MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIR, JOANNE FERRARO

History faculty and students have been actively engaging the community and the world this year. Our Fulbright Distinguished Chair, Sarah Elkind, has brought US History courses to the Danish classroom, and her sojourn in Denmark will in turn impact the way she presents US History to SDSU students when she returns. Our Stanford Chair, Lisa Cobbs Hoffman, is busy working on a new synthesis of American Foreign Relations at the Hoover Institute at Stanford University, a prestigious venue that allows her to share critical ideas. SDSU students will surely benefit from her new work. History faculty are also very proud of their thriving student internship program, a venue that enables history majors to experience historical processes outside the classroom in the San Diego community while contributing community service. History majors in Phi Alpha Theta are also all charged up hosting workshops and talks. All together faculty and students are demonstrating their devotion to connecting historical studies to the outside world in meaningful ways.

It is also very important to our department to bring in guest speakers to share their new findings in history. Yale’s Matthew Jacobson, the Appleby Lecturer this year, delivered an engaging presentation on visual culture and history, and in the process sparked new pedagogical ideas for classroom teaching. Thanks to donations from the Friends of History, we have been able to bring in other outside speakers as well. This spring Paul Harvey (University of Colorado) gave a talk on American religious history.

I want to take this opportunity to thank our donors to Friends of History for helping us to fund speakers as well as history conferences. This spring our History Department Emeriti faculty made a special gesture in this regard, and we are very appreciative of their help. Moreover, we remember them proudly.
An American in Denmark
By Sarah S. Elkind
Odense, Denmark

I am spending this year in Odense, Denmark, as the Fulbright Distinguished Chair in American Studies the University of Southern Denmark (or Amerikanske Studier i Syddansk Universitet). I am teaching four courses, ranging from a survey in American History for undergraduates to graduate seminars on twentieth century American urban history. I am also researching the presentation of Danish history at museums and historic sites, which will lead to internship training materials and, I hope, a new course on museums, history, public memory and national identity.

My interest in Denmark began when I travelled here for the first World Congress of Environmental History in 2009. Conference field trips and my own explorations took me to fascinating museums, among them the Moesgaard archeological museum (www.moestus.dk) and the Roskilde Viking Ship museum (vikingeskibsmuseet.dk). Moesgaard has on display Grauballe Man, a fascinating bog body, and an enormous collection of Roman weaponry excavated from the bog into which it was sacrificed to celebrate a victory. The Roskilde Viking Ship museum houses five preserved 11th century ships that were scuttled to help protect the harbor of Roskilde, then the capital of Denmark. Roskilde has become a center for experimental maritime archeology, which means they build replicas of Viking era vessels using traditional tools and methods, and then sail these vessels to see what Viking ships were capable of. Museum visitors can row and sail these ships, too. (Sailing a small Viking vessel – wool, square-rigged sail and all – was a highlight of the environmental history conference.)

Since I returned to Denmark, I have been back to both Moesgaard and Roskilde. But I have also explored woodlands filled with the dolmens, stone ships and passage graves of stone-age burials; the only Viking ship burial in Denmark (my spouse, Beth, is making tools and hand-wrought nails for a group that is making a replica of that ship); outdoor museums dedicated to the early iron age, the 17th century Danish city, the 18th century Danish farm; and, of course, a few castles and terrific art museums. As someone interested in museum interpretation, I’m particularly struck by the provisions these places make for young children. Every museum has an activity kit or games to help children as young as 3 or 4 experience the historical period or the art on display.

Teaching here this year has given me a new perspective on American history and on the American higher education system. During my first semester here, I taught a survey of American history from 1600 to the present. I found that examining American history from this broad sweep of time showed me the profound importance of land in American culture and policy. In developing this and my other courses, I have spent a lot of time thinking about why Danish students should care about American history, and what in American history is really relevant or important to my students here.

I will be heading back to San Diego State in the fall, in much better shape (from biking nearly everywhere) but largely defeated in my efforts to learn Danish (it’s an extremely difficult language to learn). I am sorry to report that the Fulbright program in Denmark (and in much of Europe) has been cut back year after year. Next year, there will be funding for only half the student Fulbright grants that there was this year, and the teaching position I hold now may be reduced to a single semester. This is unfortunate, both for the students and scholars who will not be able to immerse themselves in a foreign country as I have, and because cuts to the Fulbright and other foreign exchange programs drastically reduce the opportunities to build international understanding that grow more and more important with every passing year. But to end on a more cheerful note: Go to Denmark. It’s a really lovely country.

