A MESSAGE FROM THE DEAN

The production of the School’s newsletter has become one of the most enjoyable moments in my annual “to do” list. The school year moves along at a dizzying pace with literally hundreds of courses to organize, dozens of lectures, conferences, events, and the recruitment and promotion of our faculty. The newsletter forms the pause for a moment to take stock of some of the remarkable achievements of our students and faculty and major new developments in the School that continue to thrive with the support of our alumni and friends. At some point, this newsletter may have to become a fully-fledged magazine, since the highlights only begin to tell the story of the School’s activities and accomplishments.

If there is one theme that connects the stories in the first half of the newsletter, it is the Arts, particularly the strides the School is making in building new alliances in Houston, Texas, and with some national partners. Last year, I reported on new collaborations with the two major art museums in Houston, the MFAH and the Museum of Fine Arts Houston, made possible with the support of Suzanne Deal Booth. These collaborations have been taken to a new level with the support of the Brown Foundations ten million dollar gift, which will enable us to create a new collaborative PhD program in Art History. The appointment of Jenny Strayer as the university’s first art curator, and the addition of Molly Hubbard to the School’s development team, means that Humanities is poised to utilize the study of the arts campuswide and connect us even closer to the arts community in Houston.

The Arts include creative writing. Justin Cronin has burst onto the front ranks of the literary scene with his multi-million dollar book contract. The attention is well-deserved and the Dunlevie summer writing fellowship program. Discussions are currently underway with Houston’s renowned literary organization, Inprint, as we explore possibilities for new collaborations that will benefit our students. Film and radio projects are part of the Arts initiative, as researchers launch new radio series in the humanities with NPR and start to build up the film program. The success of Stephen Feld ’08 and VMB Thompson ’05 points to the film talent among Rice undergraduates waiting for the right set of opportunities. Arrival at this artistic excitement, I do not want to lose sight of the continuing brilliant work of our scholars, be they senior scholars like April DeConick, whose work received international coverage this year, or extraordinarily promising new faculty like Claire Bowers. As I look over the page of new scholarly publications and prizes, I wish we could run a full page story on everyone of these superb faculty members.

This newsletter ends on a bittersweet note this year with the story of Alan Grob’s sudden loss. He has left a wonderful legacy, not only in his passionate support for the study of Shakespeare, but in the minds of so many of his colleagues and former students. It would also be nice to take note of the second annual Dietz prize given out this year in memory of a very young scholar whom we lost three years ago.

This newsletter is the work of many hands. My new assistant, Morgan Rudy, has overseen the entire production and has kept everyone, mostly me, on schedule. I would welcome your comments, questions, or suggestions. For the most recent news about the School of Humanities, please visit our website http://humanities.rice.edu. Thank you for your interest in the humanities at Rice University.

Gary Wihl, Dean
School of Humanities
The grant will fund graduate fellowships and foster a permanent collaboration of research partnership with the Museum of Fine Arts, Houston (MFAH) and The Menil Collection. The program will admit 5 doctoral students in the fall of 2009 and 5 additional students each year until they reach a total of 25, its maximum capacity.

The Brown Foundation, Inc. was founded in July 1951 by Herman and Margaret Root Brown and George R. and Alice Pratt Brown. Since its inception, the foundation has awarded more than $1.35 billion in grants through its fiscal year ending June 30, 2006. The foundation’s mission is to distribute funds for public charitable purposes, principally for support, encouragement and assistance to education, the arts and community services.

The Brown Foundation has been giving to Rice University since 1953, with grants to the university totalling $93 million.

"This wonderful grant from the Brown Foundation will enable Houston and Rice to take an important step toward the shared goal of assuring that our city is a great center for the arts and humanities," said Rice President David Leebron.

"I am immensely grateful to the trustees of the Brown Foundation for sharing our vision of a world-class level of partnership and collaboration among three of Houston’s great institutions. With the presence of doctoral students in the museums and the combined strengths of our faculty and the museum’s scholar-curators, we can look forward to publications on art that will match the range and depth of Houston’s unique art collections.

The doctoral program will benefit the museums by providing them with scholars and researchers to help support the development of their collections. Those scholars will also challenge them to continue to rethink emerging areas of importance in Latin American art, photography and American art.

"We are fortunate to have received the incredible support from the Brown Foundation and will use these funds to attract the very best students to Houston," said Joseph Manca, chair of the Department of Art History at Rice.
A Taste of Hollywood

Justin Cronin’s novel won’t debut for another two years, but it’s already caused quite a stir in the publishing and movie worlds.

