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The Singing Theoretician



Marisa Debowsky, second-year graduate student in mathematics, with the tools of her trade. (Photo: Andy Duback)

When grad student Marisa Debowsky isn't studying graph theory and combinatorics, she's singing and, sometimes, lying about her age.

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Farewell to Elms "It was almost like crack cocaine, this tree," says John Thomas, graduate student in history, describing the American elm—the once ubiquitous, now decimated shade source.

Surfing Safari Our picks of the "best" – or at least most interesting, unusual or useful – Web pages at UVM.

Weighty Research A recent national study recently revealed that students would prefer to marry an embezzler, a cocaine user or a shoplifter than someone obese. Psychology Professor Esther Rothblum is not surprised.

THE WEEK IN VIEW

April 4 4 p.m.
"Nadine Gordimer's Post-Apartheid Novels," Laura Quinn, former Fulbright scholar at the University of Fort Hare, South Africa. John Dewey Lounge, Old Mill.

April 4 6 p.m.
"Take Back the Night" march against sexual violence, followed by speakout at City Hall.

April 5 1:30 p.m.
Zen calligraphy with Zen Master Keidop Fukushima, of Tofukuji Monastery in Kyoto, Japan. Fleming Museum, room 101. thayashi@zoo.uvm.edu

April 6 TBA
Student Leaders Conference. Students will shape their vision for the university and present it to incoming President Daniel Fogel. Janelle Christopher: 656-2060.

April 9 5 p.m.
Yom Hashoah Memorial Service, Holocaust Remembrance Day. East Gallery, Fleming Museum.

April 10 12:30 p.m.
Brown Bag Lecture: "The Racialization of Gypsies and Travelers in Contemporary Britain," Robert Vanderbeck, geography. John Dewey Lounge, Old Mill. 656-1096.

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Stephanie Morgan, program coordinator at the Women's Center, has been fasting and tending a "Sacred Fire" at the center since April 1. The fire was lighted to symbolize a commitment to end sexual violence. The fire will be extinguished on April 4 prior to the "Take Back the Night March" to City Hall. *(Photo: Andy Duback)*

ACLU Expert Attacks Counter-Terrorism Act

The new USA PATRIOT counter-terrorism act is poorly drafted, tautological, demagogic – and threatens civil liberties, the sanctity of libraries and some of the oldest principles in criminal law.

So says Benson Scotch, executive director of the Vermont chapter of the American Civil Liberties Union, of the bill, which was designed to provide law enforcement agencies with new tools to combat terrorism and passed easily in the aftermath of Sept. 11. Scotch, a Harvard-trained lawyer, was almost unstintingly critical of the law during an April 1 talk sponsored by UVM Libraries.

"What we're talking about today is what happens to our rights when words deliberately become fuzzy," said Scotch, introducing his discussion.

He went on to cite at least a dozen examples of such "fuzziness," arguing that the legislation overturned hundreds of years of traditional interpretation of the Constitution, usurping some of the authority of the courts and inappropriately opening the door to adjudicating beliefs rather than actions. Scotch also believes the bill blurs the lines between foreign intelligence investigations (which have lesser standards of evidence and process) with criminal law enforcement.

Even worse, at least in Scotch's view, is that the law is predicated on a loose definition of

CE Changes Include Staff Layoffs

Interim Provost John Bramley recently announced changes in the operation of the Continuing Education division that include elimination of 36 staff positions.

The layoffs, primarily in the areas of professional programs and video production, will affect 20 employees; the remaining positions were eliminated through attrition.

Bramley said the changes will help strengthen the focus on non-degree and summer division offerings and better position Continuing Education as a gateway to the university's academic programs. Successful non-degree programs, such as the Guaranteed Admissions Program, pre-med program, gerontology and health care management certificate programs, will remain in place.

"The new Continuing Education will be structured around programs, marketing and operations sections. They will work extremely closely with academic units, Extension and other institutions, including the Vermont State College System," Bramley said.

Regarding the involuntary separations, Bramley said the university is going to great lengths to place terminated employees in other campus positions and to provide career training and counseling to help them explore opportunities outside the university. Laid-off employees will receive a severance package that extends benefits and health insurance beyond the end of employment, depending upon the employee's years of service and age. Eight employees already have found new positions.

The eliminated positions will save the university more than \$1 million in salaries and benefits.

Gymnast Competes this Week in NCAAs

Men's gymnast Elie Sollins, a freshman from Columbia, Md., will compete in the NCAA Gymnastics Championships at the University of Oklahoma April 4-6. Sollins, who qualified in the still rings, will be only the second UVM gymnast to participate in the NCAA Championships. Heidi Allen '94 competed in the NCAA Championships in vaulting in both 1993 and 1994.

