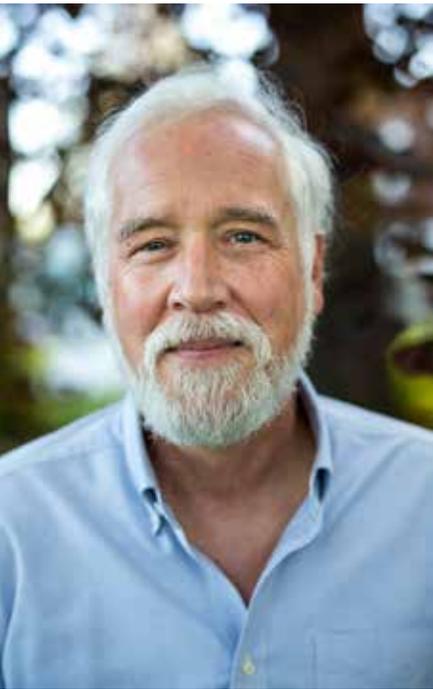


FOOTnotes



ERNIE FREEBERG

Professor and Head
Department of History

Embodied Education

While spring semester 2020 ended without our usual pomp and circumstance, from a safe social distance we have reason to celebrate getting through this most challenging academic year. When the campus closed in mid-March, few of our faculty had much experience with online teaching, and perhaps fewer had any interest in moving class into the digital realm. But we did it, with much support from the university’s technology team and patience and flexibility from our students. Students learned about history, while we figured out how to stop Zoom bombers and how to upload a lecture to the cloud that hovers over us all.

Among the most valuable lessons we learned from this experience is affirmation of something we already knew—that there is no real substitute for face-to-face learning. Teaching is a full body exercise, and nothing replaces the way a talented professor can, over the course of a semester, turn a physical classroom into a community of learners. Certainly, students told us that, loud and clear, in their end of course evaluations. They want back on campus.

We want that, too, when it can be done safely. In the meantime, we can look back fondly on those days, not so long ago, when we huddled together in classrooms, so focused on sharing ideas that we never paused to worry about sharing our breath.

By chance, just before the shutdown we asked our favorite photographer, Kelli Guinn, to take pictures of some of our colleagues in action. I love how these images capture the value of embodied education, and the passion of teaching as a physical act. They serve as a wonderful reminder of a world we have lost, temporarily, and will not soon take for granted.

Sara Ritchey



Victor Petrov



Nikki Eggers



Margaret Andersen



A Legacy of Jacksonian Scholarship

Dan Feller joined the Department of History in 2003 with a scholarly focus on Jacksonian politics. This spring, he retires as a Distinguished Professor of Humanities and leaves a legacy of building one of the most important and visible presidential papers projects in the country – the *Papers of Andrew Jackson*.

“Under Dan’s leadership, the Jackson papers project has made a bid to become the most productive and respected documentary editing project of its kind in the country,” said Thomas Coens, associate editor of the Jackson Papers. “We have published at a breakneck clip while maintaining rigorous standards of thoroughness and accuracy. Fellow scholars praise the project and in 2017, it won the Jefferson Prize.”

The project received a grant from the National Endowment of the Humanities in 2018 to prepare Volumes 11, 12, and 13 for publication. The \$325,000 grant was the second highest among the 21 awarded in the 2018 NEH Scholarly Editions and Translations program.

“The generous grant was the largest we have ever received from the NEH and came as a welcome show of confidence in the quality and significance of our work,” Feller said. “Jackson is an inescapably important figure in our nation’s history. From its beginning, the aim of the Jackson papers project has been to promote our understanding of Jackson and his era by making available the crucial primary sources and documents from which we can see, directly, what our forebears said and did.”

Andrew Jackson is one of the most critical and controversial figures in American history and a president of great interest to the public. In recent years, Jackson has become even more relevant and controversial due to two developments: first, the tentative decision to remove him from the \$20 bill in 2016; and second, the fascination with comparing Jackson to Donald Trump.

“Both of these developments have been a blessing and a curse for the Jackson Papers and its public outreach efforts,” Coens said. “On the one hand, we’re happy to play our traditional role of providing the public with the underlying facts and information that lie beneath these debates. On the other hand, the amount of misinformation that circulates nowadays about Jackson, especially within pieces attempting to compare

and contrast him with Trump, is troubling, and trying to correct it all can often feel like playing whack-a-mole. Dan, however, to his credit, has been an indefatigable warrior these last four years in trying to bring some sanity and historical grounding to those debates.”