Major movie studios began fighting for the rights to take the story to the silver screen soon after Cronin signed a multi-million-dollar book deal. Fox 2000 and Ridley Scott’s Scott Free Productions walked away the winners with a $1.75 million bid for the first book.

Rice English professor Justin Cronin has just inked a deal with powerhouse publisher Ballantine Books for the North American rights to a trilogy of post-apocalyptic vampire novels set 300 years in the future. New York magazine reported the deal with Ballantine, a division of Random House, to be worth $3.75 million.

Though the trilogy might be described as science-fiction, Cronin insists his work will find a home in many different genres. “People will call this what they want—science-fiction, speculative fiction, even vampirica l— and that’s fine.” Cronin said. This is ultimately a story about the most basic questions we ask as a society, and a species—what it means to be a human being, and who gets to be one.”

The idea for the trilogy was borne from a request from Cronin’s 10-year-old daughter, Iris, who asked him to write a book about a girl who saves the world. It chronicles the journey of an orphan girl who struggles to save humankind with her unusual powers to combat the viral epidemic.

“It is rare to find a novel that delivers so many things we look for in a book: intense plotting, exquisite writing, memorable characters and a tremendous vision and inspiration,” said Mark Towers, editor at Ballantine. “We’re really very excited about publishing this trilogy, which we know will appeal to a wide mainstream audience.”

Though the trilogy’s first installment won’t debut until the summer of 2009, it is already being hailed as a page-turner that combines the imaginative power of Stephen King’s “The Stand” and the headlong storytelling of Michael Crichton’s early novels.

This trilogy may seem like a departure from Cronin’s past works, but familiar themes emerge, such as love, friendship and sacrifice, and Cronin said that although the books will feel a little different than his other writings, the impulses that drove him to write this story are identical to those that have driven him in the past: “I simply wrote the book I wanted to write, the one that wanted to be written.”

With most of the first book written and succeeding volumes mapped out, Cronin still has much labor ahead of him. “It sounds like a lot of work, the 3,000 pages or so that the whole thing will encompass, but it’s good work and I’m grateful to have it,” Cronin said. “This has given me a real gift in allowing me to take a year off to give my full attention to the project.”

With the kind of recent success Cronin has earned, many writers would pack up their offices and quit their day jobs, but Cronin doesn’t see it that way. “I intend to return to the classroom where he teaches fiction writing,” said Cronin. “Teaching keeps me grounded.”

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Cronin is not sure yet how he will use this experience in the classroom, but he knows it will affect his teaching one way or another. He wants his students to know that this kind of deal is extraordinary and hard to come by. More importantly for Cronin, he wants to make sure his students know that success is possible.

Cronin, whose collection of short stories “Mary and O’Neil” won the PEN Hemingway and the Stephen Crane prizes for best debut fiction, is also the author of the novel “The Summer Guest,” which was a Book sense national best-seller. Other honors for his writing include a Whiting Writer’s Award, fellowships from the National Endowment for the Arts and the Pew Foundation, the National Novelists Award and an individual artists fellowship from the Pennsylvania Council on the Arts.

Cronin will take a leave this year to work on the trilogy. The first novel, “The Passage,” is scheduled for publication in summer 2009, with books two and three to follow in 2011 and 2013.
Rice University’s School of Humanities has entered an agreement to co-produce a series of nationally broadcast segments for Public Radio International’s (PRI) “Fair Game,” a move that promises to bolster the school’s growing national reputation.

“The Fair Game” segments Rice co-producers are being underwritten by Humanities Advisory Board members Mike Yuen ’89 and Robert Tudor ’82. Tudor also serves on Rice’s Board of Trustees. Hosted by Faith Salie, “Fair Game” is a weekday evening program that covers the important stories of the day, interviews newsmakers and celebrities, and features live music. As the host, Salie ties it all together using insightful satire and humor to tease out what it all means.

The idea for the program stemmed from a conversation amongst members of the School of Humanities Advisory Board. The members were discussing how to increase the visibility of humanities research and scholarship that is relevant to Americans.

“The program will give insight into how rich and complex American culture is,” said Gary Wihl, Dean of Humanities. “The great ideas that are being produced in this country, the ideas that explain how our political and legal culture came to be."

Rice’s first installment of segments – four weeklong series of programs – is planned to tackle issues of democracy that are relevant to the upcoming presidential election. The segments will focus on democracy struggles with ideals of justice and competing philosophies of liberty. The first series, planned for fall, will discuss the role of religion in politics, how democracy struggles with ideals of justice and competing philosophies of liberty.