Competing at the NCAA Championships will cap a brilliant year for Sollins, who has moved into the all-time top 10 at UVM in the rings and vault.

Coach Gary Bruening called Sollins "the strongest

terrorism. At one point in the bill's text, in what Scotch called "a delicious phrase," the law asserts an act of domestic terrorism must "appear to be intended" to influence the policy of government. The conditional word "appear" makes the tricky business of divining intent even fuzzier, Scotch said.

That vagueness has consequences. In what he acknowledged is mostly a theoretical example, and one borrowed from a right-wing Web site (the new law, Scotch said, created "strange bedfellows" between liberals, civil libertarians and the far right), the act of peacefully chaining oneself to the White House gates could be a terrorist act. It's at least potentially "dangerous to human life" (passerby could be forced to step from the sidewalk into the street, putting themselves at risk), it's illegal and it's clearly designed to change political policy. That's terrorism, according to the act – even though protestors chaining themselves to a gate is well within the mainstream of American dissent.

Scotch allowed that such a prosecution was likely, but he said he found the possibility troubling.

Section 215 of the law, which allows agents to order the production of "any tangible things" with very little regulation from the courts, was troubling to Scotch and many of the librarians in attendance. The provision could allow the government to subpoena computer hard drives, web logs and borrowing records without probable cause.

The result, said Scotch, means that the act has another unintended outcome.

"Librarians are now at the front lines of the campaign to save civil liberties," he said.

VPT to Air Fogel Interview

President-select Daniel Fogel will make three appearances on Vermont Public Television, which will run *Beyond the Green*, a recently taped interview with Fogel, beginning April 3.

In the UVM-produced show, Fogel responds to questions from interviewer Will Mikell and from UVM and community members, including Elaine McCrate, associate professor of economics; Bill Tickner, president of the Student Government Association; and Burlington Mayor Peter Clavelle.

Among Fogel's comments:

- His advice to high school and college students: "Learn to write better."
- UVM's reputation: "like many public flagships, it is more highly regarded outside."
- Advice received from former UVM President Tom Salmon: "It's always whitewater for a university president."
- Town-gown relations: "I will be the best partner the mayor could imagine."

The show will air April 3, at 7:30 p.m.; April 5, at

still-ring performer at UVM since ... Frank Zavitkovsky '92. There are very few gymnasts in the country who can match Elie's strength on rings," Bruening said.

Four Women Receive Honors as Student Employees

As part of National Student Employment Recognition Week, April 8-12, the campus will honor Nicole DeLance, who is the first-place winner of the Student Employee of the Year Contest. She is now eligible to compete for the top honors in the Northeast region.

DeLance works as a laboratory technician in the College of Medicine Microscopy Imaging Center. Janet Schwarz, her supervisor, said she and her colleagues depend on DeLance "to execute tasks that would normally be undertaken by professional laboratory staff." The senior was responsible for creating the hazardous chemical waste storage compartments in the new labs, a project that received recognition from the UVM Environmental Safety Facility.

DeLance also is involved in Project MICRO, an outreach program that takes a hands-on microscopic festival to hundreds of middle school students in Chittenden County.

Three other students will be honored for their working contributions:

- Carolyn Blake is student supervisor in the access services department of Bailey/Howe Library. Her supervisor, Angus Robertson, says Blake "has quite literally helped to keep this place running."
- Jenny Evans is a program assistant at the Sara Holbrook Community Center. She works in the pre- and after-school programs. Her supervisor, Stefanie Lloyd, says, in the "constantly high stress environment, Jenny somehow always remains professional and extremely calm."
- Leila Zayed is a student manager in the director's office of Living/Learning. Jana Talcott, her supervisor, says "We tend to save extremely important tasks for Leila... we know if Leila is assigned, they will get done promptly and correctly."

10 p.m.; and April 9, at 1 p.m.

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Fighting Words

Robert Kaufman, the spring 2002 recipient of the College of Arts and Sciences' Dean's Lecture Series award, will discuss "No Substitute for Victory: The Current War and its Implications for American Foreign Policy," on April 11, in room 101, Fleming, at 5 p.m. A reception will follow in the Fleming's Marble Court.

Kaufman, an associate professor of political science, specializes in American foreign policy and international politics. In his lecture, he will posit that the United States must not only destroy Afghanistan's Taliban and the Al Qaeda terrorist organization but also defeat Iraq, Saddam Hussein and his Baath party.

"This war is a geopolitical necessity and morally right," says Kaufman. "It's the right time, the right enemy and the right place."

The program will begin with a tribute to Kaufman's outstanding contributions to teaching and scholarship.

