DANGER!

ROBOTS
RUN AMOK
AT ESU!
How a Small University Does BIG-TIME Research

I’m pleased to introduce Emporia State University’s first research magazine, QUEST. Within its pages, you’ll find out how a few of ESU’s researchers and scholars do big research at a small university like Emporia State.

It’s impressive. ESU’s professors actively go after grants and aid that further our knowledge about a wide range of subjects: from cancer research to the way robots can be used to teach a host of topics, including math and science. Two professors fly huge kites that carry heavy camera equipment so they can study the effects of global warming on marshes. Two other professors have devoted their life’s work to improving education across the country and around the world. These ESU professors help children learn in a variety of ways across the curriculum.

The books they write are just as impressive. A campus professor and poet wrote a book that the Kansas Library Association named most notable. Another professor has written a book on a railroad debacle that shows the effects of government overregulation while another writes about how amputees after the Civil War dealt with their own self-image. Emporia State’s institutes, such as the university’s Small Business Development Center, helped 20 start-up companies obtain more than $2 million in capital.

The inspiring list goes on and on proving that Big research can take place at a small university like Emporia State.

I’m proud to be associated with colleagues like these, colleagues who help our state, region and nation as well as their students.

Enjoy!

Dr. Kathy Ermler
Dean, ESU Graduate School and Distance Education
Everyday Drama

BY RACHEL LeFLORE

A man is trapped in a cave filling with water. Five people are attempting to dispose of a dead horse. A woman in the shower hears a frightening noise. Drama. Intensity. Difficult situations. These are the types of circumstances Associate Professor Amy Sage Webb, co-director of the creative writing program at Emporia State University, deals with on a daily basis.

And, yes, every student taking her intro class must suffer through the infamous “Dead Horse” assignment. Every student in her advanced fiction class must terrify a woman in the shower. What’s so compelling about these student-written stories that keeps Webb coming back to the classroom for more? “It’s play,” she explains. “I don’t have big political agendas.” To her, it’s the thrill of the hunt that keeps her interested, the excitement of sleuthing solutions.

Whenever a general principle is challenged in class or by a student’s work, she goes back to the drawing board to test it and see whether it’s always true. For example, the general rule that the characters need to be doing something (the object lesson of the “Dead Horse” assignment) for drama to happen is a theory she is currently testing by attempting a story about a man who is trapped in a cave filling up with water. “You have a dramatic situation there,” she explains, “but it’s not interesting.”

The key, she discovered, was traversing the character’s past through his mind. “It’s turning out like a memoir.” Webb also loves teaching simply for the experience. “It’s one thing to say a student has mastered a certain course or material,” she says, “but it’s the light-bulb moment of recognition that’s the payoff: “The first encounter with a new sound is special.”

Although she’s taught in a variety of places, including classes for delinquent girls and in a women’s prison, ESU is uniquely appealing for Webb. “I like knowing my students well,” she says. At ESU she teaches intro classes, oversees graduate theses, and does everything in between. “You don’t get that kind of experience at bigger schools.”

Sometimes the friendship extends beyond the ESU college experience. Her office door and cabinets are littered with memorabilia from her students, much of which was acquired after they had graduated and moved away. A picture of her with a former student is clipped up by her computer. “We take a picture in front of this restaurant every time I visit Chicago,” she explains. There’s an obvious hint of pride as she points to it.

So what now? How will all of this affect our world? Webb describes her view of the future as “optimistic” and “inspired.” She’s working on a pedagogy and theory book, as well as a short fiction one.

It’s her students, however, who fuel her future plans. “It’s exciting to watch an entirely new generation of writers.”
A Fish Tale

Dr. David Edds in the field with his students.

Visualize a world full of colorful creatures. With just a little effort, you might be the first to discover one.

This is the everlasting appeal of ichthyology (the study of fish) for Dr. David Edds, biology professor, and his ESU students.

“One of my favorite things about teaching is seeing students discover that world,” he says, his eyes lighting up with enthusiasm. “The first time they pull up that fish net and get a glimpse of what’s in the water, it’s just inspiring.”

Edds himself fell in love with fish as a student. “I was a journalism major,” he says. “Then I took an environmental biology class.” That really turned him on to fish. This enthusiasm. “The first time students are currently working on is investigating the spread of zebra mussels, an accidental import of the Baltic and Caspian seas to United States waterways. They have no natural predators in the continental U.S.,” Edds explains. “Their population explosion has gone unchecked.” It is such a big deal, in fact, that one of the graduate students he “guides” is working on a master’s thesis on zebra mussels in the Neosho River Basin.

And speaking of graduate students, Edds has worked with more than 20 in the past 20 years. He points to the shelf containing their theses, his face full of pride. “They haven’t just studied fish,” he says. “They also studied insects, freshwater mussels and turtles.” For someone as hands-on as Edds, Emporia State University is unique in offering him the best of two worlds. “It’s the tie between the classroom and the field. In the classroom, we study the theory. Then we go out to the field and test the theory. It makes us better teachers,” Edds explains.

“We bring new knowledge to the classroom.” —Rachel LeFlore

Growing Diversity

A $857,754 grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services, Laura Bush Libraries for the 21st Century Program has helped 36 minority students work toward their advanced degrees and continue their educations through Emporia State University’s School of Library and Information Management.

