Images Speak Volumes: From Daguerreotypes to Selfies

by Katie Irwin, doctoral candidate

For more than 175 years, people have created, recreated, and circulated photographs. Whether they visualize official ceremonies, capture moments of social unrest, or depict everyday activities, photographs have always had a way of telling us who we are.

Professor Cara Finnegan studies the role that photography plays as a form of persuasion in the public sphere. She hopes that her research and teaching allow others to “gain an appreciation for the way that history can influence our experiences with the present.” In her Photography and Public Life special topics course, Finnegan encourages her students to see connections among visual media from different contexts and time periods. Her students have discussed links between styles of portraiture that appeared in nineteenth century daguerreotypes and today’s selfies, as well as common visual themes in war photography from the Civil War and the Iraq War. Finnegan explains that her students can expect to be “looking at photographs in more detail than ever before” and learning a vocabulary for talking about visual material. By the end of a semester, students are able to apply that vocabulary to their own critical arguments. “I am invested in the notion that thinking critically and writing clearly are closely related,” Finnegan explains.

Professor Finnegan cites her undergraduate experiences as influencing her scholarly interests. She was a media major who made television, and those practices got her thinking about how images can be put together to communicate particular messages to specific audiences. In this way, a “practical interest” transformed into a research interest. Every era has its own “new media,” Finnegan says, and people have always had to negotiate technological changes. She has engaged this issue with undergraduate students in the Visual Politics course by exploring how President Obama and the White House have used social media to depict him as president. Conversations with her students about President Obama and the making of his image led Finnegan to think more broadly about how presidents have engaged with new media throughout history. She is exploring this idea in her current project, American Presidents and the History of Photography from the Daguerreotype to the Digital Revolution, which analyzes how presidents engaged with and helped to shape people’s experiences of photography across its history. Professor Finnegan’s project was recently awarded a National Endowment for the Humanities Fellowship, which will allow her to write full time during the upcoming academic year. She credits the Illinois Office of the Vice Chancellor for Research’s “Support for Grantseeking in the Humanities, Arts, and Social Sciences” program as a valuable resource for helping her develop the project and secure NEH funding.

American Presidents will study different moments of media change from 1839 to the present, and Finnegan hopes to understand how presidents have shaped photography and the American public’s sense of what photography can accomplish.

Finnegan will soon travel to the George Eastman House in Rochester, New York, to participate in a workshop on nineteenth century photographic printing processes, and to the New York Public Library to engage its early twentieth century photography collection. “I get to learn new things and follow my curiosities,” Finnegan says, and we can look forward to seeing where those curiosities continue to take her.
**WORKING TOWARD OUR GOALS**

**Success in the classroom**

This has been an excellent year for our students and faculty. We have a bumper crop of new alumni, graduating 321 BA degree candidates, 10 MA's, 14 MS's (from our online Health Comm program), and 9 PhD's (see back cover for photos of the May convocation ceremony). Among them were 6 undergraduate names to be inscribed on the 2016 campus Bronze Tablet. Forty-four graduating seniors were inducted into Lambda Pi Eta (the communication honor society), 18 graduated with Latin honors (summa cum laude, or magna cum laude), and 27 earned department honors (distinction or high distinction).

Our teachers in the department received some well-deserved recognition. The campus maintains a “List of Teachers Ranked as Excellent,” as determined by student evaluations. We are happy to report that 74% of our teaching staff (faculty and teaching assistants) appeared on the fall 2015 list, a proportion that is well above the norm for departments on campus. We are particularly pleased that Professor Brian Quick and doctoral student Anita Mixon each received a teaching award from the campus Student Senate, and Anita won LAS and campus teaching awards, as well (photos are on the back cover).

**Expanding career opportunities for our students**

Also in this newsletter you can read about the success of our students after they graduate. A university survey (LISuccess.illinois.edu) of last year’s graduates showed that Communication students had a higher job/graduate school placement rate than most other students in LAS (see page 6). We are working to improve even that marker of success, devising new courses and career development opportunities, including internships.

In your line of work, you might see the growing availability and importance of professional internships. The department has had a very successful internship program for many years. Kate Dietwig-Morris, his newest director, has helped expand the program this year to create more opportunities for students and provide a rigorous academic component to each placement. In our most recent survey of communication seniors, 67% reported having an internship experience while at Illinois. Those internships provide professional experience, exposure to career fields, and, in some cases, an offer of employment after graduation.

