Dear Friends of German and Russian,

Unbelievably, the winter holidays are almost upon us so it is high time to send you an update on the news and activities from our Department. It has been a busy and productive year with lots of good reasons for celebration.

Our students continue to succeed academically and professionally. Two of our graduating German students received Fulbright Teaching Assistantships to Austria, and one student received a Fulbright Research Grant to Germany. Another of our recent graduates received an internship with the Congress/Bundestag exchange. Several of our recent Russian graduates have accepted very exciting positions that allow them to use their Russian. We again have a number of German and Russian students studying abroad, and have heard from a number of them about their incredibly rich cultural experiences. Please be sure to read more about our students’ successes in the back of this newsletter.

The fall semester sees the entire Department in action. Wolfgang Mieder is teaching his popular Proverbs course; Dennis Mahoney took the occasion of Richard Wagner’s 200th birthday to offer a course on the composer, which he is team-teaching with Professor Tom Simone from the English Department. I myself will have the exciting opportunity to co-teach a course with Professor Rae Nishi, Director of the Neuroscience Graduate Program, called “The Texture of Memory.” Theria Hoeck, Kate Kenny, and Adriana Borra round off our offerings on the German side. Kevin McKenna, Kat Scollins and Elena Carter are in charge of our continuously-growing Russian Program. Gideon Bavly has also succeeded in growing enrollment in his second-year Hebrew course and is working hard to continue this trend. Brian Minier, our office coordinator, has settled into his position and our office runs as smoothly as in Janet’s times.

We do miss Primus-Heinz Kucher from the University of Klagenfurt in Austria, who joined our Department for the spring semester as a Visiting Fulbright Professor. His contribution to the intellectual climate of our Department was tremendous; he gave two university-wide lectures, one on Ida Pfeiffer, the first woman to travel around the world, and the second one on post-Holocaust adaptations of Lessing’s Nathan der Weise. He also gave a presentation on Klagenfurt and its depiction in Austrian literature, which was particularly tailored to our intermediate German students. His lectures and classes notwithstanding, what we miss most about Primus-Heinz are the many literary discussions over coffee at the Waterman Café. They were not only stimulating, but so much fun that we vowed to continue them.

Last year was very busy in terms of lectures. In addition to Primus-Heinz Kucher, our guest lecturers included Bettina Matthias, Chair of German at Middlebury College, who gave a side-splitting talk on the German comedian Lorjo, aka Vicco von Bülow, and Jeffrey Champlin of Bard College, who spoke on Hannah Arendt. Our 24th annual Harry H. Kahn Memorial Lecture was presented by Christine Becker, who gave a talk on the life and literary legacy of her late husband, German author Jurek Becker. We were also lucky enough to be able to host our former student, Doug Smith, who spoke about his new book Former People: The Final Days of the Russian Aristocracy, which had just been very favorably reviewed in the New York Times Book Review. Another successful Russian event was the lecture by Ukrainian writer and translator Alla Perminova on the effects of the 2012 Russian Language Law in Ukraine. Finally, in conjunction with the Rubinstein School on Environment and Natural Resources, we co-sponsored a lecture by Ingo Mose on parks and protected areas in Germany.

Congratulations are in order to Kat Scollins, who passed her college-level review with flying colors, and to Adriana Borra, who was promoted to senior lecturer. Wolfgang Mieder has been named University Distinguished Professor, an honor that is bestowed on just ten members of the University of Vermont faculty. Later this semester, Professor Mieder will be travelling to Athens, Greece to accept his Honorary Doctorate from the University of Athens. In true Mieder fashion he wanted to share his good fortune and, together with his wife, Dr. Barbara Mieder, established a Green and Gold Professorship for the Department of German and Russian. Dennis Mahoney is the first recipient of this Professorship.

The current fall semester started as busily as the spring semester ended. We hosted an international conference on Exile Studies, which was a great success. Classes are going well and we are planning a number of lectures and events both for our students and the greater community. Please continue to share your good news with us – it is always a pleasure to hear from you! I will close by thanking you for your continued support of our departmental gift fund, which makes all of these great lectures and departmental events possible.

All the best,

[Signature]

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Once again, Kate had a remarkable experience teaching English as a second language to a group of young adults in Japan. She liked it greatly!