The “Emporia Diversity Initiative: Matching Recruitment with Retention Strategies” impacts these students in a variety of ways. The grant pays for their tuition, books and three annual scholarships. “The experience of working in an academic library has given me an incredible chance to promote academic achievement whether I am working one-on-one with a student or teaching in front of a class full of students,” he points out.

Alexander obtained an extension to the program last July and now an additional 18 students will benefit from the Diversity Initiative. “It has done so much for students who might not have had this kind of opportunity,” she says.

“We want to help more students further their careers in library and information management.” —Bill Noblitt

School of Library and Information Management Dean Gwen Alexander works to increase minority interest in her field.
Finding Your Way in a Global Economy

What’s important to you? Knowledge? Friendship? Personal growth? If so, a career in global trade might be right for you.
Dr. Raffaele DeVito, a School of Business professor, explains how these things fit together. His research focuses on international trade taking place in Kansas. Working on this board meant meeting with Chinese manufacturers (while on sabbatical in China), and encouraging his students to open their minds to study abroad. The council also selects the recipient of the Governor’s Exporter of the Year Award. He described his six-month-long project as “rigorous.”

DeVito could just get them over there for a few weeks, he could give them a taste of another culture and, hopefully, they would want to go back. A lifetime of international experience makes DeVito a great communicator. “Anytime you go somewhere, you have stories to tell,” he says.

TESOL Scores
The school-age population of students who speak English as a second language in the U.S. has grown by more than 169 percent from 1979 to 2003. It’s projected that by 2030, 40 percent of the total school-age population. That’s where ESU’s Teacher of the Year recipients.

“I will occasionally say something (in Mandarin) to a Chinese student,” he says. “They look surprised. It’s good to have them in the classroom. I like to group them with American students, mix the pot a little.”

His passion for international experience extends to his students. In addition to encouraging his students to open their minds to study a second language, he hopes to inspire them to go overseas for themselves.

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—Rachel LeFlore

7
What Can a Fistful of Robots Teach Us? Just Ask Education Professors Seimears and Eberle

BY BILL NUBLITT

How can building robots help elementary, middle and even high school students learn about math, physics, reading, writing and engineering? And what kind of robots are we talking about here? R2D2, C3PO from Star Wars or that stunning robot babe from the silent film Metropolis?

No, at least not at ESU’s Teachers College. These are much smaller and toy-like but no less important.

In fact, two different professors use robots in diverse, experimental ways to inspire their students—who will become teachers—to use robots in their classrooms. What will their K-12 students someday learn? Both ESU professors believe they learn the basic skills of math, physics and engineering. But Dr. Jane Eberle, education professor, takes it further. She believes that literature, such as books like I Robot, or that stunning robotic performance in the film Metropolis, can be used as an innovative way to teach skills in all disciplines.

On the other hand, Dr. Matt Seimears, education professor, challenges his class in a competition with middle school and high school students to build robots that must perform preset tasks, such as collecting moon rocks or delivering a first-aid kit to an injured person. The robot that does it the best wins. The students, both ESU graduates and high school students, work together to put on the competition. ESU is the pilot site for the ESU Missile and Capes work together to put on the competition. ESU is the pilot site for the ESU Missile and Capes work together to put on the competition. ESU is the pilot site for the ESU Missile and Capes work together to put on the competition. ESU is the pilot site for the ESU Missile and Capes work together to put on the competition. ESU is the pilot site for the ESU Missile and Capes work together to put on the competition.

The company flew Seimears to Washington, D.C., to speak to more than 50 K-12 SKILLS USA representatives about the robot module model. ESU is on the cutting edge of using the robot-building technique in the classroom. Scott Capes, an ESU graduate, also uses STEM in his Emporia High School classes. Seimears and Capes work together to put on the competition. ESU is the pilot site for STEM. “We’re now partners with Vernier and Skills USA,” Seimears says. “Our goal is to get students to go into science and technology fields.”

Zach Rampy, an ESU junior, knows the value of using robots in science classrooms. “Students learn to think critically,” he says. “Science becomes more than a pencil and paper exercise. It’s a hands-on experience, so students better grasp the science concepts involved.”

Building robots allowed me to think like a kid again,” says ESU senior Megan Biehler. “It’s neat that these eighth graders beat us.”

As an elementary teacher, Professor Eberle used Legos in her classrooms to motivate students. She quickly saw the benefits of hands-on learning, but her goals are much broader at ESU. “I want my students to integrate technology into every elementary classroom subject,” she explains. “They have to use graphing calculators with robots in hand.”

Professors Seimears and Eberle with robots in hand.

They have to use graphing calculations in building them and thus they learn math concepts. They explore the ethics of building robots and learn how different cultures use robots in their lives.”

But it’s that teamwork concept that is most important.

“Kids who may not have the hands-on skills depend on others who do,” she says. “It becomes a peer tutoring exercise. Students learn the strengths and weaknesses of others and learn that we all bring important skills to the table to make the world work.”

Eberle gives her students the materials to build the robots, but it’s up to them to do it. She merely teaches them how to use the computer to program them.

And she asks her students the tough questions: “How did building the robots, studying the literature and writing about them change your values and your views?”

They learn something else important too. Self-esteem because a person learns that by building something that works she or he understands that “yes, I can do this.”

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Max McCoy, assistant professor of journalism, is writing about meteorites.

He has written award-winning investigative news pieces and critically acclaimed western noir novels. His work even includes some of the books in the Indiana Jones series. The subjects in his articles and novels run the gamut from hate groups to unsolved murders. Wild West serial killers and Indy's legendary Crystal Skull.

