Fall 2009

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Department of English

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The English Education Laboratory at WMU constitutes the most advanced English teacher preparation and research classrooms in the world. Developed over the course of ten years by English Education faculty and supported with federal and university grants, these “classrooms of the future” allow present and future elementary and secondary language arts teachers in the English department’s large English Education Program to utilize a remarkable variety of new and emerging technologies in the teaching of reading and writing.

The classrooms offer flexible format, wireless laptop spaces for integration and presentation of a wide range of digital technology, web teaching and publishing, digital video, digital archives, and podcasting. Class activities include learning to write online in a variety of formats, individual and collaborative websites, including wikis and blogs. Students record and analyze teaching, share digital documents, and, on a designated server, design and utilize virtual worlds to teach literature.

Walking into the English Education Labs, it is not the technology that the visitor first notices, but the somewhat larger than normal level-top individual desks and office chairs, all on wheels. A cabinet of laptop computers stands on one side of the room and, with the laptops on the desks, the classroom becomes a computer lab, but one with astonishing flexibility. The highly mobile furniture can transform student seating including rows, small and large circles, squares, islands, theater seating, etc.

For instance, one seating format that Dr. Webb is fond of when teaching new technology applications is the “inside out circle.” In this formation students in groups of 3-5 sit in a close circle with their backs to each other and their desks in front of them. The students work on their own laptops facing away from each other, but by merely turning their heads, students can see all the other screens of the other students in their group, thus allowing students to model and support each other with ease.

Though the classrooms are designed to facilitate collaborative work, they also have impressive presentation technologies, data project, high-quality speakers, video, CD and DVD players, document cameras, Sympodium, and computer projection. Rather than teachers lecturing from PowerPoint, it is more common in these classrooms that the students are sharing websites or YouTube clips they have made.

Between the two English Education classrooms, and connected with them by large one-way glass windows, is the English Education Preparation and Observation Room, the nerve center of the Lab. This room has eight advanced computer stations that allow students to develop projects during and beyond class time.

The Preparation Room serves an important dual function and is also an “Observation Room” with a bank of digital video recorders connected to remote-controlled ceiling mounted cameras in both classrooms that allow recording of classroom activities. While these DVD recorders have been used to record visitor presentations or professor lectures, they are most crucial as a research tool to allow students and professors to playback teaching and learning activities for group and individual analysis.

See “Education” on page 5
As Thanksgiving approaches, I would like to take the occasion to say a heartfelt “Gramercy” (as used by Sir Thomas Malory’s knights and ladies in his late fifteenth century *Morte D’Arthur*) to all those who have given their support, material and spiritual, to our department since the spring semester. Your gifts and assistance at various events has helped us sustain major projects.

For example, the wonderful reading/auction for New Issues Press, a nationally recognized literary press, yielded enough results to fund the publication of an entire volume in their award-winning series; and some of the funds from unrestricted gifts to the department by one of our many “Friends” are already paying dividends as they support our struggling undergraduate and graduate students in paying memberships to their international honors organization, Sigma Tau Delta. Other gifts help us assist student members of Sigma Tau Delta and our student chapter of the National Council of Teachers of English to attend conferences and make the first steps towards their professional futures.

The department, just like WMU, the state, the nation, and the world, is feeling the repercussions of the global financial crisis. Although we lost three faculty lines last year because of a horizontal budget cut, we were able to guarantee all essential course offerings so that our students may move forward to degree without major impediments. While we are making responsible choices about how many different courses we can offer at any given level and on any given topic, we are certainly fulfilling our mission of 1) providing students with a knowledge of the English language and its literature and the skills to analyze this material critically and clearly communicate their knowledge, 2) encouraging them to engage actively with English studies and instill a lifelong love of learning, and 3) preparing them for the many professions in which humane perceptions and communication skills, especially writing, are essential.