After coming back from Russia, she participated in the Kanazawa project while living in Turin, Italy and Regensburg, Germany. The months flew by with new modern plays in the theater, Zoshchenko's house-museum, and seeing new modern plays in the theater. She immensely enjoyed visiting the Hermitage, Anna Akhmatova's museum, and Mikhail Zoshchenko's house-museum, as well as seeing new modern plays in the theater and reading modern Russian poetry.

Kate Kenny had the opportunity to visit with a number of present, past, and future participants of the exchange program between UVM and the University of Augsburg. While in Augsburg, she also took part in the doctoral dissertation defense of a former student there and also delivered a lecture on the novel *Ahnung und Gegenwart* by Joseph von Eichendorff as part of a series on Great Works of Literature. The lecture was taped by the Bayrischer Rundfunk and will be shown on German television later this fall. Earlier in the summer, he worked on his translation of this German Romantic novel, which he hopes to have completed by 2015, in commemoration of the two-hundredth anniversary of its publication.

After being promoted to Senior Lecturer, Adriana Borra enjoyed, as usual, her long summer in Europe: starting with a short trip to Paris and attending the AATI conference in Strasbourg she spent most of her time in Italy and Germany. The months flew by with family reunions, short trips and good reads. It’s wonderful to be back in the classroom now but she is also looking forward to a full sabbatical in 2014/15 when she will work on a new dictionary project while living in Turin, Italy and Regensburg, Germany.

Elena Carter divided her time this summer between Russia and America. In Russia, she spent a fabulous time with her relatives in her native town of Cherepovets and with her friends in Saint Petersburg. She immensely enjoyed visiting the Hermitage, Anna Akhmatova’s museum, and Mikhail Zoshchenko’s house-museum, as well as seeing new modern plays in the theater and reading modern Russian poetry.

Kevin McKenna had the rare honor of being presented by his good friend and colleague, Wolfgang Mieder, with a festschrift volume of his essays that he has published over the years on the topic of Russian proverbs. Coming as a total surprise in honor of his 65th birthday, he was presented this volume (Peter Lang Publishers) at a wonderful departmental reception held in his honor at Barbara and Wolfgang Mieder’s home last May. Professor McKenna and his wife, Marcy, began their summer by joining the Mieders on a bike-ride through the Dolomite Mountains in Northern Italy, the first day of which presented snow and temperatures in the low 40s. Back home, he returned to research and writing on his book, *The Role of Russian Proverbs in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s Fictional and Publicistic Writing* as well as writing a paper to be delivered this January at the Departmental reception held in his honor at Barbara and Wolfgang Mieder’s home last May. Professor McKenna and his wife, Marcy, began their summer by joining the Mieders on a bike-ride through the Dolomite Mountains in Northern Italy, the first day of which presented snow and temperatures in the low 40s. Back home, he returned to research and writing on his book, *The Role of Russian Proverbs in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s Fictional and Publicistic Writing* as well as writing a paper to be delivered this January at
the National Meeting of the American Association of Teachers of Slavic and East European Languages (AATSEEL): “Beauty Will Save the World: Didacticism and the Proverb in Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s Nobel Prize Speech.” In addition, Professor McKenna researched and wrote an article that will be published in the upcoming issue of Proverbium: Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship, “Parabasis in Nikolay Gogol’s The Inspector General: The Proverbial-Epigraph.” In July, he taught a course for the Continuing Education College: “Leo Tolstoy’s Anna Karenina.” Also over the summer months, Professor McKenna was honored with an invitation by the Russian Academy of Sciences to deliver a lecture at its international conference to be held this coming April in St. Petersburg: Alexander Nevsky: Fate, Age, Heritage—A Conference Dedicated to the 750th Anniversary of His Death. His paper will be delivered in Russian with a title of: “Паремиология и фильм: историческая роль русских пословиц в фильме Сергея Эйзенштейна, Александра Невский.” Finally, Professor McKenna was named to sit on the Editorial Board for a Russian sociology journal: Социальные явления/ Social Phenomena (published by the Samara State University Department of International Relations [Russia] and the Oxford Russian Foundation). The first issue of this journal will appear this winter.