So, why meteorites? McCoy admits that the book is a departure from his usual work—but not as much as one might think. It has all of the components of a great adventure novel with one big difference: there is nothing fictional about this story. His latest book, Strangely Heavy, is the true account of the search for meteorites on the Kansas plains.

You might not think the Great Plains would be the likely setting for a book about meteorites, but McCoy notes that “meteorites cannot be discussed as a science without talking about Kansas.” He points out there are several places better suited for meteorite hunting than western Kansas, because of the number and significance of the historical finds and the relatively sparse terrain. Antarctica is probably best, he said, followed by some desert regions, because the rocks are easier to spot on large empty expanses. Meteorites have been found worldwide, but about 10 percent of all confirmed finds are in Kansas. The state is also known for recovery of numerous pallasites, a rare type that accounts for less than 3 percent of all meteorites.

Much of the book is set in Kansas, including just outside Greensburg, in Bennham Township in Kiowa County, near the old Kimberly farmstead. Near the end of the 1880s, Eliza Kimberly started collecting “strangely heavy” rocks that were later confirmed to be meteorites. Since meteorite finds are named after the closest town, the area near the Kimberly Farm became known as the Brencham Strewnfield.

These meteorites not only attracted numerous curious visitors but some famous meteor hunters as well. Dr. Harvey Nininger, a native Kansan who would later become known as the Father of American Meteoritics, searched the land for the original meteorite. It was also on the Kimberly Farm that H.O. Stockwell found a 1,000-pound pallasite that would be dubbed the “Space Wanderer” and was one of the largest pallasites ever found.

More than 50 years later a pallasite larger than the Space Wanderer would be discovered only 3½ miles away from that site. The man who discovered this larger 1,430-pound pallasite is one of the subjects of McCoy’s book. Strangely Heavy actually follows two meteorite hunters, Steve Arnold and Donald Stimpson. Both men work extensively near Greensburg and the Brencham Strewnfield, but none of their work is done together. McCoy’s book points out the rivalry and differences between the two, both in personality and in their approaches to meteorites.

Arnold is a self-taught hunter who currently leases the northern portion of the old Kimberly farm. In fact, it was Arnold who discovered the previously-mentioned 1,430-pound pallasite, which he refers to as “The Big Rock.” Arnold is the flashier of the two men and currently has his own show on the Discovery Channel, Meteorite Men. He is arguably the most famous modern meteorite hunter, a title that he wears with pride.

Stimpson, on the other hand, is a retired scientist who owns the southern portion of the Kimberly land. He is more reserved and tends to keep his hunting adventures to himself. He is more comfortable talking about his discoveries in a classroom than he ever would be on TV.

According to McCoy, the two men are “very different from each other, but both very colorful and smart.” As he learned more about meteorites and the book progressed, McCoy’s editor suggested he try some hunting on his own. He traveled to the Mojave Desert, along with his guide Frank Campagnano, and spent several “grueling” days hunting as the mercury climbed to 122 degrees in the shade. Although neither was lucky enough to find a Space Wanderer or Big Rock, they did eventually find a small Gold Basin stone meteorite, weighing about 5 grams.

While Strangely Heavy is still in progress, McCoy sees it as much more than a book about meteorites. The study of meteorites not only gives us valuable information about the past but can also help determine what might happen in the future. “The more we learn, the more we know about the killshot,” he says.

Killshot? McCoy describes it as “death from the sky on a grand scale—a mass extinction event.” We already have proof in the form of large craters that meteorites have previously struck the Earth.

McCoy explains: “The scientific estimate is that such killers come once every 100 million years. It’s been 65 million years since an asteroid smashed into the Yucatan, perhaps contributing to the extinction of the dinosaurs.” Could it be possible that a meteorite of epic proportions could wipe out the human race? “Now, it may not happen for another 35 million years,” he says. “Or, it could happen this afternoon. If it’s this afternoon, what could we do about it? Nothing probably except kiss our loved ones goodbye. But what if we knew a major collision was coming in, say, a year or two? There might be time to mount some kind of defense, some kind of technology to nudge it gently out of the danger zone.”

The killshot actually sounds like something from the Wild West or one of those books about the famous archaeology professor. But that is not so hard to believe since Strangely Heavy is an adventure story after all. The world of meteorites and meteorite hunters is full of fascinating history, suspense, treasure-hunting and rivalry. The difference is that this one just happens to be true.

Assistant Professor Max McCoy searches for lost stones that are strangely heavy.
Many of us only experience devastation and disaster through images and stories that we see on the evening news. The images that Art Therapy Professor Dr. Gae1ynn Wolf Bordonaro uses in her work, however, are not those filmed by cameras and news teams, they are drawn by small hands.

Over the past five years, she has worked with children, educators, doctors, psychologists and other mental health providers all over the world to help them gain an understanding of how art can become an important part of the healing process for children living in areas affected by disasters and epidemics.

As an art therapist, her work has taken her to some of the most devastated areas of the world. In regions affected by natural and human-made disasters, the child victims are often the most difficult to assess because they have difficulty verbally expressing their fears.

Art therapists use many methods to get the children to express their trauma. In addition to encouraging the children to draw, they also use different types of media and directives that are designed to address specific concerns and issues. For example, children can use art materials and found objects to create “safe places” or use images to identify supportive adults.

