

## **State of the Department: January 2016**

2015 has been another strong year for the Department of Germanic Languages and Literatures. Despite significant losses from our tenured ranks and the absence of three faculty members who were conducting research, our student numbers remain strong. We continued to excel in research as well, and we sponsored and organized many important events on the Ohio State campus.

We continue to have great success with our graduate program. This year we welcomed an outstanding cohort of seven new graduate students into our program. Three attended undergraduate institutions in the Midwest; another joins us from the University of Nottingham in England. Three of our new graduate students come from German institutions on exchange programs: one from the Free University (for one semester), two from the Technical University in Dresden (full-year). Although they usually return to Germany after the exchange period ends, last year one of our Dresden students applied to become a regular student in our program. This year there are indications that another Dresden student may be regularized, and our Berlin student has extended her stay for at least another term. Four students successfully defended their dissertations last year, three of whom are employed in academic positions outside of OSU and one of whom is with the Italian program at Ohio State. Two students completed their qualifying examinations for their doctoral degrees, and two finished their MA degrees.

Our undergraduate program has experienced difficulties in retaining the level of majors we had prior to the transition from quarters to semesters. Various factors have contributed to the decline, including the restriction on the number of credits students can take in a term, which reduces the possibility for double majoring. The vast majority of both majors and minors in German have majors in another department. We are placing special efforts this year on recruitment in the hopes of turning around our decline in majors, but we must recognize that all language departments have experienced similar losses since 2012. We are delighted to report that we have continued to increase our student credit hours, indicating that our courses are highly desirable for the undergraduate population. Despite a decrease in instructional faculty by 12.8% and general budget by 11%, our total credit hours since FY2013 have increased by 12.5%, and our spending per credit hour has decreased by over 20%. GLL has learned how to do more with less.

The program in Yiddish and Ashkenazic Studies continues to hold its own despite understaffing. Last year we reported that the special YASP committee had encouraged the program to connect with other units and move in interdisciplinary directions, but without additional faculty contributing to the program, it will be difficult to do anything more than maintain the courses and enrollments of the past few years.

The Scandinavian program continues to attract dedicated students. In the spring of 2016, we will offer fourth-semester Swedish for the first time in many years. Undoubtedly the highlight of the program in 2015 was the conference of the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies (SASS), which took place at Ohio State from May 6-9. The SASS is a small, but effective academic society focusing on interdisciplinary research in Nordic topics, past and present. It has around 400 members from colleges and universities across North America as well as in the Nordic countries. Several hundred scholars participated in the conference, which was a huge success. Our own Merrill Kaplan was one of the conference organizers.

Our department lost several members this past year to retirement and resignation. Kathryn Corl who supervised lower-division language instruction in the department for many years, and who won the Rodica C. Botoman Award for Distinguished Undergraduate Teaching and Mentoring in Humanities in 2005, retired after almost three decades on the faculty. Helen Fehervary, a scholar of twentieth-century literature whose career at Ohio State spanned four decades, also decided to enter the ranks of emeritus faculty. And Kai Hammermeister, who was a specialist in German intellectual and literary history, resigned his position to return to Germany. Coming on the heels of losses in the previous decade, the departure of three faculty members in a single year represents a significant reduction in instructional capacity. This year, however, the College has given GLL permission to search for a new faculty member at the level of assistant professor, the first position of this type we have received in many years.

GLL also experienced a significant loss when Ilse Maria Edse, who had taught in the Department from 1952 until her retirement in 1988, passed away. During her career in German she received numerous accolades, including the Bundesverdienstkreuz, the Distinguished Service Award, and the Ohioana Citation. Her name will continue to live in the department in the Ilse Maria Edse Scholarship given annually to an outstanding student majoring in German.

Faculty productivity was a bright point this past year. 2015 saw the publication of three single-authored books by members of GLL: Katri Byram's *Ethics and the Dynamic Observer Narrator*, Paul Reitter's *Bambi's Jewish Roots and Other Essays on German-Jewish Culture*, and Robert Holub's *Nietzsche's Jewish Problem*. A volume edited by Bernd Fischer and May Mergenthaler, *Cultural Transformations of the Public Sphere*, appeared last year as well. Paul Reitter and John Davidson, both recently promoted to full professor, delivered inaugural lectures in the College. And, as always, faculty members in GLL were invited lecturers and conference participants at important national and international venues.

GLL sponsored significant events during the past year. In the spring of 2015 we heard Louis Rose (Otterbein University) speak on Ernst Kris, Stefan Horlacher (Technische Universität Dresden) lecture on masculinity studies, and Sabine Doering (Universität Oldenburg) present on Hölderlin biographies. Mark L. Loudon (University of Wisconsin-Madison), the Luebeck lecturer for 2015, spoke on Pennsylvania Dutch. This fall we heard Maria Tatar (Harvard University) on "Little Red Riding Hood," James E. Young (UMass Amherst) on Memorials, and William C. Donahue (Notre Dame) on religion in realism. Besides the Society for the Advancement of Scandinavian Studies conference last May, the graduate student conference on Configurations of Human Bodies occurred in February, and the second annual Ohio German Studies Workshop took place in November.

Natascha Miller, our Academic Program Coordinator in GLL, and Katie Kotol, the Fiscal/Human Resources Manager for GLL, Slavic, and Comp Studies, have provided excellent service to our unit over the past year. Joining them early in 2015 was Fiscal Associate Kyle Schechter, who provides outstanding support for us in the accounting and budget areas.

We anticipate being joined by a new faculty colleague in the fall and welcoming back the three faculty members who have been on year-long leave this year. As chair of GLL, I have been delighted with the progress we have made on various fronts in 2015 and am proud of our many accomplishments. I look forward to a similarly productive 2016.