In 2016, Feller received the Faculty Outreach Award from the College of Arts and Sciences for his efforts at making UT the place to go for journalists, popular writers, and teachers who want to get the story of Andrew Jackson right. This spring, UT honored Feller with a Chancellor’s Honors Award for Research and Creative Achievement for his accomplishments as editor and director of the *Papers of Andrew Jackson*.

“The works produced under Feller’s leadership are deeply researched, and have already proven to be invaluable resources for those outside the academy,” said Ernie Freeberg, professor and head of the UT Department of History. “Popular historian Jon Meacham relied heavily on Feller’s counsel in writing his Pulitzer-prize winning *American Lion: Andrew Jackson in the White House*, and more recently, Steve Inskeep of NPR published a volume on Jackson that relied explicitly on Dan Feller’s scholarship and advice.”

As a project in the history department, the papers are more than just a collection of correspondence or an opportunity to share scholarly expertise with the public.

“The Jackson papers are a recruitment tool for our graduate program that allows us to compete for top-quality graduate students with other programs that are usually better funded and have a larger faculty,” Feller said.

Max Matherne is one of the graduate students who chose UT because of Feller and the history department.

“It would be no exaggeration to say that I probably would have never attended graduate school if not for Dan Feller,” said Matherne, who was torn between a PhD in history from UT or attending law school. “My heart tugged me toward history, but my head warned me that there was little left to say about the subject I wanted to study—Jacksonian politics. A single phone conversation with Professor Feller cleared all that up.”



Six years later, Matherne successfully defended his dissertation looking at the very same topic he discussed with Feller during their first phone call.

“In many ways, Professor Feller is my scholarly role model,” Matherne said. “He is a model mentor, not just to his students but to anyone who works in the field. He knows how to balance necessary criticism with essential encouragement. Whether he’s discussing a published monograph or editing a dissertation chapter, he knows how to pinpoint illogical assumptions or gaps in evidence. As a mentor, he has always encouraged us to follow our guts and our interests, trusting that our passions and dedication would yield quality work.”

Coens notes Feller’s work ethic as one of the most memorable things that stand out during the years they worked together on the Jackson Papers project.

“Dan has high standards when it comes to the quality and accuracy of the scholarship produced by the Jackson Papers and by his editors,” Coens said. “Like any good historian worth his or her salt, I came into the job with similar standards, but Dan’s insistence on triple- and quadruple-checking information and transcriptions, on not giving up on a question or a problem until no stone is left unturned, is infectious. I have no doubt that he has made me a better historian.”

Feller’s work will not end when he retires. He will stay involved with the *Papers of Andrew Jackson* project through another volume, which will be his sixth, and finish a book of his own.

“I have enough researching, writing, and speaking to keep me busy as long as my energy holds up,” Feller said. “I’m not quitting and I’m not going anywhere. Like most dedicated historians, I’m in it for life.”

An Inspired Career Impacting Students

As spring semester closed, Lynn Sacco retired from an inspiring teaching career at UT. Sacco graduated from Marquette University in 1975 where she majored in English and journalism. Following graduation, she traveled in South America before attending law school in her beloved home town of Chicago. After practicing law for 15 years, she headed to graduate school, earning an MA in American Studies from SUNY Buffalo and then a PhD in history at USC in 2001. After a year teaching high school in one of Los Angeles's poorest communities, Sacco arrived at UT in 2004.

She quickly became one of the department's most popular teachers, offering richly conceived courses on topics ranging from American film to the history of rape, gay America, and a now-renowned course on Dolly Parton. A passionate mentor to her students, she has always encouraged them to engage with issues relevant to their own lives, including sexuality, race, and social movements. While these can be politically divisive, Sacco finds that students are more comfortable exploring these complex topics within the context of the past. By learning to empathize with people in history, and taking the time to understand why they arrived at the choices they made, students are better equipped to evaluate their own world view.

As Sacco encourages her students, "believe what you want, but have a good reason for it."

Her work with UT undergraduates has been recognized with numerous honors and accolades including the department's David V. and Kathryn G. White Undergraduate Teaching Award, the Chancellor's Award for Excellence in Teaching, and this spring, the Alumni Outstanding Teacher Award.

Outside of the classroom, Sacco has been an important mentor to large numbers of students through the years. She makes an effort to get to know all of her students, learning about their backgrounds and their personal struggles, as well as their academic interests and career aspirations. Her talents as a mentor are obvious to everyone in Dunford Hall who has had to step over the legs of the many students who camp outside her office door, waiting for their turn to get her advice and encouragement. Her sharp understanding of who her students are outside of the classroom has shaped her impressive service record on campus, including, for example, the work she has done with the Pride Center and as faculty advisor for Sex Week.