Drawings, paintings and three-dimensional figures become the tools to role-play experiences and practice new skills. By allowing survivors to draw pictures about their experiences, art therapists can gain insight, as well as overcome language and communication barriers. Drawings that “tell the story” of a traumatic experience are also an important part of mastering distressing events and emotions.

In Haiti, for example, the children created personal symbols of strength, their own strengths as well as the inspiration and support offered by others. They then transferred the symbols onto T-shirts so they could literally wear those symbols of strength. They even decorated T-shirts to be given to individuals and families in the community who, like them, had lost so much in the aftermath of the earthquake. Making art presented a vital opportunity for the children to do something for others, a shared human impulse following a traumatic event.

Wolf Bordonaro traveled to Thailand in 2006 as well as to India in 2007–08 to work with tsunami victims. Her first trip to India with the nonprofit organization Communities Healing through Art (CHART) and the Sangha Foundation focused primarily on children with disabilities.

There were two main goals for the groups in Thailand and India. In the mornings, they were there to “train the trainers.” They provided training for direct care workers. The afternoons were devoted to “response and referral,” which consisted of performing assessments with survivors and evaluating what type of assistance they would need.

In 2009, Wolf Bordonaro traveled with ESU graduate student Ann Blake to South Africa to work with child victims of an entirely different nature. South Africa is one of a growing number of countries on the continent that is ravaged by the AIDS epidemic. This has not only caused a national health emergency but also led to serious cultural ramifications.

It is widely believed in sub-Saharan communities that sexual intercourse with a virgin can cure the AIDS virus. As a result, many of the country’s children have become victims of rape, often by members of their own family. They found the mean age for victims in the clinic where they worked was only two years old, making the use of age-appropriate therapy methods such as art even more relevant.

Wolf Bordonaro explained that the experience in South Africa was unique. “It’s not the same as working with natural disaster victims because the pathology is so vastly different. This belief grew from desperation to find a cure or treatment for the HIV virus.” Wolf Bordonaro continues to work on a project that will connect students here with art therapists in South Africa.

Most recently in 2010, she traveled to Haiti to provide clinical and psychological services to earthquake victims. CHART sent three teams to the region since the February 2010 earthquake and Wolf Bordonaro’s team included ESU alumni Ann Blake and Robin London as well as ESU graduate student Deborah Cottermann.

Haiti was in terrible economic and political turmoil before the earthquake. Many existing issues, such as lack of critical infrastructure, inadequate rescue facilities and miserable living conditions were exacerbated by the disaster. This made their work difficult and also very different from the work done after the tsunami.

“The approach was different,” Wolf Bordonaro explains. “The situations were very different. For many people who experience disasters, particularly natural disasters, the event interrupts their lives and any sense of normacy. In Haiti, not unlike regions impacted by war, long-term political and economic disruptions were exacerbated by the earthquake. The earthquake was not the cause of the turmoil.”

She plans to return to Haiti twice this upcoming spring but even those trips have proved difficult to plan. In addition to the other problems caused by the earthquake, the outbreak of cholera has suspended much of the non-essential travel to Haiti. Although this does not preclude her from traveling to the region, she may not be allowed to take any students with her.
History takes interesting twists and turns. Cultures turn on a dime when a major upheaval takes place. This is the world investigated by Dr. Brian Miller, assistant professor of history at ESU, especially when that investigation involves the U.S. Civil War.

Quite frankly, he says, “I wanted to find out what it would mean to lose a limb in the Civil War.”

Movies depict Civil War doctors as butchers who piled amputated limbs in a pile next to their operating tables. “Not so,” he says now. “In some cases, they didn’t amputate enough. The doctors used a lot of caution before amputating someone’s limbs.”

His investigation into Civil War amputees shed light on conceptions of manhood at the time, specifically Southerners’ self-image. Southerners, he found, cared deeply about their appearance before the war, and losing a limb went to the heart of their visions of self. They dressed appropriately, maybe even strove to be fashionably hip. In antebellum society, Southern men who were missing limbs were considered inferior, and others ridiculed them, according to Miller. This romantic self-image crumbled when men in the war began to lose limbs.

Miller found that in Southern society notions about manhood flipped after the war. “Amputees were no longer considered social outcasts,” he points out. “Women, who before the war might have abandoned them, accepted them with their infirmities.” Furthermore, nurses played an important role in amputees’ integration back into society. “They encouraged the injured men to show their scars to their loved ones,” he says. The women of amputees also had newfound power. Because they had to provide for their husbands’ and lovers’ needs, they became more independent.

States, especially Southern ones, had to play a bigger role in their recovery too. Texas offered amputees land in the West. Alabama offered prosthetic limbs, and other Southern states gave the injured a one-time cash payment. Legislatures began to pass acts to take care of injured Civil War soldiers even though many states were bankrupt after the war.

By and large, Southerners did take care of and accepted their war wounded, Miller says. Many were offered factory jobs, and laws were more lenient for the war wounded who panhandled on street corners.

“In general, cities cracked down on panhandlers except for war veterans,” explains Miller. “There was also a move to crack down on those panhandlers who claimed to be veterans but were not. Those questioned had to provide proof they had served in the Civil War.” Some of the war wounded also ran for office and had successful political careers.

Although the Vietnam War Memorial honors those killed in that conflict, Miller wonders why there is not a memorial for the men and women wounded in that war. His research has also shown it will cost more than $20 billion to take care of the wounded from the Iraq and Afghanistan wars. He believes that the media should report more on the war wounded.