Favorite Faculty Award 2010-2011

Please join me in congratulating Ed Blum, who was nominated most influential professor by the outstanding graduating senior in History, Jonathan Paul Evans; Jeff Hay who was nominated by residential students for the Favorite Faculty Award, 2010-2011; and Steve Colston who was nominated most influential professor by the outstanding graduating senior in Social Science, John Stephen Hayes.
What I Did With My Summer Vacation
By Elizabeth Cobbs Hoffman

Probably every historian secretly hopes to publish a *magnum opus* one day, a book that crystallizes her or his life’s work. Most of us sensibly put it off. But when I met with my SDSU students at our regular class time on the morning of September 11, 2001—having just watched the Twin Towers burn, and then crumble into ash on television—I realized that the day had come to start. I needed to understand better, so that I could explain to students better, how our nation got from George Washington’s 1796 “Great Rule” of non-entanglement to Osama Bin Laden’s hit list.

Ten years have passed since those events (a magnum opus takes a REALLY long time). I began drafting a prospectus for my book when I was on a Fulbright in Ireland a few years ago, and started research during a following sabbatical. Then, last year, I wrote the first chapter, sold the proposed manuscript to Harvard University Press, and applied for a fellowship at Stanford University’s Hoover Institution. Here I am today, each morning stubbornly confronting the blank page. One century down, two more to go.

My goal is to synthesize the crucial events of American foreign relations into 400 or 500 pages, while creating an entirely new framework that I hope will put certain myths to rest and give us startling new insights into the past. (This is why sane people don’t attempt a magnum opus.) Although contemporary disasters gave impetus to my project, it isn’t really about them. Rather, the book seeks to address broader and larger questions, such as, is the United States an empire? (The short answer is “no.”) Also, if one cannot organize the events of American foreign relations around the nation’s “rise to empire,” as many historians currently do, then how else are we to understand what the United States is, and what part it has played in the creating the world of today?

Using records and accounts from a number of countries, I intend to argue that the Western values that the U.S. is sometimes accused of pushing onto an unwilling, culturally different world were, in fact, global ones that led to a new world order. External events shaped Americans just as much as Americans shaped events. Starting around 1776 with the American Revolution, and ending in 1991 with the dissolution of the Soviet Union, the world of monarchies and empires slowly dissolved. The dominant system of human political organization—dating back to the Pharaohs of Egypt—was irrevocably replaced by a world of republics: nations governed by citizens. Nearly all of these nations became democracies, or at least pretended to majority rule. (Pretense is important, for it reveals what people think the world wants to see.) Almost uniformly, they eventually adopted free-market, capitalist economies—even when they claimed not to, like today’s “communist” China. Although cultural and religious diversity endured, the broad patterns of political and economic life converged in an altogether new mold that did away with empires.

The U.S. was the pivot of this worldwide transformation, having been first to show it was possible for a disparate group of people to proclaim a republic and will their state into existence. It was a “new species,” British philosopher Edmund Burke observed at the end of the eighteenth century. In the following two centuries the species proliferated spontaneously. Half the nations in today’s world began with declarations of independence against their overlords that were inspired, at least in part, by the first such proclamation in 1776.¹ No external force made this happen. In fact, many peoples (such as the Vietnamese) founded nations against epic outside resistance. What this shows is that some values, like the aspiration to democracy or local autonomy, can become global—or go native—very quickly. My research identifies three key values that increasingly defined U.S. foreign and domestic policy over time: access, arbitration, and transparency.

So, as the clock ticks down on my Hoover fellowship, you and my colleagues might ask, so, how’s the ol’ magnum opus going? I’ll let you know in a minute. Just let me get an Advil first.

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An Awesome Experience:
Seeing History Firsthand as a SDSU History Intern
By Christopher Hanson

Reading history in a book is one thing, but seeing it first hand is a completely different experience. I think I would describe my internship at the Veteran’s Museum in Balboa Park so far as enlightening. One of the donations that we received recently at the museum is a World War II Nazi building banner that was in prestigious condition. The colors were as vibrant as if it were made yesterday. It was taken by a U.S. Army unit that liberated Germany and all the gentlemen signed the flag with their names and where they were from here in the U.S. It is sort of a portal back in time to literally see a piece of history in your hands. I did some research on the unit itself and wrote a short article about the flag and the unit that captured it, which will be published in this next month’s museum newsletter. We have also just finished getting some authentic World War II posters framed that were also donated. These posters will be displayed inside the museum along with other WW II artifacts of the period.

I have really enjoyed working in the museum because of the "hands on" experience. It is an awesome experience to see history first hand and be able to read someone’s story. I have had the opportunity to read several letters of past service members and their loved ones. It sort of takes you back in time and you are able to feel what these people were feeling 60 or 70 years ago. I have also learned a great deal about preserving artifacts and handling delicate items.