Wolfgang Mieder As always, Prof. Wolfgang Mieder was able to combine professional matters with personal enjoyments during the summer. In early summer he traveled with his wife and his Russian colleague Prof. Kevin McKenna and his wife to Venice, Italy. After a day in that fascinating city, they all went up to the Dolomites for a solid week of bicycling in that beautiful area of the world. In July Prof. Mieder traveled to Germany to present a lecture on the proverbial rhetoric of President Barack Obama at the University of Leipzig and another talk on the proverbial language of Friedrich Nietzsche at the Institute of the German Language in Mannheim. At Leipzig, where Prof. Mieder was born almost seventy years ago, his ninety-three-year old godmother attended his lecture – an unforgettable experience indeed. Subsequently the Mieders spent three days at the Cape visiting friends. There was also time to play a few games of golf during the summer, to take walks on their land with their two Labrador dogs, and to work in the garden and on the land. In addition to these activities, Prof. Mieder made considerable progress on his book concerning the use of proverbs and proverbial expressions by the two American feminists Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Susan B. Anthony. His work on the proverbial rhetoric of Germany’s former chancellor Willy Brandt also kept him busy. But after a great summer, Prof. Mieder was eager to once again teach his lecture course on “The Nature and Politics of Proverbs” that gives him the opportunity to let students partake in his life’s work on the world of proverbs.

Brian Minier turned forty last spring. His feelings on this matter are best summed up by Dostoevsky’s Underground Man: “Мне теперь сорок лет, и ведь сорок лет - это вся жизнь; ведь это самая глубокая старость. Дальше сорока лет жить неприлично, пошло, безнравственно! Кто живет дольше сорока лет, - отвечайте искренно, честно? Я вам скажу, кто живет: дураки и негодяи живут.” (“I’m now forty, and after all forty is an entire lifetime, it really is extreme old age. It isn’t done to live beyond forty, it’s vulgar and immoral. Who lives beyond forty, give me an honest answer? I’ll tell you who does: fools and good-for-nothings.”) He also took his kids on a roadtrip to Michigan for his family’s annual Independence Day reunion. His intellectual pursuits consist of trying to re-read the classics of Russian literature each morning before the children wake up, and undoing the damage his son’s curiosity does to household electronic devices.

Helga Schreckenberger enjoyed her customary trip to Austria at the beginning of the summer where she did research at the Stadtbibliothek Wien. In July, she traveled to Portsmouth, United Kingdom to present a paper at a conference on Memory and Trauma. Adding one day, she was able to explore the Isle of Wight and its beautiful sand beaches. On her birthday in August, she and her family went down the Smugglers Notch zip lines, which included rappelling down two very tall trees.

Kathleen Scollins is pleased to be back in the classroom after a busy summer of family, research, and travel, trying to keep up with her brilliant and energetic students. She spent much of the summer with her husband Brian and their two children (ages 4 and 8) gardening, exploring the Northeast (including New Hampshire, Maine, and one sweltering weekend in New York City), and rereading some long-forgotten classics in anticipation of this semester’s new course on Russian and Soviet literature of the 20th century. After presenting two scholarly papers last year on Gogol’s Petersburg tales at conferences in New Orleans and Madison, Wisconsin, it was a refreshing change of pace to spend the summer writing on one of Pushkin’s most analyzed short stories; the resulting paper, “Gambling Away the Petri-mony: Rival Modes of Social Advancement in Pushkin’s ‘The Queen of Spades’” will be presented at this year’s AATSEEL conference in Chicago. And although she will certainly miss teaching, she is already looking forward to next semester’s research leave, during which she will work on her manuscript on the early-19th-century Petersburg literary tradition.

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2013 Departmental Awards

Galina Mesko (Outstanding Senior in German), Professor Dennis Mahoney and Geoff Wilson (Outstanding Senior in Russian) at the College of Arts and Sciences’ Honors Ceremony in Ira Allen Chapel.

Awards for German:

1st year: Alexandria Hall
2nd year: Michael Hart
German 103 (Composition and Conversation): Samantha Leopold
German 121 (19th Century Culture and Civilization): Amanda Wassel
German 156 (German Literature in Context II): John Fernan
German 202 (Expository Writing): Jonas Gray
German 281 (19th Century Prose): Emily Stoneking
German 282 (Imagining America in Austrian Literature and Culture): Aidan Holding
German 296 (The Art of Translation): David Lenz
German House: Bruce Barger

Awards for Russian:

1st year: Tatiana Rumsey
2nd year: Nicholas Chlebak
Russian 101 (Phonology): Nicholas Chlebak
Russian 121 (Composition and Conversation): Jackson Taymans
Russian 141 (Reading Comprehension): Kieran Ficken
Russian 222 (20th Century Culture and Civilization): Geoffrey Wilson
Russian House: Kristen Rousse

Awards for Hebrew:

Introductory Hebrew: Nestor Alburquerque
Advanced Hebrew: Stephanie Goldberg
Kevin McKenna

Professor McKenna’s article “A Village Cannot Stand Without a Righteous Person: A Paremiological Analysis of Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s Matryonin Dvor,” appeared in Valery Mokienko: A Festschrift of Essays in Honor of His 70th Birthday, ed. by Harry Walter. The article analyzes the function of proverbs for the formal and thematic structure of Solzhenitsyn’s short story.

Professor McKenna published the article “The Tolstoy ‘Connection’: Aleksandr Solzhenitsyn’s In the First Circle through the Prism of Peasant Proverbs in War and Peace and Anna Karenina” in Proverbium 30 (2013). Professor McKenna points to the figure of a Russian peasant who appears in both the works of Solzhenitsyn and Tolstoy and whose folksy wisdom and speech serve as a commentary on the protagonists’ existential search.

A festschrift in honor of Professor McKenna’s sixty-fifth birthday entitled Russkie Poslovitsy. Russian Proverbs in Literature, Politics, and Pedagogy, appeared under the editorship of Professor Mieder. The volume contains fourteen of Professor McKenna’s essays examining the use of proverbs in literary works, Russian politics, and Russian media. Three of the essays also consider the use of proverbs in Russian language curriculum and their inclusion in Russian language textbooks. The festschrift provides both an overview of Professor McKenna’s accomplishments as a scholar of proverbs, and an informed introduction to the field of Russian proverbs.

Wolfgang Mieder

Professor Mieder’s extended version of his presentation “Beating Swords into Plowshares: Proverbial Wisdom on War and Peace” was included in the Proceedings of the Fifth Interdisciplinary Colloquium on Proverbs, 6th to 13th November 2011, at Tavira, Portugal. The article traces the use of the proverbs “He who lives by the sword shall perish by the sword” (Matthew 26:52) and “To beat swords into plowshares” (Isaiah 2:4) in the writings of public figures like George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Harry S. Truman, Winston S. Churchill, Abigail Adams, Frederick Douglass and Martin Luther King.

Professor Mieder, in conjunction with Dr. Andreas Nolte, published “Zu meiner Hölle will ich den Weg mit guten Sprüchen pflastern”. Friedrich Nietzsche’s sprichwörtliche Sprache. The book documents over 5,000 contextualized examples of Nietzsche’s use of proverbs or proverbial expressions, testifying to the importance of proverbial language for the philosopher’s work both stylistically and thematically. Dr. Nolte received his M.A. in German at the University of Vermont. The cover of the book was designed by German major Brienne T oomey.


Professor Mieder published volume 30 of Proverbium. Yearbook of International Proverb Scholarship. Included in the volume is his article “My Tongue—is of the People: The Proverbial Language of Friedrich Nietzsche’s Thus Spoke Zarathustra.” Professor Mieder points to Nietzsche’s many uses of biblical and folk proverbs and argues that while these proverbs are used to underscore Nietzsche’s break with Christianity and God, they also contribute to his poetic style. The volume also contains two bibliographies on international proverb scholarship compiled by Professor Mieder.

Professor Mieder is the editor of Johann Ludwig Burckhardt’s Arabische Sprichwörter oder die Sitten und Gebräuche der neueren Ägypter erklärt aus den zu Kairo umlaufenden Sprichwörtern. The book is a reprint of the 1834 edition and includes an introduction by Professor Mieder as well as a bibliography on Burckhardt, his writings, and on Arabian proverb collections.

Professor Mieder is the author of “Making a Way Out of No Way’. Martin Luther King’s Proverbial Dream for Human Rights” which appeared in Aspekte der historischen Phraseologie und Phraseographie, edited by Natalia Filatkina, Anne Kleine-Engel, Marcel Dräger, and Harald Burger. Professor Mieder argues that Martin Luther King used proverbs to connect human rights to universal and spiritual values.