Where did Miller’s passion for history, particularly the Civil War, come from? Even though he grew up in the North, he traveled as a child with his parents across the South where they would take side trips to Civil War battlefields and cemeteries. The scale and scope of the carnage affected him, and he’s still fascinated about that particular moment in time.

Ideas about those who lose limbs in battle continue to change. For example, when he recently visited the Lincoln Memorial, he saw an amputee wearing a blade for a leg jog effortlessly in front of him. A woman, who also witnessed the jogger, told her daughter: “Now, there’s a real man.”
Two ESU Scientists Take Photos from Kites to Explore Earth-Changing Developments

BY BILL NOBLITT

Imagines kites so huge they can lift a person. Imagine very old technology that lifted cameras so high in the 1880s that pictures of the Vatican were taken showing every detail of every statue. Imagine photographic details so startling that rare fern leaves covering a wetland come into view.

Kites and hot air and helium balloons. What are these seemingly outdated technologies doing in the modern geology lab at Emporia State University?

“Kites take cameras much lower than the 500 feet mandated by law for manned aircraft,” explains physical sciences Professor James Aber. “That’s much lower than planes. That’s much lower than even helicopters, which have to stay above 1,000 feet in urban areas. And they’re much cheaper to use. Plus we can cover three different sites in a day. If we were to depend on planes, we wouldn’t be able to do any of this.”

James and his wife Susan (a lecturer in physical sciences), sometimes with students in tow, trapse around marshlands holding kites in the air that photograph details from on high. With their sometimes startling colors and patterns, the photos look like fine art. In fact, their sometimes startling colors and patterns, the photos look like fine art. In fact, their photographic details so startling that rare fern leaves covering a wetland come into view.

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Scientists Susan and James Aber take photos from above.

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There You Go, Man, making poetry and music sing together in perfect harmony, like that blind cat Homer with his lyre.

BY BILL NOBLITT

That man is Associate English Professor Kevin J. Rabas, who teaches poetry and playwriting as well as co-directing ESU’s creative writing program. If you visit several of his websites (www.kevinrabas.com or www.myspace.com/thepetroglyphs), you see him playing music and reading poetry or reading poetry to music, like that other cat, Langston Hughes, and piano player Charles Mingus. It’s ideal that Rabas won the Langston Hughes Award for his poetry. He’s like some post-modern Beat poet howling at the angst and joy of life.

And this brings up several questions. Which is it, man? Does the music influence your poetry or does poetry influence your music? It’s a “chicken or egg” argument to Rabas. After all, he is a skilled jazz musician who trained as a percussionist. Mix well with poetry, and you have a chorus.

This is the way poetry was meant to be. Its ancient roots prove that. Rabas practices what he teaches. He has a gig in Lawrence once a month where he sings his poetry to an abstract tune. Sometimes, you’ll find him in Emporia at the Inner Bean or JavaCat 5 doing the same thing. He moves easily between jazz and poetry and funk and poetry. Maybe this new experimental, experiential technique should be called “jazzy poetry” or “funky poetry.” In this way, according to Rabas, poetry becomes a visual and performance art.

Rabas teaches poetry writing with flair. Take this writing game he calls “Echo”:

Write one line. Write the opposite of the line that precedes it.

**Example:**

Red ants climbed from the anthill on fire.
Water fell from the third story window.
Oxygen came from the tubes and spent. A door closed.
Life is a flock of birds, vibrant and true. The earth opened to rain.

Death is always slow as snails, redundant and recalcitrant, the universe a sieve.

He’s won other awards for his work. His book of poetry, Lisa’s Flying Electric Piano, was named one of Kansas’ most notable books by the Kansas Library Association. His first book, Bird’s Horn and Other Poems, has won similar recognition. What sets Rabas apart from other writers is that he’s multidimensional in the arts.

His poetry recordings include Last Road Trip, a jazz poetry CD featuring Rabas reading original poetry and drumming with Josh Schlar on saxophone, which was produced in 2002. He also co-edits The Flint Hills Review, a creative writing journal from ESU. His poetry comes from the blues, having survived a serious head injury and a broken marriage. These subjects show up in his work.

From “Waterdeep”:

Divorce came. Divorce went. She said, “Take care of yourself,” after the divorce trial, and I said I would. Listening to the band we spent time loving, Waterdeep, I listen for the cracklings, and the silence between us grows cold.

From “How It Happened”:

I was knocked down in a pick up basketball game. The doctors said my brain bounced against my skull, causing bleeding of the brain.

His work tells it like it is and in plain English. No flowery, sugary words here, but words stripped to their core. They seem more powerful that way, don’t they, man?
A HISTORY PROFESSOR MOURNS THE LOSS OF A LEGEND

REQUIEM for a Railroad

BY BILL NOBLITT

The Rock Island Line is a mighty good road
The Rock Island Line is the road to ride
If you want to ride you gotta ride it like you find it
Get your ticket at the station for the Rock Island Line.

Written by Kelly Pace
Performed by many including Lead Belly and Johnny Cash

When Dr. Greg Schneider, ESU professor of history, talks about the Rock Island Railroad and his upcoming book about it, Requiem for a Railroad, you can almost hear Kelly Pace's lyrics to the “Rock Island Line.” They whistle in the distance and leave a warning to overarching regulatory agencies in our own time.