Christopher Hanson is a SDSU senior majoring in History. In addition to his internship at the Veteran’s Museum, Chris is also volunteering at the Lambda Archives, an organization committed to preserving local Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual, and Transgender history run by our own SDSU History faculty member Frank Nobiletti in his spare time.

Faculty Excellence: Joanne Ferraro Receives the 2010 “Monty” for the College of Arts and Letters
By Dr. Walter Penrose, Jr.

Each academic year, the San Diego State University Alumni Association honors faculty with the most outstanding records of teaching, scholarship, and service to the SDSU community. These Awards for Outstanding Faculty Contributions to the University, more commonly known as the “Montys,” are very prestigious, as they honor only one faculty member from each of the university’s colleges, the Imperial Valley campus and the Library. This past fall, our own Chair of the History Department, Joanne Ferraro, received this prestigious award, having been singled out from all College of Arts and Letters Faculty as the most distinguished faculty member.

In addition to serving as Chair of the Department of History at SDSU since 2003, Joanne has published three impressive books and many articles. Joanne’s acclaimed Marriage Wars in Late Renaissance Venice was awarded the Helen and Howard R. Marraro prize for the best book published about any period of Italian history and first prize from the Society for the Study of Early Modern Women. Joanne has also received a number of impressive fellowships from the National Endowment for the Humanities, the American Council of Learned Societies, and the Gladys Krieble Delmas Foundation. She was awarded the Timeos Award for outstanding teaching at SDSU. There is not room here to list of all Joanne’s achievements, but just the few mentioned above show what a well-rounded scholar, teacher, and administrator our chair is. Congratulations, Joanne, and thank you for your outstanding commitment to our department, college, and university!
Public History Internships at San Diego State University offer a wide range of opportunities at the student’s prerogative. The goal of this internship program is not only to broaden the student’s perspective of history, adding to his or her overall mastery of the subject, but also to prepare the student for the “real world” after graduation. The History Department offers internship opportunities from libraries and museums to historical sites. The duties assigned to the student could be from a wide variety of areas. Archival research and working with the public in leading tours are two of the most common.

I decided to pursue an internship with the San Diego History Center at Balboa Park. The hands-on research that I have conducted is like nothing I have done in my previous four years at college. I now know where to look to find any sort of information on San Diego for the last two hundred years. Also attributed to my wide array of tasks at the museum, I now have a very good understanding about what goes into a museum through and through.

My primary responsibilities involve working with the Education Department. I am currently conducting research in the SDHC Archives to seek out information for an upcoming exhibit expected to launch in June 2011. This is an exhibit on the photographer Norman Baynard. Baynard photographed the largest African-American collection on the West Coast. His collected works reach nearly 30,000 negatives. For the mid 20th century, similar collections exist for Chicago and New York, but Baynard’s work is unique and unaccompanied on the West Coast. Currently, I alone am developing the tour script for the Baynard collection.

In addition to my adventures of digging through hundred year-old newspapers, flipping through biographies and sixty year-old city directories and photo albums, I also lead tours through the main exhibit within the museum. Learning information about history is one thing, but being able to convey it to a 5th grader is entirely something else. I must say that the reward is fantastic when the children are captivated in the tour and cannot stop asking questions at the end. I am also a part of a public outreach program in which we take a little bit of what we have at SDHC into schools and other locations around San Diego. With this program, just last week I gave a lecture about the many different waves of migrants to California and San Diego.

During my time at the San Diego History Center, I have worked side by side with the Director of Education, the Museum Archivist, the Photograph Archivist, the Public Programs Manager, the School Programs Coordinator and even children from preschool age through seniors in high school. My experiences at the San Diego History Center have sincerely enriched this wonderful period of my life at SDSU. As of last semester I was on the fence with which direction to take my life after graduation. After my experiences at SDHC, I am quite sure that I want to work with a museum for several years before I pursue a graduate degree in history. Having that expertise and hands-on familiarity with history gained in the museum world will only benefit me in graduate school.

Scott Johnston is a Graduating Senior within the History Department at SDSU.
Something groovy is going on around the SDSU History Department this year. Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society members have focused on reinvigorating and expanding our local Beta Kappa chapter. Last fall, seventeen students became members of Phi Alpha Theta at our initiation and we expect to expand our membership this semester as well. On March 11, 2011, Phi Alpha Theta hosted the workshop “Working Historians in San Diego: Community College Teaching and the Local History Community.” Our guest speakers included Kevin McManus, the facilities manager at the San Diego History Center, and Robert Henry, the history department chair at Grossmont College, both of whom are SDSU graduates. The event focused on the career opportunities available to students graduating with a history degree, including positions at community colleges, museums, and historic sites in San Diego.