Dean Wihl and the producers of Fair Game will form an advisory board – comprised of a broad range of distinguished scholars from universities, think tanks and the media – to shape questions and themes for the segments. The idea for the program stemmed from a conversation amongst members of the School of Humanities Advisory Board. The members were discussing how to increase the visibility of humanities research and give scholars the opportunity to bring their ideas to the public at large. The radio medium fits perfectly with those goals.

“Rice has a strong humanities program and a strong school of humanities,” said Wihl. “The program will give insight into how rich and complex American culture is. The great ideas that are being produced in this country, the ideas that explain how our political and legal culture came to be.”

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“The whole field of humanities is alive and in motion,” Wihl said. “Its disciplines provide the framework and background for the Constitution, citizenship and commerce, the very type of ideas that this program will showcase.”

As a Rhodes Scholar with an impressive background in entertainment and education, Faith is an ideal person to host the segment,” Wihl said. “She understands the academic world and she can convey scholarship work in an engaging and enjoyable way.”

Salie is fully immersed in “Fair Game,” her first foray into public radio, as co-creator, host, writer and producer. She is also a monthly contributor to O, the Oprah Magazine on the topic of ethics.

Before “Fair Game,” Salie was a star of Bravo’s critically acclaimed improvisational sitcom, “Significant Others,” and had parts in “Sex and the City” and “Star Trek: Deep Space Nine.” A former pop-culture pundit on a variety of VH-1 shows, Salie has regularly performed as a stand-up comedian at the Hollywood Improv. She received her Bachelors from Harvard University and masters at Oxford University.

“We are as curious as we are taught to be. When Americans are given the chance to encounter and absorb new ideas about topics that make them think, consider, and imagine, their lives become richer. Don’t dismiss for a moment the popularity of Oprah’s Book Club. Americans are thirsty for someone to teach them something new or remind them of something true. We are as curious as we are taught to be,” Salie said.

ON THE AIR

WHEN AMERICANS ARE GIVEN THE CHANCE TO ENCOUNTER AND ABSORB NEW IDEAS ABOUT TOPICS THAT MAKE THEM THINK, CONSIDER, AND IMAGINE, THEIR LIVES BECOME RICHER. DON’T DISMISS FOR A MOMENT THE POPULARITY OF OPRAH’S BOOK CLUB. AMERICANS ARE THIRSTY FOR SOMEONE TO TEACH THEM SOMETHING NEW OR REMIND THEM OF SOMETHING TRUE. WE ARE AS CURIOUS AS WE ARE TAUGHT TO BE.

Faith Salie
In the 2007 Campbell Lecture Series, author Alix Ohlin, examined the intersection of art and nature and how it affects the way humans use art to understand the world. Ohlin discussed the title of her novel, "The Missing Person," similar to Shakespeare's Prospero, and how the separation between art and nature is often blurred. She also explored the theme of "Tempest," which led to a re-imagining of the natural world. Ohlin's first lecture, "Prospero's Island," looked at artists who use their powers to transform the way people experience the world. She cited artists Andy Goldsworthy and James Turrell as examples. Ohlin's second lecture, "Hearing from Caliban," discussed the natural world's crises — urban development issues, Hurricane Katrina, and global climate change — and their effects on human creation. Ohlin offered answers to the question, "What role can art play in disaster?" The third lecture, "Ariel and Audubon," looked at how bird imagery is used as metaphors and subjects in literature and art. Ohlin also discussed the role of birds as barometers for the relationship between humans and nature. Ohlin's debut novel, "The Missing Person," was a 2005 Booklist Top 10. Her book of short stories, "Babylon," was published by Knopf in 2006 and short-listed for The Story Prize. Her stories have been selected for both Best New American Voices 2004 and Best American Short Stories 2005 and have aired on NPR's "Selected Shorts." She teaches at Lafayette College in Pennsylvania.
Jenny Strayer

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Molly Hubbard

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Campus tour guides will have a few more things to point out, now that the Rice University Art Committee is in place and Jenny Strayer has been named university art curator. As of June of 2007, Strayer and the committee are now responsible for acquiring and maintaining pieces of art that will be displayed throughout the campus to create a more vibrant and dynamic campus.

Strayer comes to Rice from Carnegie Mellon, where she served as the gallery director of the Regina Gouger Miller Gallery. In her time there, she greatly increased outreach efforts and engaged the community in gallery exhibitions. “Jenny is a visionary with the talent and energy to see their ideas evolve into reality,” said Raymond Brodabut, chair of the art committee. “Jenny shows a keen interest in developing programs and creating educational opportunities that will draw students into what we do.”