The Rock Island had a tumultuous history, which included three bankruptcies. Here’s a summary of Professor Schneider’s findings: “When the Rock Island and Union Pacific decided to merge, it could not survive the proceedings in the tortured case. “The Interstate Commerce Commission (ICC) took nine years to decide the case, and the Rock Island’s property was disintegrated,” he adds. “In March 1975 it declared bankruptcy, and five years later it was liquidated by the federal court. Still, after paying its creditors and restructur- ing its debt, the new corporation emerged from bankruptcy in 1983.”

How this all happened is high drama. According to Schneider, its board of directors in 1869, killing women and children. Now it’s inspired Schneider to write a history book about its many ups and downs. Schneider is no stranger to the Rock and trains. His grandfather built locomotives in Chicago.

“In my high school history class, I wrote a paper on the Rock Island Railroad,” he remembers. “During my recent research for the book, a bankruptcy attorney by the name of Daniel Murray, who worked to save the Rock Island, gave me an office in Chicago and access to all the court documents.”

Schneider calls the history about the Rock Island a requiem in three acts: “the first is about the railroad being regulated to death and the failed merger with the Union Pacific, the second is about its final bankruptcy and the third is about its liquidation.”

“In the late 1860s, the Rock Island had more than 7,000 miles of track in mostly rural America, a region without a lot of industry,” he explains. “There were signs of problems on the horizon so it tried to merge with the Union Pacific. Over time the Rock’s financial condition had worsened, with losses from 1965-74 of $100 million.”

Schneider’s book covers the final decades of the Rock Island. He charges the ICC with overregulating railroads, ensuring they couldn’t invest in other modes of transportation, “which was fine in the monopoly days, but disastrous in the 1970s.”

Schneider calls it the most egregious violation of a regulatory agency in history. “The ICC almost killed the railroads!” he declares. There were other forces at work too, including the railroad’s management. For example, according to Schneider, its board chose John Ingram, a famous Washingtonian, to lead the Rock.

“Most thought Ingram would be able to bring in money from Washington since he worked there, but they didn’t know that he was hated by almost everyone,” he says. “So the Rock was totally cashless.” In 1970, at about the same time, the Penn Central railroad filed for bank- ruptcy. It was the biggest bankruptcy in history up until that time.

“The government was alarmed by Penn Central’s collapse,” he explains. “The government bailed it out because it believed that the railroad was too big to fail. They created the government-owned Conrail out of six bankrupt northeastern railroads.” Schneider believes this particular bailout foreshadowed the recent bailouts of Bear Stearns, Lehman Brothers and Goldman Sachs.

“The Rock Island lost $100 million during this time,” Schneider points out. “By 1975, the Rock filed for bankruptcy, and it asked the government for $100 million and received $9 million to keep operating, but the Ford administration rejected helping it out.” The Rock’s last gasp was in 1980 brought on by bad weather and strikes, and the railroad liquidated its assets, the largest liquidation in American history to that time.

But its story wasn’t over. By 1983, the Rock Island paid off all its debts and sold its cars, equipment and track. Its shares were worth $250 million. “It became the most successful liquidation in history,” he says. “President Jimmy Carter became the big hero. Because of what happened to the Rock Island, Carter signed the Staggers Act in October 1980, which helped deregulate the railroads. He made this decision after considering the dire condition of the railroads and the liquidation of properties like the Rock Island, Schneider adds.

“The Staggers Act turned the industry around, and this led to 30 years of profitability, yet with fewer railroads.” A legendary railroad, then, left a leg- endary legacy of how to go out of business and showed why it’s called “The Rock.”
Yes, Girls Can Do Math & Science

Girls in Two Emporia State Programs Learn About Becoming Scientists & Mathematicians

BY ELIZABETH McLAIN

These days it’s pretty common for girls to see portrayals of female professionals. There are TV women who are doctors, forensic scientists, engineers and mathematicians. But, sadly, it is rare that young girls get the opportunity to meet women actually working in these fields.

However, there are two programs at ESU that do give girls the opportunity to learn from female professionals who are actually working in these fields.

These programs encourage middle school girls to pursue interests in the STEM fields. Harrell says, “Given that females often tend to get better grades in these areas, it’s kind of strange that more of them do not continue in careers related to mathematics and the sciences. We can encourage them with programs like EYH and MASTER IT.”

EYH has been in existence since 1994 and each year hosts more than 220 girls, grades 6-8, and their adult sponsors. The day-long conference takes place in March and gives the girls the opportunity to explore STEM careers alongside women actually working in the fields. The conference features recognized professionals who speak about their work. The girls also attend career discussions in the morning and hands-on sessions in the afternoon. Hands-on workshops include anything from building your own roller coaster to exploring a crime scene.

Adult sponsors can also attend presentations and the afternoon workshops, but they are not allowed to attend with their own student. Yanik and Harrell agree that it is important for the girls to explore these fields on their own. This program allows them to make informed decisions about which areas they want to pursue. It also gives the adults a chance to experience the workshops on their own.

MASTER IT is an intensive five-day residential program that hosts up to 24 young women each summer. The program is for girls who have completed seventh or eighth grade and who express a serious interest in exploring STEM fields. The program goes far beyond presentations and discussions, however.

As Harrell points out, “They can talk about things in which they are interested with someone who actually does that for a living while also getting hands-on experience.” In the past, the girls have taken trips to the Kansas Cosmosphere, spent an evening stargazing, gone fossil hunting, participated in problem-solving math workshops and been on field trips with biologists to collect samples.