**Research excellence**

We welcomed a new assistant professor, Lisa Guntzviller, this year, as we bid a sad farewell to retiring Professors Susan Davis, Pat Gill, Marian Huhman, and Dan Schiller (Susan and Dan retired in 2015, see page 7). Our research faculty had a very productive year, publishing scores of peer-reviewed journal articles and chapters in edited books. This year also saw publication of new books by members of our faculty, including those by Professors Ned O’Gorman and Bob McChesney.

The quality of our faculty members’ work continues to be recognized by others. For example, Professor Leanne Krobisch was named a University Scholar in the fall, one of only six members of the campus faculty recognized with this honor (see page 7). Professor Cara Finnegan received a prestigious fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities, which you read about on the cover of this issue. Several members of our faculty have received external funding for their research, as well, including new grants from the National Science Foundation and the Health Resources and Services Administration.

**State budget issues**

All of these positive developments and activity on campus have occurred against a backdrop of substantial state budget uncertainty in Illinois. Those of you who live outside of Illinois might not be aware that the state government failed to pass a budget for the 2015–16 academic year. This meant that all of our state’s universities (and quite a few other state agencies) went without a full state appropriation.

Every student and recent alumnus knows that state funding represents only a portion of the university’s budget. Student tuition pays for much of our daily operations, and the university was able to tap into its reserves to provide the rest of the funding we needed to keep our doors open. Nonetheless, the university was forced to cut the budget of academic units by about 5% this year. In the Department of Communication, we improved efficiencies in a number of areas and delayed some new hires. As a result, we were able to absorb budget reductions and continue to offer our full range of classes and services to students.

Throughout this year, the faculty and other members of the department have remained focused on our primary goals: providing a broad-based education that prepares students for the lives they will lead in the future, creating knowledge that benefits society, and serving the people of Illinois. Know that sounds kind of corny, but it really is what we aspire to do. The faculty and staff of the Department of Communication wish you a productive and peaceful year to come. If you have questions or thoughts you would like to share, please contact me (tewksbury@illinois.edu), I would love to hear from you.

David Tewksbury
Department Head
Comm Leaders are 10 years old!

In 2008, former Department Head Barth Wilson asked Professors Ruth Anne Clark and Leanne Knobloch to take on the task of forming an undergraduate group of students who would function as ambassadors for our department, both with alumni and future students. Professor Knobloch and Professor Emeritus Clark, along with some eager juniors and seniors, would be the founders of the Communication Leaders and help set the course of a group that has become part of our department culture.

Students are selected for the Comm Leaders on the basis of academic record and commitment to promoting our department in various ways. They are often asked to serve as hosts at alumni events. As a group, the Leaders have been consulted for the student perspective about issues facing the department.

Each year, early in the fall semester, Leaders host an event that brings together faculty and our students called “Meet the Department.” They also invite prospective students to “get to know” our department to learn whether our major is right for them. The event is hosted “fair-style” with faculty at tables representing our department to learn about the opportunities offered by our department. Students are invited to meet and greet faculty members and watch them arrive and immediately get to work helping to enrich the experience of their fellow students.

Comm Leaders have also assisted with our recruitment efforts in relation to prospective freshmen and transfer students, both those new to campus and those who may be transferring from another major on our campus. They are often our best ambassadors, as prospective students like to meet other students and hear about their experiences.

A good number of LAS departments have subsequently formed similar undergraduate student groups.

Jen (Van Taylor) Crocker, BA 09, one of the early Leaders, had this remembrance, “Being a part of the Communication Leaders was a highlight of my undergraduate experience. We were entrusted with representing the Department of Communication, and my confidence, interpersonal skills, and leadership capabilities greatly improved while I was a member. I received opportunities to lead events, people, and projects, and this exposed me to different types of leaders within our department and all over campus. The experiences I had as a Communication Leader better prepared me for my future educational and career aspirations, including receiving my Masters (2010) in Human Resources and obtaining leadership positions with General Mills.”

Last fall the Leaders assisted with events surrounding the symposium to honor retired Professor Bob Husband as well as hosting a spring social for department students and faculty. It was there they honored Professor Pat Gill and TA Jillian Moga with teaching awards.

