

Pen & Ink: Notes from the NDSU Department of English

Greetings from the Chair,

The scholarship issue of our newsletter does not come out until May, but from "Honor Roll" to "Alumni in Action," this winter issue reports on the impressive accomplishments of faculty, current undergraduate and graduate students, and alumni. The department, without question, has responded to the decade-long challenge at NDSU to "go to the next level" in teaching, research, and service, and this year we are contributing to the efforts that will maintain NDSU's place among the top 100 research universities in the country.

The first two graduates of our PhD program, Melissa Vosen (2010) and now Karen Sorenson (2013) are both employed in higher education upon completion of their degrees, and we have high hopes that the PhD students following in their footsteps will have similar success. As you might imagine, a perfect placement rate is

not common among PhD programs in English. And as proud as we are of our PhD students, we are also thrilled to have undergraduates as accomplished as Kellam Barta and Linnea Nelson winning awards and making presentations related to their scholarship and creative writing.

Our newsletter often reports on events that have happened (see "We Were Here"), but this issue also features fliers for events that are coming up. I hope alumni and friends of the English department will be able to attend one or more of these events.

As always, please read this newsletter as an invitation to reconnect with the department, a mentor, or new faculty member, or even to reach out to one of our current students and offer your congratulations.

Kevin Brooks
Department Chair
Kevin.Brooks@ndsu.edu
701-231-7147



HONOR ROLL

KELLAM BARTA, senior English major, has been awarded the Western Social Science Association prize for best undergraduate paper, an



extension of his English capstone project, "The Mascot Effect 2: Social Factors Influencing Pronunciation of Coyote." Dr. Bruce Maylath, professor of English, was his capstone mentor. Barta will receive the honor, \$500 prize, and membership in the organization at WSSA's annual conference in Denver, CO, this April. His project built upon previous findings that suggest that a university mascot with varying pronunciations (NDSU Bi/z/on vs. Bi/s/on) contributes to establishing and maintaining a sense of local identity through specific sound features (in NDSU's case, does the middle consonant sound like a z or an s). This project, a field study in sociolinguistics, investigates a similar phenomenon at the University of South Dakota, whose "Coyotes" may encode group identity based on whether or not the final syllable of the word representing the school mascot is pronounced. In addition to demonstrating "the mascot effect" at USD, this project explores the story of the word *coyote*, and how social factors may have shaped its use.

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Department Office:

219 Morrill Hall
Phone: 701-231-7143
Tina.Young@ndsu.edu
Michele.sherman@ndsu.edu
www.ndsu.edu/english

AARON KNODEL, was named West Fargo's Teacher of the Year for 2013-14. Knodel currently teaches Debate and Argumentation I and II for grades 10-12, Advanced Placement (AP) Junior English, and Response-to-Intervention (RTI) English IV. Although teaching both AP & RTI English can be challenging, he says the biggest hurdle is overcoming student apathy. Coping with students' mental health, attendance, and behavioral issues along with the normal teen angst requires a "delicate approach—we try to push and inspire all of our students, but we know full well that many of them face unfair challenges or stresses that greatly interfere with their school work." Surprised by winning the nomination, Knodel claims he does "nothing unusual compared to what every other teacher does and this recognition is a tribute to all teachers" and everything we do together. He believes good teaching "makes something challenging seem easy. When you make the work fun AND meaningful, students will respond in impressive ways!" Knodel graduated from NDSU in 2001 with a degree in English Education and is now eligible for the North Dakota Teacher of the Year award.



The Buzz



PhD student Karen Sorensen has accepted a tenure track position at Montana Tech of the University of Montana. Sorensen will be defending her dissertation in April and moving to Butte, MT to direct their writing program and contribute to their professional writing curriculum. Her dissertation focuses on the rhetoric of popular science and is entitled "Carl Sagan's *Cosmos*: The Rhetorical Construction of Popular Science Mythology."

Dr. Robert O'Connor published "Beauty or Truth: The Faustian Dilemma in H. Rider Haggard's *She*" in *The Lamar Journal of the Humanities*. His study examines the details of Haggard's narrative that render his novel a woman's Faustian tragedy, with Ayesha read not as a divinity, a female archetype, or a proto-superhero but as an extraordinary individual of flesh and blood.



Dr. Kelly Sassi's research, "A Review of the Literature on Pedagogical Approaches to Native American/American Indian Literatures," was published in *Applied Social Sciences: Education Sciences* by Cambridge Scholars Publishing, January 2013. Her research addresses the achievement gap between Native American/American Indian students and majority White students in the United States and teaching strategies to diminish the gap. Sassi was also awarded a grant from the North Dakota Humanities Council for her proposal titled, "Reading Literature/Viewing Art: *Moby-Dick*, *Ahab's Wife*, and the paintings of T.L. Solien." The grant will make it possible to bring award-winning author Sena Jeter Naslund to Fargo to read from her best-selling novel *Ahab's Wife, or The Stargazer* during the Plains Art Museum's exhibit of paintings by T.L. Solien in fall 2013. The grant will also fund a panel presentation on art, history, and literature.



Dr. Andrew Mara is the advisor for "Team Restaurant" one of 22 finalists in the Research and Technology Park's 2013 Innovation Challenge competition. Team Restaurant consists of Zakia Triffi and Stephan Wegerle Johansen. The goal of their project is to make restaurant visits more enjoyable while reducing wait time by integrating mobile technology to create a more seamless service. This integrated mobile technology will contain an interactive menu, ordering options, assistance notification, entertainment menu, purchasing options and a chance to give feedback. Innovation Challenge '13 showcases outstanding, innovative work of NDSU students. Teams compete for cash prizes as they present projects that solve real-world problems, advance technology and create new business opportunities.