One of Strayer’s first goals is to immerse herself in the culture of Houston and Rice. “Houston is an amazing city at the forefront of contemporary art,” Strayer said. “In addition to the rich culture, it has a remarkable excitement and spark to it, Rice has a fantastic reputation and people I really want to work with.”

In November of 2007, Texas Governor Rick Perry appointed Rice University’s Molly Hubbard to a six-year term on the Texas Commission on the Arts (TCA). The TCA encourages appreciation for fine arts in Texas, and arts in an advisory capacity regarding the construction and remodeling of state buildings and works of art. For more than 40 years, the TCA has been providing grants and assistance to artists, arts organizations and the general public. Hubbard looks forward to joining in that history.

TCA has two primary goals that serve constituents in the six artistic disciplines: visual arts, theater, dance, music, media and literature. The first goal is to provide grants for the arts and cultural industry providing financial, human and technical resources to ensure viable arts and cultural communities. The second goal is to promote widespread attendance at performances and exhibitions in Texas through marketing, fundraising and cultural tourism.

“The TCA could not be more timely as she now turns her attention to new opportunities for Rice to engage the arts community of Houston and Texas.”

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Rice University alumni Stephen Fell ’05 and Will Thompson ’05 have joined an elite group of filmmakers thanks to a class project turned nationally acclaimed documentary, “Unborn in the USA: Inside the War on Abortion.”

Oddly enough, Thompson and Fell didn’t set out to make a documentary about the anti-abortion movement. They were completing a project for the “Documentary Production” course taught by Brian Huberman, Associate Professor of Visual Arts. The assignment was to create a portrait of someone they’ve never met, so they picked an activist in Houston who conducted artificial pro-life services and experimented on aborted children. They started filming in Texas but soon traveled to 35 states and to Washington, D.C., for the 2003 March for Life.

“Because that march is the largest in the U.S., we thought there would be a ton of people covering it,” Fell said. “But there wasn’t a lot of media interest. It was perplexing. That was the moment we knew that a documentary on the pro-life movement had great potential.”

The filmmakers were right on the money with that prediction. But realizing that potential in the form of a film took dollars, time and connections. With Huberman’s guidance, Thompson and Fell had been working on their project for almost a year when Fell met Suzanne O’Malley by taking her “Writing for Dramatic Television” course at Rice. O’Malley, now a lecturer at Yale University, had been brought in by Humanities Dean Gary Wihl as a writer-in-residence in the English department.

The biggest obstacle for most documentary filmmakers is finding a distributor. Knowing that, O’Malley gave a first cut of the film to her longtime colleague Seymour Wishman, head of First Run Features, the world’s largest documentary distributor. “It was Suzanne’s connection to the entertainment industry that led us to First Run Features, who eventually agreed to distribute the film in theaters,” Thompson said. “She was instrumental in getting this film made.”

There were many other challenges in the filmmaking, but Fell and Thompson found support at Rice for funding and equipment. They used sources of funding available to Rice students, including the Endowment Grant fund, the Student Activities Commission, Leadership Rice, the Rice Academic and Research Support Fund and a fellowship from the Visual Arts Department. The Shepherd School of Music provided musical talent. Dave Warrill ’05 composed the original score for “Unborn in the USA.” From the School of Humanities, Joey McKlveen ’02 contributed additional photography for the documentary.

Perhaps it was the integrity to support that the pair found most important. “Our professors looked us in the eyes and told us we could do it,” Fell said. “That kind of encouragement can go too much.” Both Fell and Thompson cited the guidance and criticism of Huberman and O’Malley as key components to their success.

Huberman helped them define what they wanted to do with the film and then showed them how to accomplish their goals. “The environment at Rice prepared them to create films with an experimental and emotional scope,” Thompson said. Their experiences at Rice have also taught them how to handle the attention that is coming their way. “Rice submerged you in a diverse social environment of intelligent people and really emphasizes the critical thinking aspects of education,” Thompson said.

It’s been a long road, but Thompson and Fell have a few more steps on their filmmaking journey. They are seeking theatrical distribution, known as a rollout, to cities coast to coast. “The goal is to put the film in all 4,289 cities in the nation,” Thompson said. Fell is currently working in the entertainment industry and hopes to continue writing and directing films.