Professor Mieder published “Neues von Sisyphus.” Sprichwörtliche Mythen der Antike in moderner Literatur, Medien und Karikaturen. In this book, Professor Mieder demonstrates the reoccurrence of classical myths in the reduced forms of proverbs and colloquialisms. Professor Mieder explains the mythos behind each proverb or colloquial expression and documents their use in literature, newspaper articles and cartoons.

Professor Mieder delivered the keynote address entitled “Jeder ist sich selbst der Fernste’. Zur Sprichwörtlichkeit in Friedrich Nietzsches Die fröhliche Wissenschaft” at the conference of Germanists on October 4, 2012, at the University of Helsinki in Helsinki, Finland.

Helga Schreckenberger

Professor Schreckenberger published „Ingeborg Bachmann’s Radio Play Ein Geschäft mit Träumen in the context of Post-War Austria“ in „Die Waffen nieder! Lay down your weapons!” Ingeborg Bachmanns Schreiben gegen den Krieg, ed. by Karl Ivan Solibakke and Karina von Tippelskirch. Professor Schreckenberger argues that Ingeborg Bachmann’s radio play critically references Austria’s postwar desire to suppress the memories of the war and the country’s complicity with the Nazi regime.

Professor Schreckenberger is the author of “Communism, Immigration and the Necessity of Faith: Dimitré Dinev’s Engelzisingen” which appeared in Modern Austrian Prose Volume II, ed. by Paul F. Dvorak. Professor Schreckenberger reads Dinev’s novel, which covers the story of three generations of two Bulgarian families, as an exploration of the damaging impact of two extreme political situations—a totalitarian regime and migration—on individual identity, on language and communication, on family, and on relationships.
Wolfgang Mieder

Dean Cepeda-Benito recently announced that Wolfgang Mieder, Professor of German, has been awarded the rank of University Distinguished Professor. This recognition is reserved for up to ten of UVM’s most prominent faculty members in recognition of their outstanding disciplinary contributions. The rank of University Distinguished Professor is a career appointment and Wolfgang will become the eighth UVM faculty member to hold the title, the third one from CAS, and the first one representing the Humanities.

Says Cepeda-Benito, “Wolfgang is very deserving of this honor. Scholars attribute to him several seminal theoretical and applied contributions to his work on folklore and proverbs.” Most recently, Wolfgang’s series on the rhetoric of heads of state and social leaders (e.g., The Proverbial Abraham Lincoln, 2000, and other proverbial book-length studies of Harry Truman, Martin Luther King, Winston Churchill, Charles Dickens, and Barack Obama) has transformed the minor genres of folklore into major evidence of worldview, consciousness, performance, practice, and social interaction in art, literature, politics, philosophy, and history. Scholars also credit Wolfgang with introducing the critical concept of the paremiological minimum (a minimal set of sayings, the learning of which is necessary for the understanding of any language, whether native or foreign). Here, Wolfgang went beyond the purely linguistic aspects of proverbial texts to establish the fact that for any text to qualify as a proverb, the text must have (or have had) some currency (broad and impactful use) for a substantial period of time, which in turn demonstrates the central role proverbs play in the formation and understanding of cultures (Paremiological Minimum and Cultural Literacy, 1995). There are other important contributions attributed to Wolfgang, including his coining the anti-proverb (Twisted Wisdom: Modern Anti-Proverbs, 1982), as well as Wolfgang’s seminal studies of the popular adaptation of classic fairy tales and his comparative historical expositions of legends and poems; and the list goes on. With over 200 books, 450 articles, 120 reviews, and 325 invited addresses worldwide, Wolfgang might well be the most prolific scholar on the planet.

In addition, to highlight his pre-eminence (i.e., Wolfgang is the first scholar to receive the three highest, most prestigious world-wide awards for folklore studies: the Pitrè International Folklore Prize, the Europäischer Märchenpreis, and the Lifetime Achievement Award from the American Folklore Society), Dean Cepeda-Benito says, “I want to conclude pointing out his day-to-day, year-after-year, consistent contributions. Note that Wolfgang achieved pre-eminence while being department chair for most of his career; while being a tremendous teacher and mentor to both students and colleagues; and while serving, contributing, and participating in shared governance and university life for the benefit of the Department of German and Russian, CAS, and UVM.”
LEFT: Professor Mahoney was selected as the first recipient of the Wolfgang and Barbara Mieder Green and Gold Professorship. Seen here after a lunch honoring Professor Mahoney are Professor Mieder, Professor Mahoney, Dean Cepeda-Benito and Professor Schreckenberger.

