, concrete and abstract, down-to-earth and theoretical, personal and yet universal — all virtues of the well-executed SPN.

Writing with this kind of accessibility and resonance, Nash thinks, can help university professors transcend the boundaries of their disciplines and become public intellectuals.

To support his point, Nash points to Cornel West, Henry Louis Gates, Jr., Edward Said, Carol Gilligan and many others who have had their views discussed widely while prospering in the academy and often writing personally. Nash also brings up Harvard University's English department. Nash says the chair there has recently made a deliberate attempt to blur academic boundaries, hiring writers and public intellectuals like Louis Menand, Jamaica Kincaid, Amitav Ghosh and James Wood as lecturers or faculty.

Nash concludes from this that learning to excel at a broader range of scholarly writing is more likely to help than hurt an academic career. "I tell people on the tenure track to try to do both," he says, that is to write in both conventional academic and narrative modes. "I say, 'Don't get sucked into either/or.'"

Despite their obvious potential to inspire ire, Nash has received an encouraging response to his ideas at faculty colloquia and brown-bag lunches, and sales of the book are strong. His students, also, are enthusiastic, with increasing numbers choosing to write dissertations in a narrative mode. But he cheerfully admits that the process of constructing a personal narrative with scholarly resonance isn't "everyone's cup of tea."

In fact, getting personal and telling stories isn't Nash's last and best word for those putting words on the page at a university.

"Students always ask my advice for writing," he says, "I tell them: 'Finish.'"

Nash leans back in his chair and laughs. So do I.

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