To promote these goals, we are currently running an experimental course, called English 2000, which introduces about 46 students to the wide range of methods and practices germane to the field and employs exciting methods of collaborative learning and teaching. In addition to meeting with their dedicated instructor of record, Dr. Gwen Tarbox, undergraduate students in English 2000 meet and work with several faculty, graduate students, and undergraduate team coaches to get a panoramic view of the profession and thus make better informed decisions about their course work and career paths.

We are also offering our students more team taught courses than ever before: In the fall semester, Dr. Steve Feffer collaborates with Professor James Daniels in Theater on a Playwriting Workshop, and Dr. Mustafa Mirzeler explores with Dr. Allan Zaggarell in Anthropology the cultural and literary heritage of the “Legends of the Silk Road.” In the spring semester, Drs. Casey McKittrick and Ilana Nash, and Drs. Todd Kuchta and Chris McLean-Nagle will offer co-taught surveys in American and British literature, respectively; and Drs. Eve Salisbury and Grace Tiffany will investigate medieval, Renaissance, and American pilgrimage narratives in their course on “Holy Road Trips.”

The department remains a vibrant and active place, and we invite you to join us at one of the many public events we sponsor. Please find information about all we do at http://www.wmich.edu/english/ and at http://wmuenglishshevents.blogspot.com/. As always, do stop by when you are in town.

Richard Utz, Department Chair

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**FOOTNOTES COMMITTEE**

Beth Amidon, Chair
Karen Vocke
JD Dolan
Alyssa Worden, Intern
Karen Vocke’s own commitment to issues of advocacy and opportunity for farm migrant workers was formed early in her own teaching career with migrant children and other marginalized children. One of the most profound experiences in her career was taking a position as a teacher for a summer Migrant Head Start program in northwest Ohio. During her twelve weeks on the job, she worked with children and families both in and out of the classroom. Camp visits were a requirement for educators in the program, and this proved to be one of the pivotal moments of her professional and personal lives. Over the next two decades, Vocke worked in a variety of positions where she gained even more knowledge and commitment to advocacy for migrant farm workers.

That advocacy has been a major force in her work here at WMU. Two years ago, she wrote a book for teachers, *Where Do I Go from Here? Meeting the Unique Educational Needs of Migrant Students* (Heinemann, 2007). In her book she describes the workers and the challenges they face socially, economically, and politically, Ironically called the invisible people, migrant workers are a population vital to Michigan’s agricultural economy; they pick the fruits and vegetables that ultimately end up in Meijer and other grocery stores. They are the people who live and work in often-marginal conditions right here in Michigan. Their average income is approximately $17,000, well below the poverty level.

According to a recent state survey, there are 90,716 migrant and seasonal farm workers and non-farm workers in Michigan that support the economy (Michigan Interagency Migrant Service Committee). This hits especially close to home in southwest Michigan because a large number live in the counties in WMU’s service area. Migrant farm laborers travel from place to place, harvesting various crops, working about five months a year.

This lifestyle impacts the lives of the children in dramatic ways. Because migrant students’ lives are transitory—many of them leave school in the late fall to travel south as their families seek work—teachers often only have a brief time in which to work with them. Many barriers prevent educators from implementing creative pedagogy and working more closely with families: administrative pressures, standardized testing requirements, and a lack of autonomy, flexibility and resources in the classroom. As a result, the potential exists for schools to isolate and marginalize students and families with limited English skills.

Western Michigan University is now on the threshold of addressing some of those issues, with Vocke’s current research, a multi-faceted study of the efficacy of migrant education in Michigan.
Laura Feffer (MATE ’08) recently won the Farmer Award from the editor of English Journal. Her essay about her students engaging in ensemble theater, written with Dr. Allen Webb as an independent study in her MATE program, was one of two essays selected this year to be given this national award at the secondary section of NCTE at the luncheon at the conference this November in Philadelphia. This was Laura’s first published essay.