Of all the classes Sacco has taught at UT, one has drawn particular attention and acclaim, on campus and around the world. *Dolly's America: From Sevierville to the World* explores "how a 'hillbilly' girl from Appalachia grew up to become an international one-word sensation." Sacco designed this class, a small seminar for honors students, to both explore an engaging topic and prepare students to research and write an extensive senior thesis. Beginning in 2017 the course attracted enormous attention outside the university, including in such news outlets as the BBC and the *New York Times*.

As the reporter for the *Times* discovered, Sacco's course used Dolly Parton's career to explore much bigger topics - the economic history of Appalachia, the history of media-constructed gender norms, the history of tourism, and much more. In this course, Dolly Parton became a doorway to understanding so much about the regional and national history that has shaped the experience of our students today. For many students from this region, understanding Dolly helped them better understand themselves.

The impact of that course on Sacco's students was made vividly clear when it inspired a national podcast series, *Dolly Parton's America*. One episode centered on Sacco's class and her students. The program elicited an emotional response from listeners when students talked about intentionally losing their Appalachian accents in order to be taken more seriously in the world. Polly Ann Taylor ('18), from the small town of Clintwood in far southwestern Virginia, was one of those students. After the episode was released, she spent time reading through messages on Twitter from people who have gone through the same experience.

"The overwhelming amount of support and connection honestly made my day every time I read them," Taylor said. "Some of them also broke my heart when I saw how the story resonated with them, how it's also their experience, too. But it made me so glad that we were able to share our discussion the way that we did."

As she prepares to retire from the University of Tennessee, Sacco has many plans for the future, including continuing with her current research project. Sacco's first book, *Unspeakable: Father-Daughter Incest in American History*, was published by Johns Hopkins University Press in 2009. The quality of her research, and its importance to her field, was recognized by UT's Thomas Jefferson Prize the following year. Sacco's current research draws on her interests in the history of popular culture and cinema, examining how ideas of sexuality, gender, and pleasure develop over time.



Waiting out the Pandemic

Like playing musical chairs, when COVID-19 hit you grabbed the nearest chair and hunkered down. Any chair would do, and in my case, it was the Albright Institute, where I found myself virtually alone, rattling around a 100-year-old stone compound in East Jerusalem during a pandemic. That I found myself at the Albright Institute was not unexpected; I was awarded a fellowship for this spring. It's the rattling around alone and doing the cooking that was the unexpected. I arrived in mid-January as one of six fellows, along with a full staff, and the usual assortment of Albright denizens who come and go in strange and unknowable orbits. Due to COVID-19, by early March, Agatha Christie style, we were whittled down to two, and I was doing the cooking. There are undoubtedly much less accommodating places to wait out a pandemic, and on that score I consider myself very fortunate.

The W.F. Albright Institute of Archaeological Research (aiar.org), is a hulking relic of a colonial past that shares more of its DNA with the British Raj than the less corporeal American version. Of the 27 American overseas research institutes, the Albright is the second oldest; the building dates to 1925 and is situated in East Jerusalem, the Palestinian side of town, just down the street from Herod's Gate in the Old City. The building and its contents are a full expression of a kind of languorous miasma best associated with the close of the Ottoman Empire (think the film *Pascali's Island*).

Life at the Albright is all about the building, and the omphalos of the building is the courtyard. The compound, constructed in 1925, is comprised of three two-story buildings (including two subterranean repurposed cisterns); a director's house and lecture hall, a research library and hostel, and a kitchen/dining room/common room (along with a few apartments) that form a U shape around one of Jerusalem's true hidden gems, an exquisite garden courtyard.

The courtyard is a consistently cool and serene preserve that recalibrates pace to an even more languid tempo than the rest of dusty, sleepy Jerusalem.

The Albright is downright monastic, and even in the best of time the world passes it by. As I said, it's a good place to hunker down. I have access to an excellent research library 24/7, we get food deliveries twice a week, we have a small grove of lemon trees and a rosemary hedgerow, a tenth of a mile circular driveway that makes a good track, and Wi-Fi, of course. Sadly, the place is not haunted, other than by the history of the Middle East.

I've been able to get my work done, put on a few pounds, and learned how to mix a decent sidecar (and yes, I feel conjured up by central casting). But all this torpor comes at a price; like everywhere, COVID-19 has cast a deep and unsettling pall on the place. With no fellows or guests, the flow of both funds and intellectual energy have dried up. In such a pensive time, big questions have plenty of room to bubble to the surface. And as president of the Albright, I have a front row seat in trying to make sense of all this all, trying to revision a future of unknown dimensions, trying to figure out just who's Zooming who in the aftermath of COVID-19.