Kaufman joined the UVM faculty in 1992 after practicing law and teaching military strategy at the Naval War College in Newport, R. I. In 2000, he received the Emil and Kathleen Sick Award for the best book on the history of the Pacific Northwest for his second book, *Henry M. Jackson: A Life in Politics*. The author of numerous articles in both scholarly journals and the popular press, Kaufman is an adjunct scholar at the Heritage Foundation in Washington, D.C., and the Discovery Institute in Seattle, Wash.

Information: 656-1297.

Economic Engines in Action

Local purchasers, non-profit administrators, academics and government officials will meet for a one-day conference at the Sheraton Hotel Conference Center in Burlington on April 12 at 9:00 a.m. to discuss how institutional expenditures can strengthen local businesses, communities and the environment.

Michael Shuman, author of *Going Local: Creating Self-Reliant Communities in a Global Age* will deliver the keynote address, which is titled, "The Amazing Shrinking Machines: New Opportunities for Vermont Institutions to Go Local."

The conference is sponsored by the University of Vermont/Burlington Community Outreach Partnership Center. (For more on COPC's activities, look for a feature in the upcoming April

Russian Farms and Culture: Tape at 12:10

Last May, Lyn Jarvis, Extension professor and producer of the television show *Across the Fence* on WCAX-TV, traveled to Russia with 19 other agricultural communicators from throughout the country to work with and learn from Russian counterparts. Jarvis and Viktor Semenov, who produces a similar show in Tula, established a video exchange. Five of the Russian videos describing agriculture and folk customs in the post-Soviet period will be shown on *Across the Fence* beginning April 8.; all shows begin at 12:10 p.m. Several videos describing Vermont, have been sent to Russia and will be broadcast there.

Kevin McKenna, professor of Russian literature and culture, was selected to comment on four of the videos. The topics are:

- April 8 – National Farming Exhibition in St. Petersburg. McKenna provides commentary on changes that have taken place in the transition from Soviet-style state- and collective-farms to a more independently-operated farming system today.
- April 9 – Visit to Novaya Zhizn', one of the most profitable agricultural enterprises in Russia. McKenna describes working conditions on Russian farms today and problems encountered in the transition.
- April 10 – Country Schools in Tula and a visit to the local museum. Jarvis discusses his impressions of his trip last May.
- April 11 – Innovative farming techniques at Zybino. McKenna describes the changes in secondary and higher education, including the slower pace of change in rural Russia.
- April 12 – Winter Festival at Yasnaya Polyana, Leo Tolstoy's memorial estate. McKenna comments on Tolstoy's place throughout Russia and the world.

Jazz/Cinema Join in Scholar's Lecture

Krin Gabbard, chair of the comparative literature department at SUNY-Stony Brook and a leading scholar of jazz and film studies, will deliver a lecture titled "Marlon Brando as Jazz Actor," April 4, at 7 p.m. in Lafayette 207. A reception will follow in John Dewey Lounge.

Gabbard is the author of *Jammin' at the Margins: Jazz and the American Cinema* and editor of *Representing Jazz and Jazz Among the Discourses*.

Students Host Faculty Panel on Mid-East

10 issue of *the view*.)

The one-day event will cover institutional impacts, livable wages, partnership building, and more. Experts from the UVM staff and faculty, plus many representatives of local agencies, will lead workshops and participate in discussions.

Formal registration for the conference is closed, but late entries and drop-ins are welcome. Contact copc@zoo.uvm.edu by e-mail or call 656-0095

Research Follows Vermont Breast Cancer Survivors

Women with a history of breast cancer compose the largest disease group in the cancer survivor community. More than 4,000 of them are living in Vermont, many of them survivors of five or more years. Two researchers are studying how well their post-treatment primary care needs – physical, psychological and social – are being met.

Mary Canales, assistant professor of nursing, and Berta Geller, research associate professor in family practice, will deliver a Center for Research on Vermont seminar on "Breast Cancer Survivors in Vermont: A Qualitative Study of Their Perspective of Post-Treatment Primary Care Services," April 9, at 7:30 p.m. in Memorial Lounge, Waterman.

Canales and Geller will report the results of information gathered from focus groups with women in Brattleboro, Springfield, Newport, Barre, Waterbury, Burlington and Rutland.

Information: 656-4389 or crv@uvm.edu or [Center for Research on Vermont](#) .

Policy, Peace

College Democrats and Republicans and the UVM Vermont Israel Student Alliance are sponsoring a faculty panel, "U.S. Foreign Policy, the Arab-Israeli Conflict and Strategies for Peace," April 4, at 8 p.m., in Billings North Lounge.

Panelists are Robert Kaufman and Gregory Gause, associate professors of political science; and Rex Brynen, associate professor of political science at McGill University. Brynen's research interests are peace-building and post-conflict resolution. Anthony Gierzynski, associate professor of political science, will moderate.