She and her spouse, creative writing professor Steve Feffer, are thinking about building from this article and their work with drama in the classroom to write a book together.

It’s rare that a department or university would have three alumni publishing books in the same year: Dennis Hinrichsen (1975), winner of the FIELD Poetry Prize, 2008 (book, Kurosawa’s Dog)  
David James (1977), publishing his second book after a 25 year hiatus (book, She Dances Like Mussolini, March Street Press)  
Jeff Huebner writes: “I’m an arts journalist and freelance writer who’s a regular contributor to the Chicago Reader. My articles and occasional reviews have also appeared in ARTnews, Public Art Review, Sculpture, New Art Examiner, Ceramics Monthly, Labor’s Heritage, and Chicago Magazine and the Chicago Tribune as well as a wide variety of other publications. I have a special interest in public art and community-based art, including contemporary murals.


George Jepson (’66,’70, ’73) “It’s been a while since my time at Western as an undergraduate (Class of 1966). My English classes -- especially those focusing on writing -- have been extremely important in every step of my professional career, which began as a staff writer for the Kalamazoo Gazette and carried through my years in corporate communications with The Upjohn Company. After my undergraduate work, I earned a masters in history and an MBA from WMU.

As the writer/editor of Quarterdeck, a bi-monthly literary journal published by McBooks Press (www.mcbooks.com) and focusing on nautical fiction and naval history, I have interviewed authors and historians from around the world for several years. I am also presently writing freelance features for WoodenBoat magazine. My wife, Amy, and I moved back to Kalamazoo within the past year after spending 15 years in eastern Iowa, where we operated Tall Ships Books, an independent catalog/online shop specializing in nautical fiction and naval history. Quarterdeck was launching under the auspices of TSB.

Bernadine Carlson was my first instructor in writing at WMU during my freshman year, and played a major role in igniting my interest in writing.”

Tyler R. Tichelaar (PhD 2000) has been busy: “Since leaving WMU, I have left academia and become a self-employed book editor, proofreader and book reviewer. I’ve also self-published 5 novels, co-authored/edited Authors Access: 30 Success Secrets for Publishers and Authors and been involved in various organizations including currently serving as the President of the Upper Peninsula Publishers and Authors Association.”

Julia Watson (1967, BA, English & German) is Associate Dean for Curriculum and Administration in Arts & Humanities and Professor of Comparative Studies at The Ohio State University. She has published books and essays on autobiography and her most recent essays are on autographics and on collaborative autoethnography.

She writes: “And WMU, both the Honors College and the English Honors program, were formative in my academic choices. I think fondly of those years (decades ago) and feel lucky to have gone to WMU.”

Tim Wheeler (B.A. 87) Since leaving us with a degree in
English, Tim Wheeler has been active in the marketing and advertising industry. Obstructed View Studios, where Tim is Principal, recently received important award:

The 15th Annual Communicator Awards recently announced its list of winners, and Obstructed View Studios was honored for its work in print as well as radio. Obstructed View, a humor column that appears regularly in Women’s Lifestyle Magazine and The Muskegon Chronicle, received a Print Communicator Award of Distinction in the Column competition, while Obstructed View, a radio program that airs weekly on WGHN, was honored with an Audio Communicator Award of Distinction in the Program-Comedy competition.

Obstructed View has aired on several radio stations (both commercial and public) throughout the state of Michigan, and Obstructed View’s print humor has appeared across the country in several publications, including the following: American-Way Magazine (American Airlines), America West Magazine (America West Airlines), Horizon Air, Phoenix Magazine, The Milwaukee-Journal Sentinel, The South Bend Tribune, The Herald-Palladium, The Muskegon Tribune, and The Grand Haven Tribune

Obstructed View Studios has received over 140 national and international awards for its work in radio, television and print advertising. The 15th Annual Communicator Awards marks the first time Obstructed View Studios has entered any competition for column writing (print or audio). Learn more at obstructedviewstudios.com.

http://www.hedyhabra.com

She has two stories, “Our Family Keeper” and “The Flood.” forthcoming in Parting Gifts: Qedeshim Qedeshot.