June 14, 2007
New York Times:
“The directors, Stephen Fell and Will Thompson – who started the film as a senior thesis at Rice University’s film school – show a wide spectrum of abortion opponents, from advocates of violence to fire and brimstone soapboxers to a subtler group that takes classes in empathy... a rigorously objective look at the anti-abortion movement.”
THE TEAM MEMBERS DRINK A LOT OF WATER TO STAY HYDRATED, TAKE VITAMINS AND PRACTICE WARM-UPS TO STAY LIMBER. BUT ALL THIS PREPARATION ISN'T FOR THE GRIDIRON...

UNDEFEATED:
FORENSICS TURNS IT ON

THE PRODUCT OF THOUGHT

THIS IS FORENSICS, better known as debate, and the physical conditioning pales in comparison to the mental preparation for members of the undefeated 2007-2008 George R. Brown Forensic Society, Rice University’s speech and debate team.

“Like any other collegiate sport, we practice, strategize and play to win,” said Jeremy Grace, assistant director of the forensic society. “Forensics is not only an academic sport; it’s an endurance sport that combines multiple aspects of the humanities, social sciences and technical sciences into a performative act.”

The forensic team was founded in 1984 and has grown to 20 members. They compete in individual events of public address, interpretation of literature and limited... To develop a solid foundation for debate, students work as a team to research and gather information about social issues and current events. The team keeps files on the different subjects and practices multiple times a week.

“What I enjoy most about forensics is that it rewards a liberal arts education,” said Hrishi Hari, a Jones College senior. “Forensics provides a forum to use what we learn through our coursework and apply our knowledge to current public policy issues.”

As a by-product of forensics, Hari, a political science and history major, discovered that he needed to learn more about economics to succeed, though it was a topic he’d avoided. “I started taking economics classes, and after a few, I realized that this hard work had paid off and that I had been able to reach people!”

“We use a sport mentality when we set season-long goals,” said David Worth, director of the society. “We are highly competitive and continue to try to do better than the year before.”

In 2007, the Rice team took first place overall in all but one of their nine regular season meets and placed seventh at the National Parliamentary Debate Association tournament. In the American Forensics Association National Individual Events Tournament (AFA-NIET), the team finished 19th out of 120.

“The best part of being on the team is learning from such talented people,” said Aparna Bhaduri, a Jones College sophomore. “Looking at everyone else on the team, you know you are never done growing because there is always an upperclassman whose level you want to reach.”

One person Bhaduri looked up to was teammate Priscilla Parrett ’07, the 2007 national champion in persuasive speaking. “Winning a national championship was one of the greatest moments of my life that I will never forget,” Parrett said. “Standing on the stage in front of all my peers, representing my team and coaches, I realized that all this hard work had paid off and that I had been able to reach people!”

Priscilla Parrett ’07 persuaded her audience that replacing one standard light bulb with a compact fluorescent light bulb was a significant step in addressing global warming. She backed her claims by presenting research from the Christian Science Monitor, the News Hour with Jim Lehrer, National Public Radio’s “All Things Considered” and many other media outlets.

To win, Parrett needed more than just good facts and a noble cause. Forensic competitions are subjective, so speakers have to be convincing and deliver their points with confidence and enthusiasm. “That tends to be the most difficult lesson students learn just because they are right, doesn’t necessarily mean they are going to win,” Grace said.

“Forensics is one of the finest ways to improve your communication, research and interpersonal skills,” Worth said. “Those skills last a lifetime and are important in all areas of life. By taking part in speech and debate teams, students can learn how to express themselves and their ideas.”

Worth said there are two lessons each team member must learn: the real contest is with yourself and excellence is the result of practice.
Though they have completed their summer study overseas, Rice students who participated in Focus Europe fellowships continue to reap the benefits of their experiences. Among other activities, the students took to stages, laboratories and businesses across Europe while being supported by faculty mentors back at Rice.

Focus Europe is an interdisciplinary program in the School of Humanities that supports the study of European culture, history and political thought. Supported in part by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, a fellowship to Europe is a course with a European focus. Rice students who participate in a course with a European focus have the chance to conduct research abroad under the supervision of a Rice faculty mentor.

The 2007 summer fellowships were awarded to seven students from the School of Humanities, the School of Social Sciences and the School of Architecture to pursue research projects in Germany, France, Italy, the Netherlands and the United Kingdom. Students were expected to write a research paper or an essay based upon their work and a presentation about their research. Though students worked on projects that deal with topics in European cultural and intellectual history, literary studies, media studies, political thought, philosophy or the European Union, their projects have a common theme of exploring issues listed above.