Stafford Thomas Remembered

(1929–2015)

The department learned of the passing of Stafford Thomas (a member of our faculty from 1967–1989) last fall in Michigan. He was 86. He and his wife, Susan Thomas, left Champaign several years ago, moving to Michigan to be closer to their daughter and her family. Susan was also a member of our faculty until her retirement in 2005, most remembered for teaching our public relations course and Public Speaking (CMN 101). She survives along with their children, Virginia (Paul) Jackson and Alan (Kathy) Thomas.

Born in Lynchburg, VA, Professor Thomas held degrees from the Universities of Colorado, Wyoming, and Washington. His entire academic career was spent in service of our department.

Stafford was hired into the Division of General Studies (part of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences), with a joint appointment in Speech (our department name at the time) in 1964 as an assistant professor charged with the task of teaching the Verbal Communication course sequence, DGS 111 and 112, and helping to train and supervise teaching assistants and instructors who would teach the courses. In 1967 the courses, along with Professor Thomas, were transferred to the Department of Speech (becoming Speech 111 and 112, now CMN 111 and 112) when the Division of General Studies at the time was disbanded. He became associate head in 1968, a position he held for several years.

Professor Thomas made especially valuable contributions to students in the Teaching of Speech curriculum, including teaching the course, Drama for Teachers. Especially relevant here was his experience with high school drama. At a time when high school teachers of speech were often called upon to direct the junior and/or senior class plays, Professor Thomas was a gold mine of information, about everything from choosing the play to building the sets and selling tickets. And his natural creativity led to demonstrations of how to make the most of whatever resources our graduates might find in schools large and small.

Stafford Thomas contributed to the camaraderie of the faculty through his gift as a cartoonist. His spontaneous sketches, on place mats in the Illinois Union dining hall, for example, provided many a laugh while exposing our foibles and foibles in a good-hearted way. And the staff members who served in that venue also enjoyed Thomas’ humor. A few years after he retired, someone discovered that the dining hall staff collected many of his sketches that were left behind after his lunch visits. Staff members displayed dozens of them on walls of the rooms where they worked behind the scenes.

Stafford Thomas was a respected faculty member serving in various capacities throughout his career here. It is fitting that one of our Tradition awards—which recognizes exceptional service to the department by a graduate student—is named The Stafford H. Thomas Award.

Bob Husband Honored

Friends and former students gathered at a reception in October to honor retired Professor Bob Husband and to launch a fund that was established in his name. The Fund is to be used by the department to sponsor events for undergraduates in the areas of organizational leadership and applied communication.

The first event October 5, 2015 was in the form of a symposium panel featuring John Wright, II (Northwestern Mutual), Ryan McPartlin (Actor), and Jill (Norski) Kradenier (Google), all former students of Bob’s. Undergraduates were invited to attend. Alumni spent the day in residence visiting classes and meeting with students.

These events were a good opportunity for former students and alums to share some memories with Bob, while at the same time connecting with classmates and current students.
Illini Success study results: Communication graduates fare well

By Dave Evensen, LAS Communications and Marketing

The Illini Success initiative has provided valuable insights into the career path of new graduates.

Thanks to a major campus undertaking, the University of Illinois and College of Liberal Arts & Sciences know a little more about one of its most important groups of people—its new graduates.

The university today released results of its Illini Success initiative, which surveys new bachelor’s degree recipients on their post-graduation plans.

Career data have important implications, from addressing the questions and concerns of prospective students to answering accreditation who are measuring institutional quality. Federal and state governments are asking for more information about the value of a college education and are making comparisons that can potentially be tied to funding of higher education institutions.

The Career Center, with the help of all undergraduate colleges and numerous other units across campus, drove the effort, which, through a combination of surveys, employer and college reports, and LinkedIn data, obtained verifiable information on the early career track of more than 5,700 bachelor’s degree recipients in the class of 2014–15.

That number represents 74 percent of the total number of bachelor’s degree recipients at Illinois over that time period.

Full results of the study can be found at illiniuccess.illinois.edu. In the College of LAS, information was obtained for 2,185 bachelor’s degree recipients, or 71 percent of the college total. Those data revealed that 77 percent of LAS alumni in the class of 2014–15 who participated in the study had secured a “first destination,” which includes employment, continuing education, military service, or volunteer work.