Her poetry manuscript “Tea in Heliopolis” was recently finalist in the Patricia Bibby First Book Award (2009) and semi-finalist in the Crab Orchard Review First Book Competition (2009).

WHAT ARE YOU UP TO?

Please tell us where you are and what you’re doing. We’d like to include you in our next alumni update section. Please include the year and degree with which you graduated, any fond memories of the English department, as well as something that you’ve done since your time as a Bronco.

Please email us at: engl_news@wmich.edu
Dan Mancilla, who has his MFA from WMU, and who has entered our PhD program this fall, is one of three finalists for the Chicago Tribune’s Nelson Algren Award.

Chad Sweeny reports: “I’m very pleased to announce that my third full-length book of poems, Parable of Hide and Seek, will be published in 2010 by Alice James Books as the runner-up in the Beatrice Hawley Award for which there were over one thousand manuscripts submitted. This is a prestigious press with a long history and strong marketing department, so it represents a big endorsement of my work as a poet. I’m overjoyed, as much as I’m struggling in the trenches with two research papers due next week. Thank you for all of your support and good will. It’s always fun to tell you of positive developments.”

And if that wasn’t enough good news from the Sweeny household, Jennifer Sweeny, Todd’s spouse, has won the James Laughlin Award, one of the more prestigious awards given in the American poetry community. It’s the most recent incarnation of the Lamont Award.

Kelly Sandoval wrote “How to Win in Reno” in a English 5660 workshop last year. The story was a runner-up for the 2009 Undergraduate Fiction Award, and is now going to appear in Esopus Magazine.

Also, our Ph.D. candidate Michael Fischer was a finalist for Nimrod Magazine’s Katherine Anne Porter Prize for his story “Crybaby Lane,” and another story from the same collection, “Subhumanz,” was just accepted by the Tusculum Review.

Sigma Tau Delta Fall 2009 Inductees

Alicia Akins
Jill Archie
Danielle Bailey
Emily Beard
Jessica Bixel
Maike Buck
Danielle Cavinder
Takunia Collins
Ashley Crawford
Jason Elkins
Megan Emerson
Kimberly Evans
Paula Fader
Brannon Flowers
Kathleen Garbacz
Jax Gardner
Kendra Grieser
Elisa Gruss
Jennifer Henson
Sally Johnson
Amarrah Kean
Amanda Klein
Shauna Koszegi
Bethany Leyder
Carissa Marks
Shannon McConnell
Sara Olivares
Aane Ruple
Dana Ruzicka
Louise Schreiber
Stephanie Sorenson
David Staggs
Audrey Sturrus
Staci Stutsman
Christina Triezenberg
Matthew Tootalian
Stephanie Vogie
Megan Werner
Lindsey Wiegand

WE WANT YOU....IN OUR NEXT ISSUE!

Do you have a story being published? Have you started grad school? Have you started a new job?

We want to know!

Email us at: engl_news@wmich.edu
Student News

Sigma Tau Delta: Three Years and Counting

The WMU chapter of Sigma Tau Delta has kicked off what promises to be another successful year. Since the granting of our charter and induction of our first class of 46 members in March 2006, the WMU chapter of Sigma Tau Delta has grown to a membership of 139 undergraduate and graduate student members, some of whom have since become alumni, and six faculty members.

Nineteen new student members joined us at the February 2009 induction ceremony, the seventh in our chapter’s history. Also inducted in February 2009 was WMU Writing Center Director Kim Ballard, who became our fifth honorary faculty inductee. She joins 2007 honorary faculty inductees Dr. Jon Adams, Dr. Meg Dupuis, and Professor Mike LoPresto, and 2008 honorary faculty inductee Dr. Scott Slawinski. The chapter is looking forward to welcoming many new members this year, the first group of whom was officially inducted later this fall.