Grace Ng, Will Rice College junior, studied in Germany for her project "The American Singer on the European Stage: A Research Documentary on the Expectations and Challenges for American Opera Singers in the European Music Scene." She began her project as a way to show people something they hadn’t seen before. "By bringing Europe closer to people, I hope I can encourage them to explore their lives and the world around and beyond them," Ng said. "The Focus Europe fellowship offered me a great opportunity to experience Europe from an opera standpoint and bring this to the American audience." Brian Huberman, associate professor of visual arts, served as her mentor, offering guidance and reminding her that every scene she used should move the film forward.

Interested in exploring the relationship between science and architecture, Benjamin Pollak, Jones College senior, studied in Cambridge, London and Utrecht, the Netherlands, to complete his project, "Experimental Space Architecture and Science Research Clusters in the U.K." He investigated the architecture and use of research facilities, interviewing renowned scientists and touring laboratories. "The fellowship is very open, which allows you to attempt to achieve things you could not have imagined," Pollak said. "I met many opera singers who currently work in this field, potential Nobel Prize winners, which is a certain degree intimidating but very exciting at the same time." Pollak credits mentor Christian Emden, associate professor of German, and Denis Healy, director of the Texas Humanities Research Institute, with helping him grow his network of contacts and conduct his research. After visiting five facilities and interviewing many scientists, Pollak said he ended up with more than enough data to complete his project.

Emma Howell, Hanszen College senior, pursued her fellowship in Paris. An English and French major, she researched current trends in immigration and advertising for her project, "A New Image: Immigration, Advertising as a Means to Study Immigration in Paris and London." "My time abroad really helped me grow and become more independent," Howell said. "This research project was the culmination of that important experience. It allowed me to follow a real passion of mine, and I wouldn’t have had this chance without the funding or the support from my mentor." Julie Fette, assistant professor in French studies, mentored Howell.

Grace Ng
The research fellowship has motivated me to find more research experiences, make more films and learn more languages.

Ben Pollak
The experience abroad made me more aware of how my area of study (architecture) has an impact on a broader community.

Emma Howell
It forced me to stray away from normal research paper conventions and invent some more creative ways of researching.

How did the time abroad impact your Rice education?
The inspiration for April DeConick’s new book came when Dr. DeConick was intrigued by National Geographic’s original release of the Coptic Gospel of Judas and as a scholar wanted to read it for herself. While researching and translating it, she discovered that National Geographic’s translators had made some serious errors.

As noted by DeConick, “National Geographic claimed the text said that Judas didn’t betray Jesus, but instead that Jesus asked Judas, his most trusted and beloved disciple, to hand him over to be killed.” According to that translation, Judas was a villain, who acted on Jesus’ request to betray him. Simply put, DeConick disagrees.

During her own translation of the 3rd-century religious document, DeConick found that the National Geographic translation was problematic and based on a “provisional” Coptic transcription that had mistakes resulting in the erroneous findings.

“As I started translating the Gospel of Judas and began to see the types of translation choices that the National Geographic team had made, I was startled and concerned,” DeConick said. “I found that the text very clearly called Judas a ‘demon.’”

DeConick contends that the Gospel of Judas is not about a “good” Judas or even a “poor old” Judas. It is a gospel parody about a “demon” Judas written by a particular group of Gnostic Christians who lived in the second century.

The finding of this gospel has been called one of the most important archaeological discoveries in the past 60 years,” DeConick said. "It is important that we get this right.”

The original mistakes made by National Geographic are now being corrected. "We were told that the National Geographic Society is going to release a second edition of 'The Gospel of Judas,'” said DeConick, “which will be a more neutral translation and reflect the criticisms of other scholars.”

“I am very grateful to the scholars who reconstructed this gospel for the world,” DeConick said. “But the damage has been done in terms of interpretation of this important early Gnostic text. Because of the initial translation, the public impression is that this text says Judas was a good friend of Jesus and did him a favor, and that simply isn’t the case.”

DeConick stated that many scholars and writers have been inspired by the National Geographic version. “It appears to have something to do with our collective guilt about anti-Semitism and our need to reframe the relationship between Jews and Christians following World War II,” she said. “Judas is a frightening character. For Christians, he’s the one who had it all, and yet betrayed God to His death for a few dollars. For Jews, he’s terrifying. The man whom Christians associated with the Jewish people, whose story was used against them for centuries.”
CLAIRE BOWERN AWARDED NSF GRANT TO STUDY AUSTRALIA’S INDIGENOUS LANGUAGES

Rice University’s Claire Bowern, assistant professor of linguistics, hopes to advance understanding of how language spread across the globe by investigating language change in prehistoric Australia.