Some 69 percent of LAS bachelor’s degree recipients reporting a “first destination” were classified as employed. The average annual salary of full-time LAS graduates who replied for the study is $49,675, compared to the campus average of $55,390. The average annual salary by discipline in LAS ranges from $36,743 to $66,923.

LAS graduates contribute heavily to the Illinois economy, according to the study. Some 74 percent of LAS graduates indicate they are working in Illinois in the months after graduation, compared to an average of 70 percent across campus.

Of those LAS graduates pursuing more education, 49 percent are pursuing master’s degrees, 18 percent are pursuing professional degrees (law and medicine), and 19 percent are pursuing doctoral degrees. Some 63 percent are continuing their education in Illinois.

Some 77 percent of LAS graduates participated in one or more experiential learning opportunities (internships, assistantships, student teaching, service learning/volunteering, study abroad with internship or practicum components, clinical experience, co-ops, and field experience) while they studied at Illinois. Of those, all ranked those experiences as “very helpful” or “helpful.”

Other highlights of the study of the class of 2014–15 include:

- Communication has one of the highest percentages of alumni securing employment after graduation (78 percent).
- About 83 percent of graduates from the School of Literatures, Cultures, and Linguistics have secured a first destination, which is second-highest in LAS after Communication graduates (88 percent).

Department Honors Retiring Faculty

A reception was held early in May to honor Professors Susan Davis, Pat Gill, Marian Hulman, and Dan Schiller, who together combined for 52 years of service to our department, which included teaching and mentoring hundreds of our students, both graduate and undergraduate.

Marian and husband David will divide their time between Champaign and their beloved home in Edmonds, Washington to be closer to their sons. Susan and Dan have made a new home and life in New Mexico, while Pat and her husband, Richard, who live in Champagne, plan to travel.

We are indebted to each for contributions during these past years, and we will miss their presence around Lincoln Hall. We wish them the best in a well-deserved retirement.

From the Archives: Students Enrolled in our Department

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Year</th>
<th>Undergraduate Students</th>
<th>Graduate Students</th>
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<td>133</td>
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<td>2015</td>
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<td>88</td>
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* In 1967, department names were Theater, Speech Correction, Teaching of Speech, and Speech Communication. In 1991, majors were Teaching of Speech and Speech Communication. In 2015, the only undergraduate major was Communication.
** In 1967 and 1991, the graduate degree was MA and PhD. In 2015, the degree was MS, PhD (in Broadcast Communication), and PhD Communications.

INVEST IN THE FUTURE OF THE DEPARTMENT OF COMMUNICATION

You can make a gift to the department online, by phone or by connecting with our advancement office, Tony Pomonis (LAS ’02). Tony expanded the local chain of Merry Ann’s Diners from one location to four, and he offers his own experience as proof that a LAS degree equips you with the skills needed for career success. You can reach out to him by calling (217) 300-1470 or email him at apomonis@illinois.edu. Tony travels around the country regularly and may be in your neighborhood soon! Your gift will support the department’s continued excellence in education.

Ensure continued excellence in teaching, research, and public engagement by supporting the Department of Communication with a gift!

You can designate your gift to:
- Communication Annual Fund, which supports an array of activities
- Joseph Wenzel Undergraduate Support Fund
- Robert L. Husband Leadership in Communication Fund
- Thomas Canley History of Rhetoric Award
- Ruth Anne Clark Student Scholar Award Fund

You can also boost your gift:
- See if your company is listed as one that has a matching gift program (some even double or triple your gift)
Got Internships?
Communication students are eager for real-world experience. We offer our students course credit for interning with organizations that put them to work in a supervised learning setting. Employers who partner with us report that they benefit from our students’ communication skills and gain from evaluating the on-the-job performance of potential employees. Communication interns are eager to apply what they have learned to the work world.
If you have internship opportunities to offer or would like more information, please contact Kate Ditewig-Morris via email: comm-internships@illinois.edu.

Communication Alumni:
Let Us Know What You Are Doing
Please include your contact information along with a list of your accomplishments or personal news from the past year. Send us an email: communication@illinois.edu.