The chapter has been very active on the WMU campus and beyond. Our signature campus event, the Sigma Tau Delta English Studies Conference (ESC), showcases the best scholarly and creative writing of WMU students who have the opportunity to present their original scholarly and creative work in a professional setting in front of an audience of students, faculty, and staff. This entirely student-run conference is open to all WMU students, whether they are members of Sigma Tau Delta or not. The hugely successful Spring 2009 ESC was held on Friday, April 17, and the chapter is hard at work on plans for the fall ESC, scheduled for Friday, November 6, 2009.

Sigma Tau Delta is also making its mark beyond the WMU campus. The WMU chapter has sent a delegation to the Sigma Tau Delta National Convention every year since our charter was granted. Three of our own represented WMU at the 2006 convention, in Portland, Oregon, just weeks after our first induction ceremony. In 2007, a delegation of 10 Sigma Tau Deltas from WMU presented their work at the convention in Pittsburgh, and in 2008, 10 WMU students and one alumnus represented us in Louisville, where Jennifer Dempsey, then a WMU senior (and now a graduate student at the University of Maryland) won first prize for poetry, after having placed third in 2007.

WMU Sigma Tau Delta’s Patrick Love, Meghan Dykema, Daniel Kenzie, and Caroline Lampinen presented their work at the convention in Minneapolis in March 2009, and an impressive delegation of chapter members accompanied them to the convention to represent WMU and cheer on the presenters. At the Minneapolis convention, WMU’s own Helena Witzke was elected Associate Student Representative for the Midwest Region. Witzke, a February 2009 inductee, is the first such office holder for our chapter. At the same time, Daniel Kenzie, 2008-09 chapter president, was busy nabbing third prize for Best World Lit, British Lit, or Critical Theory Essay.

And for the second consecutive year, the WMU chapter was invited to participate in the Outstanding Chapter exhibition at the 2009 Minneapolis convention and recognized again as one of the “most active, vital chapters in the country.” But WMU is not resting on its laurels; the students are already hard at work on their submissions to the 2010 national convention, to be held in St. Louis in March.

The WMU chapter of Sigma Tau Delta comprises a diverse group of WMU students, each with an affinity for English studies and a record of superior academic achievement. They are engaged with all aspects of English studies and regularly bring honor upon the University, including by presenting their work at the national conventions, and through their campus and community activities. For more information about us please visit the chapter’s website at http://www.retroflexive.com/sigma or contact Dr. Lisa Minnick at lisa.minnick@wmich.edu.
Tom Bailey, having no current administrative duties whatsoever, is back to full-time teaching for the first time since 1987. He spent last academic year chairing the Department of Special Education and Literacy Studies in the College of Education and teaching part-time in ENVS and English, and before that spent 5 semesters re-establishing the Ombudsman office and teaching part-time. Beginning his 40th year at WMU, he is delighted with his 8am section of English 1100, T/R.

In the most recent issue of the English environmental magazine, RESURGENCE, September/October 2009, he has a solicited article on the poetry of Mary Oliver. He has an essay on the Ompompanoosuc, a Vermont river, forthcoming in ISLE [Interdisciplinary Studies in Literature and Environment], which is now published by the Oxford University Press.

He has children of former students in this year’s classes, keeps in contact with many friends from former years, and would love to hear from students who suffered through his courses in the past, and who wouldn’t mind admitting it.

Tony Ellis’ book, Old Age, Masculinity, and Early Modern Drama: Comic Elders on the Italian and Shakespearean Stage, has just been published by Ashgate.

This first book-length study tracing the evolution of the comic old man in Italian and English Renaissance comedy shows how English dramatists adopted and reimagined an Italian model to reflect native concerns about and attitudes toward growing old. Arnie Johnston’s poem, “What’s Underneath,” won the Phi Kappa Phi Forum poetry competition on the Summer issue’s theme of American pride.