The young women spend their mornings working on activities with ESU math and science faculty. During the afternoon, they get to network with female professionals to learn more about their careers. The women also lead the participants in hands-on activities related to their field of expertise. In the evening, there are social activities with math or science related themes.

EYH and MASTER IT are instrumental in encouraging young women to pursue their interest in STEM fields. “It’s difficult to suddenly decide to become an engineer or scientist since these subject areas build upon themselves,” says Yanik. “It is crucial at this young age that girls are motivated and encouraged to stay in math and science so they have that background.”

It is motivation and encouragement that will shape these young women as they make the move from watching female professionals on TV to becoming role models themselves.

Two of 24 rising eighth and ninth grade girls learn the joys of lab work.
How Can a University Get Students Involved in Research? Two Programs Show How.

The idea that research opportunities should be reserved for graduate students is becoming a thing of the past. ESU undergraduates have the opportunity to participate in research through two programs, Kansas Idea Network of Bio-medical Research Excellence and ESU's Summer Undergraduate Program. The Kansas Idea Network was the basis for ESU's Summer Undergraduate Program. Dr. Tim Burnett, associate professor of biological sciences, is the campus coordinator for the Kansas Idea Network and the committee chair who developed the Summer Research Program. In fact, the Kansas Idea Network model provided a template to use in developing one for the entire campus.

The Kansas Idea Network is funded by a National Institutes of Health grant, and ESU is part of a university network that was awarded in 2003. The Kansas Idea Network has provided nearly $800,000 in support with $170,000 of that being used for scholarships. The funding assists with student training and securing equipment and preliminary data for the research. The Kansas Idea Network’s impact goes beyond the funding’s scope. The grants allow students to focus on research as part of their education. They are able to spend more time on projects and make valuable contributions to faculty research. At the same time, the funding has made research facilities more modern. Updated laboratories allow students to use modern tools and explore the latest research methods. The Kansas Idea Network’s success prompted ESU’s Undergraduate Research, Scholarship and Creative Activities Committee to use it as a model in developing the Summer Research Program. The committee, however, wanted the program to encourage all departments to participate, not just those in biomedical research. Juniors or below are recommended for the program by a faculty mentor. Selected students work directly with their faculty mentor for eight weeks in a full-time, intensive research program. The student awards can total up to $7,000 with $2,500 for summer scholarship, $3,000 for faculty salary and up to $1,500 in supplies.

Burnett believes the undergraduate research committee is a catalyst for expanding ESU’s research opportunities. “My hope is that the summer program will inspire these same types of transformations in other departments and that undergraduate research will emerge as a defining characteristic of our campus.” After just one year, the program is already having an impact. Stephen Jowers, a student in Early Childhood/Elementary Teacher Education participated in a research program last summer. Jowers worked with his mentor, Dr. Melissa Reed, on a project titled “Leer Entre Lineas: Helping ELL Students Succeed in the Classroom.” They will present their findings at a conference in March and also plan to submit an article to the Kansas Journal of Reading in May.

For students and faculty participating in the Kansas Idea Network and Summer Research programs, the experience extends far beyond the semester or the summer. These programs give undergraduates invaluable research experience. By building research relationships early, students can move into graduate programs with a true passion for research.
Changes to the educational system in Kansas do not always happen quickly, but the people and programs at the Jones Institute for Educational Excellence (JIEE) are constantly working to identify and address these issues. JIEE is home to many types of programs and research that support practicing teachers, Pre-K-12 students and unified school districts in Kansas. School improvement, professional development opportunities for teachers and advanced learning techniques for students are just one part of a much larger picture.

Reading Recovery
“I don’t like to call Reading Recovery a program, it’s an intervention,” says Dr. Suzanne DeWeese, a teacher reader for Reading Recovery. “It’s a short-term, one-on-one literacy intervention for first graders who are identified as being at risk for failure in reading and writing.” Reading Recovery is part of a support system for regular classroom instruction. The objective is to identify and assist at-risk students so that they are able to read and write within the level of their class.

The success of Reading Recovery is evident in the improvement in classroom retention rates and a decrease in the number of students being placed in special education programs. A small study of students completing Reading Recovery in 2009-10 found that 80 percent scored at the expected level or higher. The success of the program is due in large part to the fact that the teachers may encounter when working with students. The mini-docs are being made available at the academy’s website (www.emporia.edu/jones/kmeacademy/videos.html).

Mathematics and Science Partnership
The MSP matches universities with public schools in an effort to improve the math skills of students at the Kindergarten through eighth grade levels. Carrie Davis, an MSP math coach says that the purpose of the program is to increase the math knowledge of teachers and to help them develop a better understanding of math content. By changing the way teachers deliver content and widening their knowledge base, they can improve student learning. The MSP is federally funded through No Child Left Behind. The Kansas program is funded for the 2011-12 year through No Child Left Behind. The Kansas program is funded for the 2011-12 year.

Great Plains Center
Since 1993 the Great Plains Center for National Teacher Certification has assisted Kansas teachers seeking national board certification. The process is completely voluntary and calls for teachers to take part in a rigorous assessment of their teaching practices. Teachers submit portfolios, complete computer assessments, and are evaluated by a teacher in their field.