Her $450,000 five-year CAREER grant from the National Science Foundation (NSF) will fund research on Australia’s past indigenous languages that she hopes to use to answer important questions about the nature of language change.

Bowern’s work could lend insight to how Australia’s 250 languages spread throughout the continent and how their speakers came to live where they do today. “There is important historical work on Australian languages but we are still at an early stage in discovering the history of these languages. I will give a lot of focus to writing down and inputting data.”

Detailed records of these indigenous languages date back only 200 years, though humans have lived in Australia for more than 40,000 years. However, by studying the forms of words in modern languages, researchers like Bowern can draw inferences about which languages various groups spoke, and in some cases, where they spoke them. Historical linguistic work in Australia is still in its infancy. Bowern said, since many Australian languages are spoken by very small numbers of people, and descriptive and documentary work has taken precedence.

An Australian who came to the U.S. eight years ago, Bowern hopes to create a functional database with more than 200,000 records that can help reconstruct words from different languages and find similarities that could show how populations dispersed. She also aims to disseminate discoveries through popular media to broaden general knowledge of Australian languages.

While Bowern will have many challenges with her fieldwork, perhaps paramount is the scarcity of language speakers and lack of linguistic records. Many of the 250 languages are on the verge of extinction. “A lot of my work will be to set up the skeleton for future work,” Bowern said. “I want to give other people starting places so the field can continue to grow and move forward.”

There are claims that the same linguistics methods used in Europe and the Americas do not work in Australia. Should those claims render true, it would profoundly impact study and research in linguistics since those methods are based on properties of language change that have been thought to be universal. However, Bowern’s groundwork shows systematic similarities between words in various Australian languages. “Just about all the preliminary work indicates that Australian languages share the same characteristics that we find elsewhere,” Bowern said. “Small speech community size, widespread multilingualism and other factors have obtained relationships between these languages.”

This grant sets a research path for Bowern. The research questions she will investigate and answer will form the basis for her long-term research.

What excites Bowern most about this grant is the opportunity to involve her students in the research and build the profile of Australian linguistics in the wider field and beyond. “Outreach and education are important components of my project,” Bowern said. “In addition to the research, I will focus on training students in the field and creating an experience that will equip them for their own future research work.”

Bowern’s proposal was selected from 112 considered by the Linguistics Advisory Panel for an NSF CAREER grant. The grant is one of the NSF’s most prestigious awards and supports early career development activities of teacher-scholars. It aims to build a scholar’s foundation for a lifetime of integrated contributions to research and education. Bowern is also the recipient of an NSF/National Endowment for the Humanities Documenting Endangered Languages grant and has previously held language documentation grants from the Endangered Languages Documentation Program, the Australian Institute of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Studies and the Endangered Language Fund.
Douglas Brinkley Joins the Humanities

Douglas Brinkley has raised the visibility of historical writing in the mind of the public, building bridges between the university and the general public. He has been in the news lately for editing the private White House diaries of Ronald Reagan. The book was profiled on the CBS Evening News. HarperCollins plans a first printing of 350,000 books. He is currently working on "Crovaty: Conservation: Theodore Roosevelt and the Wilderness."

"Douglas Brinkley has established a prominent place among contemporary historians, especially through his prolific writings aimed to broadcast an audience," said Rice University Provost Eugene Lee. "His work on contemporary American history and politics resonates across a broad spectrum of public interest, and his interpretive commentaries in the broadcast media are informative and widely watched."

"Douglas Brinkley has raised the visibility of historical writing in the mind of the public, building bridges between the university and the general public," said Gary WN, the Dean of Humanities and the Frances Moody Newman Professor of Humanities. "His joint appointment between the Department of History and the Baker Institute provides the optimal opportunity to draw upon his abilities. His appointment at Rice opens up new possibilities for collaboration between the Baker Institute and the School of Humanities."

Besides teaching three classes, Brinkley has been asked by former U.S. Secretaries of State James A. Baker III and Warren Christopher to be part of a commission studying Presidential War Powers. "We'll be meeting in Washington soon," Brinkley said about the study group. "My task is to analyze how presidents like Polk, McKinley, Wilson, and Johnson, among others, dealt with the Congress during wartime."

Dietz Prize

The second annual Elizabeth Dietz Prize for the best book published in early modern studies has been awarded to Robert Watson, professor in the UCLA Department of English, for his book "Back to Nature: The Green and the Real in the Late Renaissance."

This award was created to honor Dietz, who died of cancer in 2005. In her short life, Liz forged intense friendships and provided examples of inspiring teaching and professional responsibility. The judges were Bruce Boehrer, the Bertram H. Davis Professor of English at Florida State University; Patrick Cheney, professor of English and comparative literature at Penn State University; and Sir Frank Kermode, retired from chairs in literature at the University of London and Cambridge University.