UVM Choir to Perform Verdi's Requiem

The University of Vermont Concert Choir and the Burlington Choral Society and Orchestra, under the direction of David Neiweem, professor of music, will perform Verdi's *Requiem* April 6, at 8 p.m., in Ira Allen Chapel. This is the final concert of the Choral Society's 25th anniversary season.

Soprano Margaret Cusack, one of the soloists, has sung leading operatic roles here and abroad for years. She debuted at the Metropolitan Opera in 1999. Other guest soloists will include mezzo soprano Tina Bunce, tenor Thomas Faracco and baritone Elem Eley.

Tickets: 656-3085. Information: 878-4418.

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April 3-April 9

Awards and Honors

Jane Kolodinsky has been named chair of the Department of Community Development and Applied Economics. Kolodinsky has published her research in the area of consumer economics in more than 20 different journals, and she received the Carigan Award for Outstanding Undergraduate Teaching in 1994. She has served as president of the American Council on Consumer Interests and held numerous administrative positions at UVM, including special advisor to the provost.

Dr. Diane Magrane, associate dean for medical education and professor of obstetrics and gynecology, was named president of the Association of Professors of Gynecology and Obstetrics at the organization's annual meeting on March 7. Magrane is a past chair of the APGO Undergraduate Medical Education Committee and was instrumental in planning, implementing and developing outcomes for the APGO Women's Health Care Education Retreats in 1996 and 2000. She will serve as APGO's president until 2003.

March 27-April 2

Awards and Honors

Alan Ling assistant professor of computer science, has been awarded the 2002 Kirkman Medal by the Institute of Combinatorics and its Applications (ICA). The medal is given to an outstanding member of the ICA in the early stages of his or her research career who has made important contributions to research. The ICA awards no more than three medals per year. The other medals went to faculty members at the University of Ghent and Tsukuba University.

Kathleen Liang, associate professor in CDAE, participated in the Federation of Business Disciplines-Association of Small Business and Entrepreneurship annual conference in March. She presented an article, "The Impact of Starting a New Venture on the Entrepreneur and Their Family: Expectations, Reality, and Willingness to Start Again," which the Federation Committee named winner of the 2002 Distinguished Paper Award. Since 1984, when this award was established, Liang was the first winner from a non-traditional business field. She also is the first winner whose work focuses on agriculture and resource issues and the first from the Northeast region.

Her presentation also was the lead article published in the latest edition of the *Journal of Business and Entrepreneurship*. Liang also conducted a symposium: "Service Learning and Teaching Entrepreneurship to Youth Groups: Exploring Different Approaches and Comparative Experiences."

Mark Stoler, professor of history, has received a Fulbright Senior Specialists grant to the University of Haifa in Israel. Beginning April 20, he will spend two weeks lecturing in the American Studies program and working with faculty member who are completing plans for a new graduate program in the area. Stoler, is among the first grantees under the new Fulbright Senior Specialists short-term grants program, which offers two-to six-week grants to leading U.S. academics and professionals to support curricular and faculty development and institutional planning at academic institutions in 140 countries. Stoler's areas of special expertise are U.S. diplomatic and military history and World War II.

Dr. David Fassler, clinical associate professor of psychiatry, is the recipient of the 2002 Francis J. Braceland Award for Public Service from the American Psychiatric Association (APA). Named in honor of Dr. Francis Braceland, who served as president of the APA from 1956-1957, and as editor of the American

Journal of Psychiatry from 1965-1978, the award is presented in alternate years to a psychiatrist who has made outstanding contributions as an author, spokesperson, and publicist in the service of the mentally ill and disabled and in the art and science of helping. The award will be presented at the Convocation of Fellows during the Annual Meeting of the American Psychiatric Association in May.

Pauline Ratnasingam, assistant professor of business, has been admitted as a member of the *Information and Management Journal* advisory editorial board.

Publications and Presentations

Patrick Neal, associate professor of political science, presented a paper on "Political Liberalism, Public Reason and Religion" at the Faculty Colloquia Series in Moral and Political Thought at Johns Hopkins University, on March 8.

Donna Kuizenga, professor of Romance languages, recently published three articles: "Romanière à succès, succès de romanière. Mme de Villedieu et les topoï , " in *Homo narrativus: Recherches sur la topique romanesque dans les fictions de langue française avant 1800*; "Ce rusé d'Amour: les Ruses des Annales galantes," and "Les Ruses du roman épistolaire sous l'Ancien Régime" in *Écriture de la ruse*. She also published two papers: "Espaces féminins? La topique des lieux dans les Nouvelles africaines et les Mémoires de la vie de Henriette-Sylvie de Molière de Mme de Villedieu." XVe Colloque de la SATOR, Ecole normale supérieure,* Paris. November 2001; and "Une Altérité voilée: images de l'Afrique dans la fiction de Madame de Villedieu" at the 7th biannual meeting of the Centre International de Rencontres sur le XVIIe siècle, University of Tunis, Tunisia, March 2002.

