Language and Culture

Language and Culture is the quarterly electronic magazine of the School of Languages and Cultures in the Faculty of Arts at Sydney University. It explores current issues in the field of languages and cultures and provides updates on the activities of the School.

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My warmest welcome to colleagues and students as we begin a new academic year in the School of Languages and Cultures. I trust that your time away was enjoyable. Welcome as well to our other readers whose interest in and support of the work of the School we deeply appreciate.

We begin the year with the very good news that we have new members of staff. The Chinese Studies department has been wonderfully enhanced by the arrival of Dr Esther Klein and Dr Zhao Xiaohuan who, in their respective continuing positions as lecturer and senior lecturer, will contribute to our programs in Chinese history and literature. For her first two years Dr Klein's position is funded thanks to the University’s China Studies Centre. We are grateful to the leadership of the Centre for their support and collaboration. The department of Germanic Studies has welcomed Dr Tristan Lay who will oversee the language pedagogy in the department. Our Korean Studies department will welcome at midyear our new lecturer in contemporary Korean society and culture, Dr Su-kyoung Hwang. Dr Barrie Wharton has been appointed senior lecturer in Spanish and Latin American Studies and will arrive midyear, in time for semester two. Finally, Dr Vannessa Hearman, our new lecturer of Indonesian Studies, will be with us for the next few years enriching our language and culture teaching in that department.
In future issues of the journal this year we will profile our new colleagues in the School, sharing with you the details of their training, experience, and interests. I hope you will then see why I am so enthusiastic about our new appointments: they internationalise our School, diversify our staff, and deepen our teaching and research expertise in all sorts of unexpected ways. We have other, more senior, recruitments in the works but it is still a bit too early for me to make any announcements. I hope to do so, however, by the time of our next issue of this newsletter.

I know that many of our students spent their summer months travelling and in a number of cases took advantage of “summer abroad” study programs to improve their language, to engage with another culture, or simply to have fun immersing themselves in something completely different. I am delighted by the fact that we in the School helped to create one of the newest and most stimulating of such opportunities: in-country Chinese language study at Peking University. A description of this unique and innovative program follows immediately after my welcome in this issue of the School’s magazine. But since I am personally proud of the success of the program let me add a few observations of my own. We are the only university in Australia to offer our students the chance to study the Chinese language at a Chinese university in a language program that we ourselves manage and coordinate and thus can give them Sydney University credit points.

Our program focused on second-year language study. Students who completed the first year here on our campus were able seamlessly to continue their studies in Beijing and then return here knowing that what they did in their summer intensive prepared them for more advanced language work back home. We kept the program relatively small since it was a trial but were still happy that the slots we made available were filled within two weeks of announcing the program. I am grateful to the staff of the Chinese Studies department for making all of this possible, especially Zhang Xiaowei who accompanied the students to Beijing to make sure that all went well. And students had a ball. Please check the student blog mentioned in Xiaowei’s report. Because of its success we hope to offer a similar intensive language program at Peking University in the winter and then, next summer, we will be offering students a choice: intensive second-year Chinese at Peking University or at Fudan University in Shanghai. It is possible that the model we used in setting up the Beijing program will work for some of our other departments though it may well be that the great willingness of Chinese universities to work with us and the relative affordability of their programs may make it difficult to replicate our China experience elsewhere in the world. But we will nonetheless be on the lookout since all of my colleagues are convinced that high-quality in-country language immersion is an invaluable and essential element in the study of all the languages we teach.
Last year’s inaugural Sydney Summer School at Peking University (PKU or “BeiDa”) was a great success, with all 59 University of Sydney students graduating from the intensive four-week program, which finished on 21 December. The program was offered by the Department of Chinese Studies at the University of Sydney.

Peking University, one of the most highly regarded universities in China, has the longest history of any Chinese university of teaching the Chinese language to international students, and the University of Sydney is honoured to be the first and the only university in Australia to conduct an in-country study program here. The success of this cooperative endeavour establishes a solid foundation for a continuing relationship between the universities, including further intensive programs such as this.

The program commenced on 26 November 2012 and consisted of four weeks of intensive language instruction with 80 hours of face-to-face learning in the classroom, plus 5 weekend cultural excursions, including tours of famous historical sites and theatre visits. The students, all of whom successfully
completed the course, earned 6 senior credit points towards their degrees.