“I am here for any teacher going through the process,” says Dr. Roger Caswell, GPC’s director. “There is 24/7 support and our success rate shows that this type of support really helps. Many teachers do not get certified in their first year, the national average is around 40 percent, the success rate here is 81 percent.” GPC also holds a two-day orientation academy. The academy is sponsored by State Farm, which has provided nearly $96,000 in funding over the last 12 years.

Center for Innovative School Leadership
Established in 2004 by the Kansas Legislature, CISL performs reviews of school districts to help them identify ways they can improve efficiency and effectiveness. The district volunteers for the review collect data, visit on-site and write a report. Teams of experts evaluate the district in four key areas: teaching and learning, facilities management, leadership and human resources.

The recommendations made by the teams aren’t strictly cost-cutting ideas. “It’s not just about saving money,” CISL Director Bill Sailors explains. “Sometimes efficiency might cost money. For example if a district is still doing its accounting by hand and it would be more efficient for them to use accounting software, then we recommend that. It will cost them money in the short-term but save them money later.”

Other Jones Institute Programs
All of the planning and events that take place at JIEE are organized and promoted by the institute. Toni Bowling, director of workshops and conferences, says that the conference programming and the workshops are very important. “They bring regional experts to the area and provide opportunities for professional development for practicing educators.” Additionally, the special projects office, directed by Lucie Eusey, is responsible for organizing several events for The Teachers College including the Honors Banquet and the Faculty Recognition awards. Special Projects also works with academic units at ESU to bring nationally recognized education experts to campus for the Jones Distinguished Lecture Series. The programs and events at JIEE are promoted by publications, directed by Terri West. The office promotes the Future Teacher Academy and connects to academy alumni through a Facebook page. Brochures for JIEE programs and the newsletter for the Teachers College are also published through the office. Brief explanations of the work that happens at JIEE cannot begin to do the institute justice. Educational excellence is not just part of the institute’s name but is reflected in every program and person that is part of JIEE. Dr. Larry Clark, director of JIEE, is quick to point out, “Explaining what goes on at the Jones Institute is not something that can be done easily. “You can read the mission statement and look at the reports but that just doesn’t tell you the whole story.”

ESU Institute Helps Children & Teachers
BY ELIZABETH MCLAINE
For more than 20 years, two ESU professors have been researching kitsch. Their common interest now finds Drs. Monica Kjellman-Chapin, associate professor of art, and C. Edward Emmer, assistant professor of social sciences, working together on two projects. They took time to answer questions about kitsch.

Q. Kitsch is a vast and complicated subject, but could you provide a layman’s definition and give some mainstream examples?

MKC: Most people think of kitsch as that which is excessively sentimentalized, schmaltzy, overly cute, decorative, and/or cheap. Examples might include Precious Moments figurines, Thomas Kinkade paintings, garden gnomes, paintings on black velvet, academic paintings, particularly of the female nude or mawkish subjects from the 19th century, and popular culture variants of artistic “masterpieces,” such as Leonardo’s Last Supper or the Mona Lisa.

CEE: We are both, within our respective disciplines of art history and philosophy, trying to complicate that definition. However, kitsch is more complex than such popular understandings of it would indicate. We are both concerned with investigating the way that definitions of kitsch have been shaped over time, the way in which kitsch encompasses a vast array of disparate artifacts, and yet notions of “cheapness” and “inferiority” cling to it. Especially troubling for both of us is the way in which applying the term to objects is seductive because it implies that the person applying it is superior. This does not necessarily mean that the term has no merit, but it does show that the use of the term deserves careful consideration.

Q. What sparked your interest in kitsch?

MKC: My interest was initially inspired by the phenomenal success and ubiquity of Thomas Kinkade, as well as my interest in popular culture variants of art historical works.

CEE: I’m mostly interested in landscape paintings and patriotic kitsch.

MKC: I’m mostly interested in art historical variants and art history’s traditional suppression of and now recent celebration of kitsch.

Q. What are your current projects?

MKC: There are two books on kitsch with which we are currently involved. We are working on a collection of previously published studies of kitsch, particularly those essays and articles that are out of print, not published in English, or otherwise difficult to obtain. That book will not offer much in the way of new interpretation but rather is conceived as a single place to find writings about kitsch, which can be used as a jumping-off point for further investigation and analyses. The other project, forthcoming from Cambridge Scholars Press, is an anthology of new writings about kitsch in the cultural landscape from various authors. I am the editor of this volume and provide the introduction as well as an essay on Kinkade and kitsch. I commissioned C. Edward Emmer to write the coda to the volume, which includes a considerable analysis of political kitsch.

Q. Has your study of kitsch taken you to any interesting places?

MKC: Yes, in the way that anything waxes and wanes in terms of critical attention. Kitch has been the focus of scholarly attention at various points, including the early 20th century, the 1960s, when Susan Sontag and others were articulating the relationship between kitsch and camp, and again, a sort of apogee of interest at the end of the 20th century, when debates about postmodernism were raging. Kitch has been declared dead—a number of times now—but it keeps mutating and coming back. Its place within discussions about class, gender, taste, irony, sincerity, authenticity, coolness and beauty means it will always be relevant.

Q. What other research projects are you currently working on?

MKC: I am working on artistic hoaxes and fake folk art, as well as completing a manuscript on James McNeill Whistler and the female nude.

CEE: I am working on articles in Kant’s aesthetics and numerous translations of German philosophers.

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Objects in space: What are the odds that Mathematics Professors Marvin Harrell or Betsy Yanik drops a polyhedron? See Page 22.