Another of their one-acts, The Graduation Play, is currently featured on the online edition of Phi Kappa Phi Forum.

Arnie’s libretto (from his new translation) for an opera version of Sartre’s No Exit will get a workshop production in late January by Theo Ubique Theatre Company at the (appropriately) No Exit Cafe. Their English translation (with Dona Roșu) of Romanian playwright Hristache Popescu’s long one-act Epilog will be published as a book in 2010 by Editura HP, Bucharest. Editura HP will also publish in 2010 separate English and Romanian editions of their play Beyond Sex, with the Romanian version (Dincola de Sex) translated by Dona Roșu and Luciana Costea.

And they’ve just signed on as Phi Kappa Phi Forum’s Arts and Entertainment columnists for the coming year, having agreed to do at least three columns for the quarterly, beginning with the Spring 2010 issue.

Katherine Joslin’s and Daneen Wardrop’s books are due out from University Press of New England this fall. Joslin’s book is Edith Wharton and the Making of Fashion, and Wardrop authored Emily Dickinson and the Labor of Clothing.

Toby Kahn-Loftus had a busy summer: She was a regular contributor to the eMet, the online newsletter of MCTE. Last year she wrote a “Teaching Tips” column on a variety of strategies for the K-12 classroom. This year she’s writing a “President’s Update” for each issue since Kahn-Loftus officially became President of MCTE in June 2009. The eMet newsletter won the National Council of Teachers of English Affilate Newsletter Award-2009.

MCTE also won the NCTE Website Affiliate Award-2009 due to the outstanding Ning designed by our colleague from Grand Valley State University, Rob Rozema (PhD 2002).

She encourages everyone to join the new networking site for MCTE at: http://mienglishteacher.ning.com/

Casey McKittrick’s article, “Brothers’ Milk: The Erotic and the Lethal in Bareback Pornography,” is to be published in the anthology Porn and Philosophy published by Riley-Blackwell, in December.
Judith Rypma made two presentations—“From Metaphors to Minerals: Poetry Meets the Earth Sciences” and “Bridging Past and Present: ‘Old’ Novels for a New Generation”—at this year’s Michigan Reading Association conference. She also was invited to Northland University as the keynote speaker at a People to People event, where a Midland station televised her “Legends and Lore of the Fabergé Eggs.”

John Saillant spoke at the University of Puerto Rico at Mayaguez on April 22, 2009, on the topic of “The Coming-of-Age Story in Olaudah Equiano’s Narrative.” This was the first in a series of papers, organized at the University of Puerto Rico, on teaching African American literature in the Caribbean. His talk will be published as “Profitable Reading” in a collection of essays forthcoming from the University of Tennessee Press.


Allen Webb edited The Doctoral Degree In English Education, Kennesaw State University Press. This book gathers the testimonies of graduate students and their professors, mostly former public school language arts teachers, as they develop their abilities as English teachers, earn the most advanced degree in their field, become professional leaders, and begin teaching at the university level.

Obituary
Ken Macrorie, Professor Emeritus, Former College Composition and Communication Editor From the Las Cruces Sun-News: Ken Macrorie was born in the Mississippi River town of Moline, Ill., in 1918. He graduated from Oberlin College in Ohio and served in the Army during WWII. He then earned a master’s degree in English at the University of North Carolina where he became a civil rights activist and began his lifelong dedication to breaking down racial bigotry and bars to equality wherever he was. He taught at Michigan State University and was active in forming the teachers union.

When he began work on his doctorate at Columbia University, he studied perception, concentrating on how it affected journalists and accompanying New York Times reporters on assignments. He wrote his doctoral thesis on objectivity/subjectivity in reporting. After receiving his degree, he returned to Michigan State, eventually moving to San Francisco State and then to Western Michigan University where he made the breakthroughs that led to his national leadership role in re-educating teachers trapped in unproductive teaching methods to learn how to express themselves in print and pass that knowledge on to their students.