As well as greatly enhancing the students’ Chinese language skills, the program enriched their knowledge and understanding of Chinese culture and society, providing them with an experience that will motivate them to continue with their study of Chinese language and culture with new enthusiasm, and increasing the number who take their major in Chinese studies.

Xiaowei Zhang, the International Coordinator of the Department of Chinese Studies, accompanied the students and was on-site to coordinate the program at Peking University for the duration of the course.

China Exchange BLOG!

During the course of their studies at Peking University, students and teachers contributed to this blog, recounting their experiences of Beijing and their studies, the people they met and the life they experienced there. To catch up on their posts and photos, go to

On January 23-25, the Japanese Studies Department hosted an international conference entitled “Women’s Manga in Asia: Glocalizing Different Cultures and Identities.” The conference, the fourth international meeting of the Women’s Manga Research Project (JSPS KAKENHI Grant Number 24320047), was organized by Dr Rebecca Suter from the University of Sydney, and Dr Fusami Ogi from Chikushi Jogakuen University.

Manga are story-long Japanese comics. While in other countries comics are generally designed for a young audience and are fantastical in nature, manga encompass a wide variety of genres and themes, and are aimed at a readership of all ages. Although Western, particularly North American, comics, have often been targeted at young male readers, in the case of Japanese manga, gender boundaries have been falling as well, and shōjo manga, comics written by and for young women, are thriving both in the commercial and in the amateur market.
The medium first developed as culturally specific to Japan, but in more recent years a truly global manga boom has been underway. Today, manga artists are no longer limited to being Japanese people, nor does a manga necessarily have to be a Japanese product. The manga boom has been particularly striking in the realm of shōjo, and more girls and women are creating and reading comics/manga worldwide. For this reason, it is crucial to explore the relation between women and comics/manga from ever-broader perspectives worldwide, globally as well as locally. The conference addressed precisely this issue, by looking at women’s manga production and consumption in the Asia-Pacific region, in order to explore issues of gender, genre, and cross-cultural negotiation.

On the first two days of the conference, held at the University of Sydney, there were papers by academics from SLC, and international scholars and postgraduate students from Japan, Taiwan, the United States, Europe, and Australia. Keynote speakers were Prof. Tomoko Aoyama from the University of Queensland and Dr. Fran Martin from the University of Melbourne. The conference was very well attended and discussions were productive and stimulating; the organizers are currently collecting the papers to produce a publication.

The third day, held at the Art Gallery of New South Wales, hosted a lecture by Professor Masami Toku from California State University about her international exhibition on shōjo manga, “Girls Power!” and a workshop by four women manga artists from Japan, Singapore, and Australia, Mika Ikeda, FSC, Queenie Chan, and Madeline Rosca. The artist workshop was particularly fascinating; the authors discussed what it means to draw manga inside and outside Japan, the difference between the Anglophone and Japanese comic industries, and their own creative process, including practical drawing demonstrations on screen.
Avril Alba, Hebrew Biblical and Jewish Studies

The School of Language and Culture’s Department of Hebrew, Biblical and Jewish Studies (HBJS) was well represented in both organisation and conference papers given at the 25th Annual Conference of the Australian Association of Jewish Studies held in Sydney in February 2013.

The conference was co-convened by Professor Suzanne Rutland and Neta Steigrad, Associate Lecturer in Classical Hebrew Curriculum (Master of Teaching) in our Faculty of Education, with help from Dr Anna Hueneke. Association President Dr Michael Abrahams-Sprod, who is an Honorary Associate and part time lecturer in HBJS, opened the conference. Delegates were then treated to two days of debate and exchange of ideas on a range of topics that fell within the conference theme of Jewish Language, Jewish Culture: The Shaping of Jewish Civilization.

The first day of the conference was held at the Sydney Jewish Museum with the keynote address ‘What do we really know about Ancient Hebrew?’ given by HBJS Chair of Department, Associate Professor Ian Young. Ian spoke about the way that discoveries from outside the Bible (inscriptions and the Dead Sea Scrolls) have challenged older scholarly models of the nature and development of ancient Hebrew. International presenters included Assistant Professor Navras Jaat Aafreedi, (Department of History and Civilization at Gautam Buddha University, Uttar Pradesh, India) who presented a ground-breaking paper on the Indian Muslim involvement with the Hebrew Language. Hebrew language education also featured prominently on the program with Dr Zehavit Gross, (Bar Ilan University) and Professor Rutland presenting the findings on the teaching of Modern Hebrew in Jewish day schools both in Australia and the Pacific region, as part of a five-year research project funded by the Pratt Foundation.