*Kuizenga is president of this organization (Société d'Analyse de la Topique Romanesque), which is dedicated to the study of narrative prose in pre-Revolutionary France. SATOR brings together researchers from 10 different countries in Europe, North America and Africa.

Pauline Ratnasingam, assistant professor of business, had an article accepted in the *Information and Management Journal* titled "Model of Inter-organizational Trust in Business to Business Electronic Commerce," Volume 15, Issue 1-2.

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The Singing Theoretician

By Tom Weaver



Marisa Debowsky, second-year graduate student in mathematics, with the tools of her trade. (Photo: Andy Duback)

Grad student Marisa Debowsky's calculus class was on to her.

"Word on the street is you're nineteen years old," one of the undergrads said, mock serious as a Hollywood private eye.

Partial credit. She's eighteen to be precise, as mathematicians generally are about matters numerical.

Truth be told, Debowsky would rather not talk about her age. If you sat next to her on an airplane, she'd probably give you her "30-second spiel." Began college at age 13 in an early admission program at Virginia's Mary Baldwin College. Collected her bachelor's when her peers were lining up at the DMV for learner's permits, and began to work on graduate-level research and coursework at UVM at age 17. Or you might just get a white lie ("I'm 25") that makes years and education jibe with expectation.

Debowsky admits that it was fun for about six months when she started college and everyone wanted to do a story on the littlest freshman. She's relieved that, with the exception of the occasional campus journalist bent on a catchy lead, most people at UVM have quickly gotten over her youth and gone on to more important matters. "The shock is short," she says.

Zeroing In

Math has always "been it," Debowsky says, but she recalls a teacher, Mrs. Benjamin, and a challenge, dividing by zero, that stoked her passion for the intellectual gymnastics of theoretical mathematics. Unwilling to believe that one can't divide by zero, Debowsky set out to prove it possible. Finally accepting that it wasn't going to work, she turned her attention to proving it impossible. "That took up all of third grade," Debowsky says.

The recommendation of a Mary Baldwin College faculty member brought Debowsky to UVM for her graduate study, in particular to work with Professor Dan Archdeacon in the field of graph theory and combinatorics. *The Journal of Graph Theory* is based at UVM, and Archdeacon is the managing editor.

Working with Archdeacon last year on a research fellowship, Debowsky took on the challenge of exploring possible graphic configurations on a Möbius strip. In her second year, she has submitted two papers and is writing a master's thesis on another topic. Archdeacon notes that most graduate students don't begin independent research until the doctoral level.

Put simply, combinatorics is "about fancy ways of counting," Debowsky says. "And graph theory is a bunch of dots and lines and you play connect the dots. You use graphs to model relationships and you study the structure of how things are connected. That is the nutshell of what I do all day."

Farewell to Elms

"It was almost like crack cocaine, this tree," says John Thomas, graduate student in history, describing the American elm—the once ubiquitous, now decimated shade source.

Surfing Safari

Our picks of the "best" – or at least most interesting, unusual or useful – Web pages at UVM.

Weighty Research

A recent national study recently revealed that students would prefer to marry an embezzler, a cocaine user or a shoplifter than someone obese. Psychology Professor Esther Rothblum is not surprised.

The explanation is way too easy because she is kind. A truer picture of the challenge of her intellectual life emerges from the description, on Debowsky's personal Web site, of the math graduate student office at 16 Colchester Avenue: "The focal points of the room are the white board, which is generally filled with incomprehensible but necessary equations, and the couch opposite the white board, which is generally filled with puzzled grad students."

One, Two, One, Two, Three, Four

Music is generally the answer when Debowsky looks for ways to rejuvenate herself for another battle with the puzzlement of that white board. "Music has rivaled math my whole life," she says.

Growing up in Manhattan, Debowsky studied classical voice and piano. She carried a dual major in math and music theory, minor in piano, at Mary Baldwin. At UVM, she recently won out in the highly competitive auditions to make the Cat's Meow a *cappella* group.

Though her mathematics and musical pursuits serve as counterbalances, there are multiple commonalities, Debowsky says. "I see many things through a logical perspective and that draws me to theoretical math, grammar, foreign languages, music theory..."

And when math and music come together, it is a beautiful and sometimes amusing thing. Witness Debowsky's multi-faceted homepage again, which includes the lyrics to her favorite songs, with a sub-category of math songs. Click on [Debowsky's home page](#), for a recast version of the Indigo Girls' "Closer to Fine":

"These Ds and these Xs, they make me so nervous, Who cares what the area under a curve is? I don't know the answer to these questions, slopes and curves and tangent lines, And the less I see the point of the derivative, I'm failing my Calculus."