BELOW: Professor Mahoney delivered a lecture on Eichendorff’s novel, Ahnung und Gegenwart, which will be shown on Bavarian television (BR-alpha) on Thursday, December 12th at 5:15, German time.

RIGHT: While in Augsburg, Professor Mahoney met up with department students and alumni. Pictured are (from left to right) Jonas Gray, Anna-Lisa Kraller, Professor Mahoney, Anna Olson, and Evan Groetch. Charlie Dan Sheffy was behind the camera.
Alumni News

Dan Cawley (Russian major, 2012) is in the middle of his first year as a Peace Corps officer, working near the Chinese border in a remote village populated by a mix of Kyrgyz, Dungans, Uyghurs and Russians. By all reports Dan is having quite an experience in his Peace Corps job and is grateful for the opportunity to advance his Russian language skills as well as to learn so much more about other nationalities in the area.

Ross Cunningham (Russian/Economics double-major, 2011) is completing his final year of law school at George Washington University and reports that his command of Russian has proved most helpful in his work internships in Washington, D.C. Ross worked for the Justice Department's Office of Overseas Prosecutorial Development, where he was part of a team tasked with providing rule-of-law assistance to post-Soviet countries (particularly Georgia, Kyrgyzstan, and Ukraine). He had lots of interaction with Russian-speaking diplomats and even had the opportunity to meet the President of Kyrgyzstan during his visit to Washington. In addition, Ross worked for Transparency International, and at the U.S. Department of Commerce doing international legal development work. He has passed the Foreign Service exam and is considering that as an option following his graduation from law school this May.

Kirsti Dahly (Russian major, 2011) accepted a position as Coordinator of Russian Exhibits and Special Events for the Russia/America Foundation in New York City. Katie Boynton (Russian major, 2012), joined Kirsti this summer at the same Foundation, before heading off to the Russian translation/interpreting program at the Monterrey Institute for International Studies.

Beka Foley (Russian major, 2013) is now employed in Paris, where she is a Production Assistant for a French Film and Television Company that is creating commercials for Google Maps. Beka recently spent a week’s vacation in St. Petersburg, a city to which she has wanted to travel for quite a while.

David Lenz (German/Business Administration double-major, 2013) received an internship with the Congress/Bundestag exchange.

Megan Luttrell (Russian major, 2010) completed her M.A. degree in Russian Literature at the University of Kansas this past May and is now enrolled in the first semester of her Ph.D. program there.

Svetlana Mikheyeva (Russian major, 2013) is waiting to hear where the Peace Corps will post her. All indications suggest it will be in an area of the former USSR.

Jack Minich (German/Political Science double-major, 2012) and Galina Mesko (German major, 2013) are the recipients of Fulbright Teaching Assistantships to Austria.

Sam Mishcon (Russian major, 2011) is completing his final year as a Peace Corp officer, working in Tbilisi, Georgia where he is advancing his spoken skills both in Russian and the Georgian languages. Upon completion of his two-year term, Sam plans to enroll in a Russian Studies graduate program in the U.S.

Brian Olsen (Russian/Geography double-major, 2008) has been selected by the U.S. Olympic Committee’s Advisory Council to manage the U.S. athlete lounge at the upcoming Sochi Winter Olympic Games that begin this February. Brian is no newcomer to the Olympics: an Olympic athlete himself, he skied on the U.S. Biathlon team in the 2004 Olympic Games. Brian will be in charge of a Russian crew this February, working to assist American athletes in the Games.

Tanya Sherman (Russian major, 2011) has been accepted into the M.A. and MBA Programs at the Monterrey Institute for International Studies (Monterrey, CA), where she is specializing in translation and localization management.

Allison Tompkins (Russian major, 2013) is now living in the St. Louis, MO. area, where she is employed as a Russian Specialist in the Office of Geo-Spatial Analysis for the U.S. Government.

Brienne Toomey (German/Environmental Studies double major, 2012) received a Fulbright Research Grant to Germany. She is currently conducting research in Berlin. She also published “Old Wisdom RE-Imagined: Proverbial Cartoons for University Students” in Proverbium 30 (2013), in which she examines the inclusion of proverbs and anti-proverbs in the University of Vermont student newspaper The Water Tower.