Other HBJS presenters included 2012 Honours student Sean Sidky who gave a paper based on his thesis topic—an exploration of Elie Wiesel’s original Yiddish version of the memoir that became known to the English speaking world as ‘Night’. Sean received the University Medal for a joint Honours undertaken with the SLC’s Program in International Comparative Literary Studies and HBJS. Dr Ari Lobel presented a thought provoking paper contrasting modern scholarly and rabbinic commentaries on why Jews returning
to Israel in the Second Temple period chose to use the Aramaic or Assyrian scripts to write the Torah, when tradition had it that God himself had written the Ten Commandments and the Torah with the original Hebrew script. Dr Marianne Dacey, an HBJS graduate and the Director of the Archive of Australian Judaica, presented a paper entitled ‘The Eschatological Jerusalem in Qumran and Later Texts’. Finally, Dr Racheline Barda, a recent HBJS graduate, analysed the influence of French language and culture on Egyptian Jewry and current HBJS doctoral student Jan Poddebsky gave a paper entitled ‘Dancing Moments’. Her presentation led to a lively discussion and reflections on the contributions of the Yemenite community to the culture of Israel and throughout the Jewish world in terms of a more individualistic style of folk dancing, compared with the hora, which was from Romania.

Other presenters included Professor Ghil’ad Zuckermann (University of Adelaide) who gave a paper arguing that it was the descendants of the first wave of Zionists revitalising Modern Hebrew, that truly shaped this ‘new Jewish language’ which he labels ‘Israeli’. Language use in the Sephardi world was also well represented with Dr Myer Samra’s presenting on the Jews of Baghdad and their Arabic dialect and Judy Campbell speaking about her current project, the creation of a musical about the exodus of Egyptian Jews in the 1950s and 1960s, using the idiom of Broadway which was developed by Jews from Eastern Europe who had migrated to America.

The conference also included musical presentations from Heather Lee and Kim Cunio who demonstrated Sephardi and Mizrachi music, playing and singing melodious extracts from their settings from texts including the Dead Sea Scrolls, ‘Apostrophe to Zion’ (a psalm not found in the Bible but in Qumran). They utilised several instruments from the Medieval and early music period, such as the oud and the triangular psaltery, a medieval Western instrument that is a close relation of the asor (harp) in the Bible. The hurdy-gurdy, a medieval instrument played by bowing a wheel, was also used to accompany secular Ladino repertoire.

A selection of conference papers will be published in the 2013 edition of the Australian Journal of Jewish Studies and planning is already underway for the 2014 conference to be held at the University of Adelaide.


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School News

Language Library video library now online
The entire video contents of the SLC language library has been digitised and has been made available to staff and students on the internet.

The videos consist of several hundred films and documentaries in over a dozen different languages. This list will continue to grow as the School continues to make more videos from the current database available over the coming months, as well as recording new films and programs for upload.

This is just the first step in a process that will also include the upload of over 2,500 audio recordings currently in the Language Library holdings.

Online streaming access has many advantages. Students and staff are not limited to the single location/single copy of the old Language Library, but can access the material on any computer connected to the University network: at home, on their laptops, or on any one of the 700 computers in the newly refurbished Fisher Library, including in the new sound-proof booths, meeting rooms and mini-theatres.

This digital language material is held in one of 12 language eCommunities on the University’s Learning Management System. Staff and students can log in and self-enrol in the eCommunities of their choice. The link is https://elearning.sydney.edu.au/webapps/portal/frameset.jsp

eCommunities are one of many improvements slated for the Universities Learning Management System, with other collaborative modules being prepared for use in the near future.

Buddhist Studies

On 10 January 2013, Wendi Adamek gave a talk “Making Buddhist Ancestors: Portrait Statues at Baoshan” at the School of Oriental and African Studies of University of London.