Sharing lyrics like these might help some teachers relate, but Debowsky doesn't need that kind of help. She calls teaching a "hoot" and says that the classroom dynamic may have felt a little strange at first but all are now past that – "it doesn't bother me and it doesn't seem to bother the students."

Debowsky, who hopes to continue on with her doctoral work at UVM, looks forward to the fine day when she looks back on herself as the youngest grad student, youngest post-doc and youngest professor and discovers she's the senior member of the faculty. Oh, to be old.

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A Farewell to Elms

By Kevin Foley



Elms once covered the University Green – and the United States. Now only a few remain. Graduate student John Thomas has worked extensively to illustrate and elucidate the history of our lost national tree. (Photo: Sally McCay)

transcendentalists, the elm was a symbol of repose – the image of the "poet under the elm tree" shows up again and again in their writing. Arching canopies of elms draped over almost every New England city and forged out West as well. Elms were civilization, luxury, contemplation, comfort. They were, without question, our national tree.

Leafing Out

Their very popularity, the addictive quality Thomas saw again and again in his year of poring through archives and purchasing old images on eBay, created an enormous monoculture – estimated in the early '30s at nearly a billion trees – with predictably grim results. Starting in the 1830s, local outbreaks denuded entire towns, and pests rarely stayed completely local, hopping from town to town on elm-lined roads. Dutch elm disease, which arrived in a load of European timber sometime in the 1930s, preyed on beetle-weakened trees. The epidemic raged for 30 years, killing 90 percent or more of America's elm population. Burlington might have had 8,000 to 10,000 of the trees at one point; perhaps nine remain, though more have been planted recently.

"This was one of the largest natural disasters to ever hit the United States," Thomas says. "It was like this slow-moving hurricane that knocked out one built landscape after another."

We still mourn those lost landscapes. UVM alumni returning to campus often look out with sadness at the University Green, where only one elm remains. Thomas's grant proposal was prompted, in part, by a newspaper story he read about alumni attending a Burlington high school reunion. He was struck by how often these former students, many of whom hadn't visited Burlington in decades, talked about the vanished trees, the vanished elms.

Thomas misses them also, though at 38, he's just barely old enough to remember the last vestiges of America's elm age.

"As a kid in Ohio my third grade teacher took the class outside to witness the dismantling of a huge old elm. As it was reduced to logs our teacher sadly told us of all the history it had witnessed. I've never forgotten that afternoon for some reason," he says, explaining one early root of his elm interest. As a

"It was almost like crack cocaine, this tree," says John Thomas, graduate student in history. He's describing the American elm – the once ubiquitous, now decimated tree whose tragic history he spent much of last year studying with a UVM SUGR/FaMe grant.

Thomas is kidding, mostly, but the comparison is apt. Elms were addictive. For the colonists, they were a sweet green reminder of England. For Emerson and the

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A recent national study recently revealed that students would prefer to marry an embezzler, a cocaine user or a shoplifter than someone obese. Psychology Professor Esther Rothblum is not surprised.

student, contract historian and archivist, Thomas kept coming across images and engravings of elm-shaded towns nationwide that were scarred by Dutch Elm disease. Thomas originally wanted to see if losing the trees had a psychological/cultural effect on the people who lived with them.

When that didn't pan out, Thomas decided to direct his project more generally, as an illustrated history of the rise and fall of the American elm. His SUGR/FaMe funding (the acronym, by the way, stands for "Stimulate Undergraduate and Graduate Research with Faculty Mentoring") let him travel to important archives, and hire researchers to visit repositories he couldn't get to. Perhaps even more valuable, winning the grant built confidence.

"It wasn't like getting a good grade on a paper," Thomas says. "Getting an original proposal accepted by a panel of people from different disciplines, people who aren't all historians, was a validation of creativity."

A Blow to the Gut

During his grant-funded peregrinations, Thomas began regularly hearing from librarians about a mysterious MIT professor who had "just visited" and "asked for the exact same document." Thomas had positioned much of his project on the almost unbelievable fact that there wasn't a scholarly, book-length history of the elm, so when thesis advisor handed him a leaflet describing a symposium related to the MIT author's new elm history, he didn't take the news well.

"This was rather like getting sucker-punched!" Thomas says. After recovering from the blow, he recast his project and, hopefully, eventual book, as an illustrated history of the tree. Despite completing his grant, and filing 300-plus pages of manuscript with advisor Bob McCullough, lecturer in historic preservation, he's still acquiring elm images.

As an older student with professional experience in his field, some aspects of the SUGR/FaMe process – developing a proposal, applying for and receiving a grant, writing a long manuscript, working closely with faculty – were familiar to Thomas. But the extensive archive work, he says, "has definitely built my skills. With every project, you always get better, you always discover where more things are." And his inquiry has reminded him, once again (Thomas has a 15-month-old daughter), of the importance of flexibility.