Student News

Erin Boyer, Rubin Goldberg, Adrianna Morris, and Julia Slessova attended the 2013 Russian Summer Program at Middlebury. Two first-year Russian students, Sameera Ibrahim (Mira) and Georgia Jackson (Sveta) have learned that they’ve been accepted into the Summer 2014 Middlebury Intensive Russian Language Program.

Stephen Casadonte, Quentin Sauvage, Julia Slessova, and Jackson Taymans are currently studying abroad at St. Petersburg University. While there, Jackson Taymans is doing volunteer work for LenFilm studios, primarily assisting with editing English translations.

Nicolas Chlebak will spend the spring 2014 semester studying Russian at Yaroslavl State University in Yaroslavl, Russia, which is Burlington's Sister City.

David Plotkin is writing a senior honors thesis entitled “Peter and the West: How Sergei Prokofiev’s Peter and the Wolf Expanded beyond its Folkloric Origins into an American Idiom.”

Gabriel Sheir will spend the spring 2014 semester studying Russian at Moscow State University with the SRAS Program.

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SPRINGFIELD — What makes Russian President Vladimir Putin tick and how will his country's hard-line stance on a recently passed anti-gay law affect the upcoming Winter Olympics in Russia? According to University of Vermont Professor Kevin McKenna, it could hurt Russia's image internationally, but it may boost his popularity among Russians.

McKenna, a Russian language, literature and culture professor, spoke to 40 students Thursday at the Springfield High School library. Putin, a former KGB officer, served his first term as president from 2000 to 2008 and is serving a second term from 2012 to the present.

Putin has been prominent in the news in recent months and McKenna discussed his rise to power and why he is in the international spotlight.

"Putin's desire is to return today's Russia to the level of visibility and prominence the Soviet Union held prior to 1991. (The Russians) loved that," McKenna said.

According to McKenna, Putin’s greatest interest is to host a successful Winter Olympics next February in the Russian city of Sochi. The last time Russia hosted the Olympic games was in 1980 at Moscow.

Putin would like to duplicate the same success Moscow had 34 years ago. But a controversial anti-discrimination law that Putin signed in June has caused an international uproar, one that the Russian president was trying to avoid.

According to McKenna, the law prohibits individuals, groups or organizations “to advocate or propagate information addressed to youth with respect to sexual preference.” McKenna believes the law will not only impact Russia’s image abroad but also strengthen Russian nationalism.

“Most Russians are fiercely nationalistic,” McKenna said. “What Putin has been advocating is that only the purists and positive values of anyone and anything Russian ... and there is a phenomenon for the last 40 years that associated homosexuals with prison populations.”

A Russian polling firm showed 75 percent of Russians support the anti-homosexual law. According to McKenna, the poll doesn’t reflect what Russians believe but is based on the experiences they have when a new culture is introduced to a nation with a strong sense of nationalism.

“What we see in Putin we don’t like. We tend to place more value on liberties and freedoms, whereas Russian people place a far higher value on something different — security,” McKenna said. “Liberalism has not fared well in Russia today. In the Russian mind-set, it was the liberals in the 1990s that brought in capitalism, democracy and destroyed Russia. So many Russians understand those in terms of their experiences, not in terms of what capitalism is and not in terms of what democracy really is.”

SHS senior Amanda Battiest said she wanted to learn more about Russian civil rights. Instead she learned more about how Russians interpret their own experiences and the laws that guide them.

“I think it’s true that a lot of Americans misinterpret the spirit of the law, but the important part is the implications,” Battiest said. “We can infer they’re implying it and I think that’s the issue. We’ll handle it eventually.”
Student Scholarship News

Aidan Holding was the recipient of a $1,000 Mieder Scholarship. CharlieDan Sheffy was the recipient of a $500 Mahoney-Nietsch Scholarship. Galina Mesko and Jack Minich received Fulbright Teaching Awards to Austria. David Lenz was awarded an internship with the Congress-Bundestag Youth Exchange Program (CBYX). Matthew Andrews received a $500 Study Abroad Scholarship.

Receiving $300 Study Abroad Scholarships were Hannah Doughty, Hannah Gibson, Ian Goodnow, Jonas Gray, William Harney, Andrew Lenz, John Mauran, Corey Pariseau, David Plotkin, and Will Sinkula.

Congratulations to our 2013 Graduates!!

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