Mark Allon spoke on “Recent discoveries of Buddhist manuscripts from ancient Gandhāra (Afghanistan/ Pakistan)” at the School of Philosophy’s Sanskrit Week, Wahroonga, 9th January 2013. He gave a guest lecture “Creation, spread and adaptations of Buddhism along the Silk Road” for The University of NSW’s ARTS2458 Along the Silk Road: Conquerors, Traders and Explorers, 25 January 2013. He also attended the Advisory Board Meeting of the Dhammachai Tipitaka Project, a project which is producing a new edition of the Pali Buddhist canon, and the Pali Tipitaka Conference The Transmission of Dhamma: from the Buddha Time to the Present Day, Dhammachai Tipitaka Project, Wat Phra Dhammakaya, Thailand, 22nd to 23rd February 2013.

Italian Studies

Giorgia Alù gave an invited talk at the University of Fordham (New York) on “Photography and Literature: Interactions in Italian Culture”, (25 January 2013).

M. Cristina Mauceri, Cassamarca Lecturer, gave an invited lecture at the Université de Toulouse (1 February 2013), the University of Copenhagen (13 February 2013) and at the Università di Roma Sapienza (21 February 2013) on the emotional connotation of food in transcultural Italian writers: “Dalla bocca al cuore: La dimensione culturale e affettiva del cibo in alcuni scrittori transculturali in Italia”.

Antonia Rubino presented a joint paper with Associate Professor Ken Cruickshank (Faculty of Education and Social Work) at the International Symposium on “Approaches to Researching Language and Identity” (University of Sydney, 9 November 2012). The title of the paper was “Language and identity research issues in multilingual sites: Community languages in Australia.”

Antonia Rubino was a plenary speaker at the Conference of the Applied Linguistics Association of Italy, at the University of Palermo (21-23 February). Her talk was on Italian as a migrant language and as a second language in Australia.

French Studies

New journal: The Journal of World Languages
Alice Caffarel-Cayron will be an Associate Editor on a new journal that has been accepted for publication by Routledge Taylor and Francis Group for publication from 2014: the Journal of World Languages.

‘The aim is to produce a journal which recognizes that the phenomenon of becoming a world language encompasses a growing number of languages with significant implications for the development of these languages. In addition, the journal encourages a comparative approach looking at differences and similarities in terms of patterns of growth, and also the different roles of language pedagogy, the media, the economy, etc. in contributing to growth of a language into a world language.’ (Jonathan Webster, Editor)

The journal is a promising new avenue for publication opportunities for scholars in the School of Languages and Cultures.
Acclaimed Egyptian author Ahdaf Souief was in January this year a guest at the Sydney Ideas lecture series at the University of Sydney.

In conversation with Dr Lucia Sorbera of the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies, and introduced by the Head of School Professor Jeffrey Riegel, Ahdaf Souief spoke of her experiences witnessing and reporting on the revolutionary events in Tahrir Square during the events in Cairo of the so-called “Arab Spring”, experiences reflected in her book, the 2012 memoir *Cairo, My City Our Revolution*. The evening provided an excellent opportunity for the University of Sydney and the community at large to hear about these events in Egypt from an eyewitness to them.

Ahdaf Souief is in Australia as a guest of the Perth Writers Festival and Adelaide Writers Week, who worked with Sydney Ideas to make her available for this one-off Sydney event.

A video of the event and a podcast, are available for streaming/download at: sydney.edu.au/sydney_ideas/lectures/2013/ahdaf_souief.shtml

Ahdaf Souief was educated in Cairo and London and publishes in both Arabic and English. Her novel *The Map of Love* was translated into 21 languages and shortlisted for the Man Booker Prize in 1999. The characters of her stories cross the borders between the Middle East and Europe leading many critics to label her a “transnational writer.” The entanglement between political history and the everyday life of ordinary people makes her novels significant as well to scholars of cultural history and gender studies.

In 2004 Ms Souief published a translation of the novel *I Saw Ramallah* by the Palestinian writer Murid al-Barghouti with a foreword by Edward Said. This is only one among her experiences of cultural activism inspired by the cause of the Palestinian people. And Adhaf Soueif and her family have been part of the Egyptian revolution since its inception.

Dr Lucia Sorbera, who conducted the interview, is a lecturer in the Department of Arabic and Islamic Studies at the University of Sydney. She will be offering a new unit of study on “Gendering History in the Arab World,” which will feature many of Ahdaf Soueif’s works.
Lionel Babicz took part in a round-table organised by the Maison franco-japonaise in Tokyo on 13 December 2012, on “History and Reconciliation: Japan-Korea, France-Algeria, and Beyond.”