He's already recast the project once, after the sucker-punch. Now he's trying to find time to reorganize his project as he balances his job, family and thesis research – this blow, alas, he more or less walked right into. Thomas and advisor McCullough disagreed about how to organize the project during the entire process, Thomas stubbornly clinging to his vision throughout. Now, with work completed and the grant expired, Thomas has decided that McCullough was essentially right.

"He was honest. I rebelled against his opinion, and finally I came around and changed my mind," Thomas says.

This may not be the kind of outcome that the faculty mentoring grants are intended to produce. Or it just may be *exactly* what they should do.

John Thomas's Favorite Burlington Elms

Thomas likes the remaining elm on the University Green, which he says was saved by "chemotherapy of sorts" during the 1970s. (See image above.) He's also partial to the tree in front of Ethan Allen Park on North Avenue. But his favorite is on Bayview Street in Burlington's Hill Section.

For more on student research and the SUGR/FaMe project (and Thomas), see [this Vermont Quarterly story](#).

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Best of the UVM Web

By Kevin Foley

UVM's webspace is vast – more than 86,000 pages – and popular – just last week, there were 104,666 unique visitors, probably more people than ever read Tina Brown's defunct *Talk* magazine.

Fueled by coffee and a desire to provide great reader service, *the view's* staff looked at each and every one of those pages (with about 85,000 unfortunate exceptions) to bring you our look at the "best" – or at least the most popular, unusual, noteworthy or appealing sites at UVM.edu. Surf on!

One note: To avoid opening dozens of windows on your screen a la commercial sites like Yahoo! (the X-10 camera page is *not* one of our top picks), following the links below will replace *the view* on your screen. To return here, use your browser's back button.

Best of the Division of Shameless Commerce

Yes, at UVM (not *Car Talk*) And no, cynics, we're not talking about the [Sponsored Programs](#) pages and grant-writing resources. UVM's Web shows that we trade in more than just ideas here. There's the [Surplus Property Site](#), for starters. And best of all, [Deals and Discounts](#) for faculty and staff. (Here's a deal you don't have to link to: According to [UVM Today](#), Borders is offering all UVM faculty and staff 25 percent off for both personal and institutional purchases April 25-28.)

Best Teaching Sites

We're fond of Huck Gutman's [Modern Poetry Pages](#) and Thomas Streeter's [Media Semiotics Tutorial](#) – read them in that order lest you crush the butterfly under the theoretical iron – but we'll go with the [old barns](#). Yes, barns. Almost everything you need to know about the care and feeding of your local declining icon of Vermontiana is right here.

Best Low and High Culture Sites

The most trafficked Zoo homepage (and one of the most popular sites in all of UVM) belongs to undergrad Kelvin Sherlock, who [offers](#) just about everything you'd need for a dorm-room Bob Dylan hootenany, besides a beat-up acoustic. But Classics Professor Z. Phillip Ambrose also has an extremely well-traveled site, with his resources and translations for [singing Bach](#).

Speaking of Dylan

Charles Howe must disagree with all that "you don't need a weatherman to know which way the wind blows" stuff, because [his page](#) serves up megabytes of meteorological data from his home weather station and many others.

Best Expression of an Obscure Interest

Dennis Clougherty, associate professor of physics, tempted us with his [Buckyball](#). We also dug [this student's paen to the Audi 80](#) (so do thousands of visitors from all over the world) but we'll go with undergrad Ashley Cross's furry electronic tribute to [Cats, Cats, Cats](#). We can't say why; something about it just makes us smile.

Best Webcams

Forget the [Proctor Sugarhouse](#) – there's something actually to see. Sometimes, anyway. We'll go with Proctor's view of [Mt. Mansfield](#), which changes only when the weather does. The glacial pace of the camera reminds us of those 12-hour Andy Warhol movies, but with prettier subject matter. As an honorable mention, check out the [Green Cam](#) – it's great for watching the traffic stuck on

[The Singing Theoretician](#)

When grad student Marisa Debowsky isn't studying graph theory and combinatorics, she's singing and, sometimes, lying about her age.

[Farewell to Elms](#)

"It was almost like crack cocaine, this tree," says John Thomas, graduate student in history, describing the American elm—the once ubiquitous, now decimated shade source.

[Weighty Research](#)

A recent national study recently revealed that students would prefer to marry an embezzler, a cocaine user or a shoplifter than someone obese. Psychology Professor Esther Rothblum is not surprised.

South Prospect when you're stuck in the office.