As an educator and writer, Ken touched and changed the lives of his students by opening them up to their own latent abilities to write their stories, tell their truths, find their interests, research their curiosities, and finally organize what they needed and wanted to say into memorable prose. His books include, Uptaught, Writing to be Read, Telling Writing, Four In Depth, A Vulnerable Teacher, Twenty Teachers, and The I-Search Paper. All of his books are filled with student writing.

He leaves his wife, Joyce; grown children, Mike (Marie), Lisa Dillman (Dennis Hamel), Karin Imel (Scott), Kirk Dillman (Lori); and the grandchildren, Olivia, Deirdre, Jessica, Erika, Cole, and Rachel.
This summer I was fortunate enough to have an internship with Sleeping Bear Press, a children’s literature publisher. Sleeping Bear allowed me to utilize the skills I have acquired as an English major to contribute to their company’s progress. This internship also showed me how a publishing company works, seeing the time and care that goes into creating a children’s book. Some of the titles they’ve published are the Kathy-Jo Wargin legend of Michigan series: *The Legend of Sleeping Bear, The Legend of Mackinac Island, and The Legend of the Petoskey Stone.*

During my time at Sleeping Bear Press, I worked on projects promoting upcoming books and editing books that were just starting the publication process. I was able to see the production that goes into promoting a book. I had to make calls to magazines, radio stations, and television programs to publicize the books. It gave me a chance to work with media, something I have never done before. This part of the job made me realize that the work isn’t done just because the book is printed.

Along with book promotion, editing was also part of my internship. My English revising skills were tested, checking for spelling and grammar errors as well as fact checking. This was a wonderful opportunity, working with the editors and discovering what works in children’s literature. I saw the relationship an editor has with the author and the illustrator. This gave me a greater respect for editors and all their behind the scenes work to publish a book.

As well as these editing projects, I was also a part of editorial meetings. I witnessed how a book is submitted, how the editors decide whether the book is something they want to publish, and how the book comes together. These meetings were an opportunity for me to see what happens inside a publishing company and to pitch projects I thought were suitable for Sleeping Bear. With my children’s literature background and a pending English degree, my opinions were requested and valued. I loved being part of creating something that encourages reading and helps children learn and grow.

The chance to work with Sleeping Bear Press is an opportunity I will always treasure. Sleeping Bear allowed me to see some of the values of an English degree. I loved working in children’s books publishing and seeing the passion this company has. Sleeping Bear’s motto is to “Provide books that enrich children’s lives through stories that blend entertaining text with educational content” and they accomplish this through working together and keeping this goal constantly in sight.
Two Western affiliates were recently elected, by public vote, to serve on the Portage District Library Board. Anne Dunn, an English Literature student, and Alicia Siebers, a part time English Literature professor, were elected to serve a four year volunteer term on the board.

While both women have a passion for books and literature, each decided to run in her own special way. For Alicia, who has a husband and four children, the library has always been a relaxing outlet “This may sound strange but one day I was having a root canal done and I was trying to imagine a relaxing place and of all places I imagined a library!” With this in mind Alicia and her four year old daughter campaigned within the community.

Anne, whose lifetime goal is to be a librarian, wanted to implement change within the Portage library. The first issue she and the other board members need to address is where to trim the budget since the library’s funding has been cut, “My goal is to still be able to supply people with the same quality and service so it feels as if the cuts are not really there, but we all have to give a little to survive this economic situation.”

Alicia would like to use her connections from Western Michigan University to provide additional services while facing cutbacks, “One idea I have is to have guest speakers from Western come to the Portage Library.”

Portage library board meetings are held every fourth Monday at the library.

For more information visit: www.pdl.lib.mi.us
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For a contribution of $100, you can be among the group of supporters of the programs that make our department special. Your name will be inscribed on a plaque displayed in the department’s central office on the 6th floor of Sprau Tower.

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