Another item of excitement this semester was the Phi Alpha Theta regional conference at Chapman University, held on April 9, 2011. Several SDSU students were highlighted in the conference program. Jonathan Eng presented a paper entitled “The Continental Evolution of Anti-Asian Racism in the Cold War Era.” Joshua Hammack also stirred up the muck with his presentation of “The Vietnam Conflict: Revolutionary Women and Militarized Masculinity.” The conference provided these local SDSU Phi Alpha Theta members with an opportunity to receive feedback from students and faculty from colleges throughout southern California.

The Phi Alpha Theta History Honor Society was founded in 1921, bringing students, faculty, and researchers with an interest in history together to exchange ideas. The Beta Kappa chapter of Phi Alpha Theta formed at San Diego State University in 1948. Members participate in events on campus including meetings, history department lectures, events with Honors Council, and initiation.

To be eligible to become a member of Phi Alpha Theta, undergraduate students must have a minimum 3.1 GPA in history courses and a minimum 3.0 GPA overall. Graduate students must have a minimum 3.5 GPA in history courses. Students also must have a minimum of 12 units in history courses. Membership in Phi Alpha Theta provides students with opportunities to participate in meetings, events, and initiation. For more information about Phi Alpha Theta, please contact SDSUPhiAlphaTheta@gmail.com.
The 30th Annual Andrew Bell Appleby Memorial Lecture was held on Friday, February 11th, 2011 at San Diego State University’s Little Theater. Matthew Jacobson, Professor of History and American Studies at Yale University, was the afternoon’s featured speaker. His talk served to boldly challenge conventional scholarship and depart from obvious expectations. Participants were asked to re-imagine the very direction of history itself as well as the role of historians in producing it. His innovative approach demonstrated both the vitality and the usefulness of historians who employ an American Studies methodology. In doing so, he also exemplified the maturation of social history, the power of interdisciplinary study, and the joy of collaboration in what might otherwise be a very isolating process. Professor Andrew Appleby would no doubt have been proud.

The afternoon’s audience certainly anticipated that Professor Jacobson’s talk, entitled “Historian’s Eye: Documenting Hope and Despair in Obama’s America,” would address his pioneering work in the field of whiteness studies or perhaps his more recent turn to the cultural and political history of modern America. Instead, as he jokingly admitted, Jacobson switched gears entirely and unveiled his multimedia project “Historian’s Eye” which combined documentary photography, interactive community discussion, and grass roots participation in order to chronicle American history and culture from the ground up. Arguing that visual images of the present can transform the past and provide it with meaning, Jacobson called upon historians to archive current events as part of their quest to write history. While the lessons of history may help us better formulate current policy, Jacobson also argued that, conversely, visual images of the present can actually provide a useful window into the past. For Jacobson, contemporary photography can speak directly to our historical memory and tell stories about the trajectory of history that conventional sources cannot. At the same time, Jacobson argued that historical perspectives, when applied to contemporary visual culture, can serve as a valuable form of public history while helping to contextualize the present.

Jacobson laid out his case through an expansive tour of the Historian’s Eye website, where visitors can find art-inspired photography and open source discussions on topics as diverse as immigration, public protest, the Obama presidency, and the recent economic collapse. The photographs were mostly taken in black and white and with the help of several artists and documentary filmmakers, giving them a strikingly aged and vocal quality. Text is often juxtaposed with ironic imagery, and human subjects feature prominently alongside isolated and often haunting architectural landscapes. Jacobson’s most convincing moments came when exploring the historicity of the Obama inauguration against the strange brew motivating the ground zero mosque protesters. The images presented in both topics revealed a deep seeded historical pain rooted in past events. The key distinction, however, proved to be that while the inauguration emerged as a moment of hope and joy, the mosque protests became rooted in hate and despair.

The afternoon’s event was led by History Department Chair Professor Joanne Ferraro who introduced the legacy of the Appleby Lecture as well as the noteworthy scholar that it honors. She was followed by Professors Steve Colston and Mathew Kuefler who awarded this year’s Appleby Scholarships to Joshua Hammock and Matthew Vasilakis. Professor Edward Blum introduced the afternoon’s speaker and the outdoor reception that followed was lively and well attended. Professor Jacobson’s website “The Historian’s Eye” can be viewed at: www.historianseye.commons.yale.edu

Guy Emerson Mount is currently finishing his M.A. in History at SDSU and will pursue his Ph.D., focusing on African-American history, at the University of Chicago starting this Fall 2011.
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If you would like to join our e-mail list to receive notification about upcoming events, please send a note to: bakashia@mail.sdsu.edu

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