The Lights Are On, But No One's Home

The students in this [Virtual Reality Campus Tour](#) (warning: you may need to download additional software to view this page properly) never move. They just sit on bench and bicycle, talking and talking and taking in the eternal UVM fall.

Best Bet-Settler

OK, so you probably don't argue over exactly which campus building John Purple Howard funded. But if Thomas Visser isn't handy, you could check this [Historic Timeline](#) of UVM buildings for more than you ever wanted to know about our fair campus. (The [campus history scrapbook](#) is cool, too.)

Best Animal, Vegetable, Mineral

The animal has to be the [Charlotte Whale](#), of course. We'll leave the mineral where it belongs, with the [Geology Department](#). For vegetable (and flowers and deciduous trees and flowers), the [Master Gardening Pages](#) are the inevitable pick.

Best Meta-Pages

Obviously, there's the indispensable [UVM A-to-Z](#) (thanks Meredith!). But you knew about that. A fun toy for charting the wilds of UVM's vast webspace is the [Community Page](#), which tells you who has a homepage and where it is.

Best Pages to make you Want and Not Want to Go Outside

A visit to the [Digital Archive of Human-Induced Landscape Change](#) is enough to keep us inside for weeks. Wesley Wright's [SKIYT-L: The Vermont Skiing Discussion List Base Camp](#) is considerably more inspiring.

Best Place for Plants to Grow

Flower guru and extension Professor Leonard Perry offers a wealth of gardening information and multi-media at his alliterative [Perry's Perennial Page](#).

Best Display of Initiative

OK, most undergraduates so inclined have M.C. Escher *posters*. (Yes, even now.) But recent alum Matt Storer built a [Whole Gallery](#) (er, "shrine"). You have to like that.

Thanks to Meredith Woodward King of the UVM Web Team, who did more work on this story than I did. The silly jokes are mine, the useful site links are hers.

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UVM HOMEPAGE

Rothblum Weighs In

By Lynda Majarian

A national study recently cited in *The New York Times* revealed that students would prefer to marry an embezzler, a cocaine user or a shoplifter than someone obese.

From fashion to fitness, fat is out. Men wearing nothing but rock-hard abs and their Calvin Kleins and women who haven't eaten solid food in a decade stare hungrily at us from the pages of glossy magazines, on television and movie screens. Rich, famous and most important, thin, they are the American epitome of beauty.

Warming weather brings out our biggest fears. As we try to fit summer clothes over winter weight gain, the very idea of suiting up at the beach or local pool might seem unfathomable. Looking to shed those extra pounds in a hurry, we might contemplate the Zone, or the Atkins Plan, or good old Slimfast.

But what if we don't need to change?

Psychology professor Esther Rothblum, who has done extensive research on the stigma associated with weight, says the question obese people need to ask is not "Should I go on a diet?" but "Can I accept myself even if society doesn't?"

In a country where more than half the population is considered overweight and nearly 18 percent obese, studies indicate that weight may draw more open and widespread discrimination than race, age or gender.

"There is a misconception that fat people are unhealthy," Rothblum says. She notes that diets usually don't work, and yo-yo dieting is associated with some of the same health problems attributed to obesity, including diabetes and high blood pressure.

"Medical studies show that women live longer than men, but you wouldn't tell a man to have a sex change operation," she reasons.

Yet it's legal in most states to tell someone he or she is too fat to be hired, says Rothblum, whose research has shown a direct correlation between obesity and employment discrimination and poverty.

Being fat not only makes people downwardly mobile, according to Rothblum's research, but also unpopular. Rothblum suggests we tune out the barrage of messages telling us thin is in. She notes that the economy "has much to lose if women stop focusing on their weight," in spheres ranging from the fashion and food industries to publishing and politics.

Just as corsets and foot-binding went out of fashion, Rothblum hopes that anorexic models will become another anachronism.

"It's interesting to note when women are most vocal about seeking power it is most fashionable for them to be smaller and take up less space," she says. The women's suffrage movement in the 1920s coincided with the coltish flapper look, for instance, and the 1970s ushered in the age of Twiggy and her skinny super-model sisters.

So what is a fat person to do? "Nothing," Rothblum says. "Society as a whole has to change its bias, which it is beginning to do slowly." It's becoming easier

[The Singing Theoretician](#)

When grad student Marisa Debowsky isn't studying graph theory and combinatorics, she's singing and, sometimes, lying about her age.

[Farewell to Elms](#)

"It was almost like crack cocaine, this tree," says John Thomas, graduate student in history, describing the American elm—the once ubiquitous, now decimated shade source.

[Surfing Safari](#)

Our picks of the "best" – or at least most interesting, unusual or useful – Web pages at UVM.

to find clothing in larger sizes, for instance. And the ranks are swelling in the National Association to Advance Fat Acceptance, whose members remind us that "' Fat' is not a four-letter word."

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