Chairied by the specialist on Japanese colonialism Arnaud Nanta (Centre National de la Recherche Scientifique), the Tokyo round-table brought together experts from different backgrounds. The main presentations were given by the Japanese military historian KUROSAWA Fumitaka (Tokyo Women’s Christian University), who has recently edited a book on “History and Reconciliation”; the scholar of French colonialism and Algerian history Akihito Kudo (Gakushuin Women’s College); and Lionel Babicz, who is working on the history of modern Japanese-Korean relations. Other participants were Nobuko Kosuge (Yamanashi Gakuin University), who has written abundantly on Japanese-English reconciliation, and Hisaki Kenmochi (University of Shizuoka), a specialist on Franco-German relations.

The event was held just a few days before the first State visit to Algeria of the new French President, François Hollande, to commemorate the fiftieth anniversary of the Algerian independence in 1962. Two years ago, Tokyo and Seoul commemorate the hundredth anniversary of the Japanese annexation of Korea in 1910.

The process of reconciliation that has taken place since liberation must also be studied through a decolonisation paradigm. The Franco-Algerian and Japanese-Korean couples are two variants of a very similar post-colonial situation. The relationship within each of these couples is mainly dictated by geopolitical factors and policy choices, but the colonial past still casts its shadow both on the past colonisers and on their past victims.

The roundtable participants noted that the proximity of these anniversaries was highlighting the relevance of a comparative analysis of these two colonial and postcolonial situations. Japanese colonialism in Korea was motivated by ideas partly similar to the policy implemented by the French in Algeria. Both Korea and Algeria were an integral part of the national territory, and the fate of the two provinces was to be total assimilation.
Asian Studies
An article about the work of Dr Baoping Li on Chinese porcelain and ship-wrecks appeared recently in the Sydney Morning Herald:
[link to the story]

2012 ASAA President’s Prize
Late in 2012 the Asian Studies Association of Australia (ASAA) announced its President’s Prize for the best thesis on Asia awarded in 2011. The winner is recent doctoral graduate Hongwei Bao, who wrote the winning dissertation, entitled ‘Queer comrades: Gay identity and politics in postcolonialist China’, in the School of Languages and Cultures at the University of Sydney. Dr Bao will receive a prize in the sum of $1,500. He will also receive the DK Book Award worth $500.00, presented by DK Agencies, the global book distributor based in New Delhi, and a three year membership of the ASAA.

Committee members were enthusiastic in their approval of Bao’s thesis, which explores the attempts by gay men and women in China to define for themselves lives and roles that are at once rooted in the culture in which they were born and, at the same time, the larger, global, gay movement of which they inevitably play a part. One of the prize committee’s judges described it as, ‘A truly remarkable thesis that doesn’t fit into any box, takes risks, and breaks rules. It engages across disciplines with both a wide range of Western theory and Chinese thought to interpret and give meaning to the experience and contested identity of gay people within the social tumult of contemporary China. The author is an acute observer of social change and discourse from the inside (China) and the outside (Australia). What I like most is the style of his engagement with theory, never becoming its prisoner but drawing on it like a composer to explore variations on a theme’.

Congratulations Hongwei Bao!

Congratulations
To Vrasidas Karalis, Chair of Modern Greek Studies, for his promotion to Professor.

Welcome New Staff
Profiles of our new staff members will appear in future editions of Language and Culture.

Dr Tristan Lay
Department of Germanic Studies

Dr Vanessa Hearman
Department of Indonesian Studies

Dr Esther Klein
Department of Chinese Studies

Dr Xiaohuan Zhao
Department of Chinese Studies
The following departments and programs are located in the School of Languages and Cultures:

- Arabic & Islamic Studies
- Asian Studies Program
- Buddhist Studies Program
- Chinese Studies
- European Studies Program
- French Studies
- Germanic Studies
- Hebrew, Biblical & Jewish Studies
- Indian Subcontinental Studies
- Indonesian Studies
- International & Comparative Literary Studies Program
- Italian Studies
- Japanese Studies
- Korean Studies
- Modern Greek Studies
- Spanish & Latin American Studies

More Information

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