

## **State of the Department: January 2018**

The calendar year 2017 was successful and enjoyable, but brought minimal changes for the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures. In our productivity indicators we continued to evidence efficient use of faculty resources. Our number of enrolled graduate students declined slightly, as several students achieved terminal degrees, while we increased our undergraduate majors. The faculty continued to produce scholarship that contributes to a greater understanding of our disciplines, and we organized and supported various events on campus that contributed to an enhanced intellectual climate.

For the past few years the department has focused efforts on increasing student credit-hour production and on using faculty resources prudently to support these efforts. While our student credit-hour measures declined slightly in 2017, they remain significantly higher than they were in the first two years after semester conversion despite the decline in the number of tenure-track faculty members. We had to expect a leveling off of recent increases since we have reached near capacity in many of our highest enrollment courses. While we experienced a slight decline in our lower-division language enrollments last spring versus the previous spring, our fall enrollments remained steady and equaled the figure from 2016. Our enrollment in other courses was slightly less than in 2016, but still substantially above years earlier in the decade. We graduated one more major in academic year 2016-2017 than in the previous year, and the number of declared majors has increased slightly as well. In the five years since semester conversion we have graduated 168 majors and 240 minors in German.

We continue to put effort into undergraduate recruitment to strengthen the major and the lower-division language program. We participated in several successful recruiting events, including German Day and German Career Day, and continue to contact prospective majors, as well as students who have taken German in high school and intend to matriculate at Ohio State.

We enrolled two new students in our graduate program, one at the MA level, one in the PhD program; in addition two visiting students from Dresden came to the department. Students in the program are of high quality and produce excellent work. ABDs participate once every term in a dissertation colloquium, in which they present portions of their dissertations for public discussion. During 2017 three students in GLL earned PhDs: Marcus Breyer, who wrote a dissertation on Eduard von Keyserling; Bethany Richetti, whose dissertation dealt with realism in painting and literature; and Simon Losch, who examined the function of America and the image of America in reunified Germany. Six students passed their MA examination this past year. With three students completing their dissertations and a few departures or “pauses” in the education of other students, the number of active graduate students fell this past year, but we are counting on a strong recruiting year to replenish the ranks. We have several outstanding applicants to the program, and we are confident that the new incoming class will be one of the best and largest in recent years.

2017 saw Matthew Birkhold awarded a University of Luzern fellowship, which enabled him to research in Switzerland during the summer, and Paul Reitter received the Berlin Prize which supports a semester at the American Academy in Berlin. Both Paul Reitter and Bernd Fischer were editors of volumes that appeared in 2017.

The budgetary situation in the department remains stable. We have permanent funding that allows us to field our curriculum for the major and for graduate studies, and to fund three or four courses in the general education curriculum. We are also able to grant one full-time sabbatical leave and one non-teaching semester on special assignment without having to request additional funds. With regard to language instruction we have sufficient College monies to offer six sections in each of the first three terms of our lower-division classes, as well as courses in individualized instruction. Most of our cash requests are refused by the College, but we are able to fund most of them using carryover from previous years. Our endowment and gift funds are small, but they do allow us to support students and programs in various essential ways. We are extremely grateful to those who have made this support possible.

Yiddish and Ashkenazic Studies continues to be a highly valued part of GLL. It was hampered this past fall by the absence of Professor Miller, but it continues to enroll students who are interested in Yiddish culture and literature; indeed, its enrollments in 2016-2017 showed a slight increase over the previous year. We now have three graduate students in the program, one who is simultaneously a graduate student in theater. Undergraduates continue to participate in the Vilnius program, where they learn Yiddish and receive an education in Ashkenazic traditions.

Enrollments in the Scandinavian program continue to hold fairly steady, evidencing continuing interest in Swedish language and medieval Norse literature and mythology. An infrequently-offered survey course enrolled well in Spring 2017, demonstrating that interest extends to Scandinavian topics beyond Sweden and the medieval North. One minor was just graduated last semester; four continue in the program. One student writing a senior thesis in History on a Scandinavian topic is enrolled for an independent study with Professor Kaplan.

GLL sponsored several important events in 2017. For the fourth year it organized in October the Ohio German Studies Workshop, which brings together faculty from across the state to exchange ideas and learn about each other's research and pedagogical activities. The previous April it sponsored the tenth annual Midwest Symposium in German Studies, a meeting of select scholars from major institutions who present ongoing research for discussion. GLL was also centrally involved with the Second Language Research Forum, which discusses state-of-the-art research on second language acquisition. The annual graduate student conference in March dealt with the provocative topic of "The Cyborg and the Undead." And this past fall GLL hosted a two-day program on the Graduate Experience in German, which attracted twenty prospective graduate students to Columbus, where they learned about graduate education in the field. We had two Luebeck lecturers in 2017, one in each academic year. Ian Buruma spoke on Germany, Japan, and the Age of Trump in April, while Dagmar Herzog presented on psychoanalysis and moral politics in post-Nazi Germany in November. The department also sponsored or co-sponsored lectures by Robert Pippin on Hegel, by Elisabeth Krimmer on German nurses during World War II, and by Shelley Frisch on translation. It was, indeed, a busy and stimulating year.

During 2017 we also completed our first online language course, and it should start enrolling students during the coming academic year.

GLL continues to be active in exchange programs. Although the Berlin exchange was discontinued, we welcomed this fall a Fulbright student from Austria in our department who teaches and takes courses. We have also established a firm relationship with the University of Bonn and will have our first faculty exchange this spring. Dr. Christian Meierhofer will be coming to Columbus to team teach with May Mergenthaler, who will then go to Bonn for teaching in May.

2017 also saw the selection and recognition of our initial distinguished alumnus, Ken Wilcox, who earned a PhD from OSU in 1977.

We look forward to an even more eventful and productive 2018.