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Paula Sanders Appointed to Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies

Professor of History Paula Sanders is the new Dean of Graduate and Postdoctoral Studies—a new position created to strengthen Rice's graduate and doctoral programs. Sanders said one of her priorities would be to help develop opportunities for graduate students to get teaching experience at Rice. Dr. Sanders is also committed to fostering a collaborative and cross-disciplinary intellectual community of faculty, graduate students and postdoctoral fellows. Her many other responsibilities include helping organize periodic reviews of graduate programs, advising graduate students on issues related to candidacy, working with the dean of undergraduates to manage career services and student activities for graduate students and postdoctoral fellows, and working with the vice president for administration to address graduate student housing issues. At the national level, Sanders will promote Rice's graduate programs to external audiences and help ensure that Rice policies and programs support graduate education goals. Sanders said her new role will be easier because the tragedy left by Jordan Kemety, who retired as Vice Provost for Research and Graduate Studies, and Susan Luiss, associate dean for graduate studies, Fortunately for the School of Humanities the new position still allows Sanders to continue her research on medieval history of the Islamic world.
**Faculty News**

**Awards**

**English**
- Joseph Campos, assistant professor, received the Genna Luxel Award from the Prairie Schooner Magazine for poems published in 2007 and is the recipient of a 2007 Creative Writing Fellowship in poetry from the NEA.
- Caroline Louwans, professor and Director of the Humanities Research Center, received an Institute of Museum and Library Services National Leadership Grant, along with co-principal investigator Geneviève Henry for the American Archive Partnership with the University of Maryland.
- Kenneth Dohrer, assistant professor, received a Faculty Initiatives Fund Award for Health Media Literacy and was invited to be a Scientia Faculty Fellow.

**In Memoriam**

**Alan Grob**

Alan Grob, professor emeritus of English and a former chair of the department, died Sept. 21, 2007. He was a 2007 Creative Writing Fellow at the National Endowment for the Arts. Grob, who served as a faculty member at Hancher College from 1962 to 2002, was the recipient of multiple Brown Awards for Superior Teaching. He and his wife, Shirley, established the Alan and Shirley Grob Fund for Excellence in Teaching.

**History**

- John Bates, William P. Hobby Professor of History and Editor of the Journal of Southern History, received a 2007 Frantz Fanon Prize for Outstanding Work in Caribbean Thought for his book The Dialectics of Transformation in Africa.
- Jeffrey Kidd, professor of Religious Studies, was nominated for a Pulitzer Prize by the University of Chicago Press for his book on Islam and was elected to the American Academy for the Study of Religion.

**Religious Studies**

- Eliza Brown, recipient of the 2007 Frantz Fanon Prize for Outstanding Work in Caribbean Thought for her book The Dialectics of Transformation in Africa.

**Linguistics**

- Robert Engebretson, assistant professor, received the 2007 PRB Bluegrass Teaching Prize.

**Visual and Dramatic Arts**

- Dama Kasten, associate professor, received the Yaddo Artist’s Fellowship.

**Faculty Publications**

- **Shoshana Firth**, Assistant Professor of Art History
  - The City’s Treasure: Istanbul in the Eighteenth Century

- **Douglas Brinkley**
  - Professor of History and Fellow at the James A. Baker III Institute for Public Policy
  - The Great Deluge: Hurricane Katrina, New Orleans, and the Mississippi Gulf Coast

- **Jane Chance**
  - Professor of English and Director of Medieval Studies Program
  - The Literary Subversions of Medieval Women

- **John Strow**
  - Harry and Hazel Chavanne Professor of Religious Studies
  - Escape into the Future: Cultural Pessimism and Its Religious Dimension in Contemporary American Popular Culture

- **April DeConick**
  - Rice Carroll & Percy E. Turner Professor of Biblical Studies in Religious Studies
  - The Thirteenth Apostle: What the Gospel of Judas Really Says

**New Faculty**

- **Douglas Brinkley**
  - PhD, Georgetown University
  - Professor of History and Baker Institute for Public Policy Fellow

- **Joseph Clarke**
  - PhD, Rutgers University
  - Assistant Professor of English

- **Malcolm Fagan**
  - PhD, Indiana University
  - Assistant Professor of Philosophy

- **Nicoletta Orlandi**
  - PhD, Georgetown University
  - Assistant Professor in the Humanities in Linguistics and Chair of Linguistics
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