Most days begin with me and the director discussing the current situation and the necessary steps to ensure the safety of the residents and to keep the place running. By late-February we started cancelling a variety of programs: workshops, field trips, scholarly dinners, and the like. By mid-March, most of the fellows had left or been caught out of the country and were no longer allowed back (Israel shut down pretty quickly and thoroughly, a strategy that seems to have worked as the COVID numbers look very good and the country is now cautiously re-opening). With only two fellows left, we had to make the very difficult decision of furloughing the staff. During the next seven weeks none of the residents left the building, and while this sounds implausible, I can assure you it is not.

Since 1925 the Albright has survived a lot; changes in government, riots, wars (when Israeli soldiers tried to enter

the building in June of 1967, Omar Jibreen, the cook (who was still here in 1984 when I was fellow) refused their entrance, telling them it was American property (they sheepishly abided as many of the Israeli high command knew the Albright's reputation), and now a global pandemic.

I'm pretty sure the Albright will make it through this challenge as well, and I am working hard to ensure that will happen. We plan on reopening in August when a new group of fellows begins to arrive. We are holding our breath that we can do this safely but like every institution, so much is out of our hands. With all that is going on (and not going on), tomorrow, like every other day since mid-January, I plan on working in the library on my book project (rural elites in small scale societies in the Iron Age I - not too dissimilar to the Albright itself), taking breakfast and a few coffee breaks in the courtyard, and then making dinner. Be safe, be cautious...

- By J.P. Dessel, associate professor of history



Understanding German-American Catholics

Peyton Snyder, a senior history major at UT, recently finished his honors thesis, "Fellows in Faith and Heritage" under the supervision of Professor Vejas Liulevicius. Researching this project required learning how to read documents written in old German cursive, a skill that few historians develop prior to graduate school. To master this unusual skill, Peyton took a special course in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, one of only two such programs in the country. With generous funds from the Leroy Graf undergraduate research fellowship, Peyton was then able to travel to the University of Notre Dame archives to begin his research.

His project focuses on the largest German-American Catholic organization, the Central-Verein, from the late nineteenth century through the 1920s. Peyton explored how these German-American Catholics negotiated their identity in the context of anti-Catholic strains of German nationalism, ethnic and linguistic strife in the American Catholic Church, and pervasive anti-German sentiment in the United States during World War I. While in the archives, Peyton worked through a large volume of documents, including letters between German immigrants in America and the family members they left behind in Europe. The letters from the period 1914-17, prior to US entry into the Great War, were especially interesting as many of these German-Americans had family members serving in the German military and facing hardships on the home front. This research also yielded some surprising discoveries. For instance, Peyton found that the Central-Verein sent \$3 million in financial aid to impoverished ethnically-German parishes in Europe (some lying outside the nation-state, in Czechoslovakia and Poland) during the postwar economic crisis. A central finding of this thesis is that by the 1910s, there was a distinct ethno-religious identity in the Central-Verein, whose members imagined themselves as part of a global community of German Catholics.



The pandemic prevented us from applauding our outstanding undergraduate students in person at this year's awards ceremony, but that did not stop us from celebrating their success. Read more at tiny.utk.edu/graduate-news-2019.

GRADUATE STUDENT SPOTLIGHT

In the Archives



Alyssa Culp spent the summer of 2019 researching in Munich, Germany, at the Bavarian State Archives and Bavarian State Library. With a bit of luck and help from an archivist, Alyssa found an entire collection about the Bavarian morgues.

"This collection essentially found me," she said. "I believe that is the true beauty of research and working in the archives; you never really know where the manuscripts and collections might lead you."



To read more news about our outstanding graduate students and view award recipients, please visit us online. tiny.utk.edu/graduate-news-2020



nationale de France.

Jordan Amspacher traveled to Paris in 2019 to conduct archival research for his dissertation and had the opportunity to examine numerous thirteenth-century manuscripts at the Bibliothèque

"To hold within your hands the actual physical record of the thoughts penned by an author eight-centuries deceased, and then to feel those thoughts inhabit your own consciousness, as though they have a will to grant some measure of immortality to the otherwise nameless scribe who gave them form elicits sentiments which the confines of the written word simply do not have the power to convey."



Malcolm Huang's research on the cultural ties between Qing-China and colonial North America focuses on the circulation of Chinese tea and tea culture. In 2019, this project

sent him to research collections in Guangzhou, China, and Salem, Massachusetts. Malcolm's experience highlights an important lesson about how archives are organized and classified. Sometimes the collections that seem like they would be useful (due to the catalog description or keyword listed in the database) turn out to be dead ends. Then, there are other collections that do not initially seem like they would yield important information, but prove to be full of unexpected insights.

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NEWSLETTER

FOOTnotes