Dr. Verena Theile, NDSU Assistant Professor of Early Modern Literature, is co-editor of *Staging the Superstitions of Early Modern Europe*. A collection of literary and historical essays on superstitions in performance and early modern drama, the book will be released by [Ashgate Publishing](#) in February 2013. Theile co-authored the introduction. Her own, single-authored essay, "Early Modern Engagements with Fear, Witchcraft, the Devil, and that Damned Dr. Faustus" is featured in "Part 1: Early Modern Superstitions: Religion, Reformation, and the History of Fear."



Dr. Elizabeth Birmingham initiated the collaborative effort between NDSU's College of Arts, Humanities and Social Sciences, Fargo-Moorhead's Center for Interfaith Project, and the Fargo Public Library. In doing so, NDSU Libraries and the Fargo Public Libraries have been awarded a [National Endowment for the Humanities \(NEH\) Muslim Journeys Bookshelf](#). This collection of books, films, and other resources will introduce the complex history and culture of Muslims in the United States and around the world. The libraries are two of only 842 public, academic, and community college libraries across the country selected to receive this grant. Each library will receive 25 books, three films, and access for one year to *Oxford Islamic Studies Online*.

Dr. Gary Totten published two articles. His essay, "Imagining the American West in Wharton's Short Fiction," was published in *The Journal of the Short Story in English* and examines Edith Wharton's representation of the American West in her short stories, noting the negative cultural meanings she attaches to the West, including themes of entrapment, loss of opportunity and alienation, particularly for female characters. In his book chapter, "Re-Authoring the Nineteenth Century: Morrison's 'Beloved' and Stowe's 'Uncle Tom's Cabin,'" in *Inhabited by Stories: Critical Essays on Tales Retold*, Totten demonstrates how re-reading a 19th century novel about a slave mother's experience, such as Harriet Beecher Stowe's "Uncle Tom's Cabin," in relation to a contemporary re-telling of a similar story, such as Toni Morrison's "Beloved," highlights new ideas about race and gender in the earlier novel.



In Dec. 2012, Drs. Miriam Mara and Kevin Brooks published their collaborative article, "Translating health care: Stories from refugees, providers, and friends," in the journal *Rhetoric, Professional Communication and Globalization*: <http://www.rpcg.org/index.php?journal=rpcg&page=article&op=view&>. Drawing on interviews and participatory observation, this article weaves stories of translating healthcare told from the perspectives of refugees, health care providers, and friends. The research finds friends of refugees can provide an important role in helping with cultural and institutional translations, and their role should be considered as part of a culturally-centered approach to healthcare.

STEPHEN FRECH

A POETRY READING

IN HIS OWN WORDS

Monday, March 18th

1:00 pm

Memorial Union Gallery



2ND DAVID MARTINSON BROADSIDE MEMORIAL

LIVING WITH POETRY

Tuesday, March 19th

7:00 pm

Spirit Room, 111 N. Broadway

Stephen Frech is an associate professor of English at Millikin University. He has published three award winning volumes of poetry and his fourth poetic volume, *A Palace of Strangers Is No City*, was published by Cervena Barva Press in 2011. Frech is founder and editor of Oneiros Press, publisher of limited edition, letterpress poetry broadsides.

An NDSU Department of English Cosgrove Seminars Presentations in conjunction with the NDSU Division of Fine Arts and Oneiros Press. These events are free and open to the public.

NDSU

ENGLISH

Introducing — Dr. Linda Helstern

Like the environment, education is without boundaries, it knows no borders. When Dr. Linda Helstern came to NDSU in 2004 she carried with her, life experiences that blurred borders and spanned oceans. Her academic background literally carried her from coast to coast. When she was 10, her family moved half-way across the country, in the middle of winter. En route from a Polish-Italian suburb of Philadelphia to a small town in central Minnesota, they were caught in a lake effect blizzard in Gary, IN, where they somehow managed to secure the last available hotel room in the entire town. Having been so “hospitably” welcomed to February in the Midwest, is it any wonder that Helstern had never crossed the Red River until joining the NDSU English faculty as an assistant professor?

“I was uprooted from a Polish-Italian suburb of Philadelphia and transplanted into a small town in central Minnesota—when I was 10—in February—during a blizzard.”

Linda Helstern

What is truly amazing is how her family’s relocation from Philly to farm community didn’t thwart her willingness to pick up roots in order to keep learning. After earning a BA in English from Hamline University, she earned her MA from the University of New Mexico, and then earned her PhD from Southern Illinois

University-Carbondale, specializing in twentieth century American/Native American literature. While working for the SIUC Department of Engineering, she also studied Native and American studies at UC-Berkeley and Creative Writing at UC-Davis. In 2008 Helstern crossed the Atlantic to teach Literature and the Changing Environment at the Maastricht Center for Transatlantic Studies where she learned more about the European response to global warming.

Along with writing, Helstern teaches American literature survey, literature and the environment, multicultural literature, Native American literature, and modern poetry. As a professor, Helstern suggests her classes “strongly encourage border crossing between



Helstern—Fall 2012 Advising Luncheon



disciplines and cultures. This was the essence of all the professional writing positions I have held, whether in health care, financial services, or engineering, and it is the basis of my literary scholarship with its dual focus on contemporary Native American writers.” Gerald Vizenor and Louis Owens are the focus for much of Helstern’s research and she is impressed with “their approach to thinking about culture, speaking to a native audience, and how environment is a profound concern for them.” Helstern’s goal is to do more thinking across cultures and bring Native literature and the environment together in important ways.

Having studied, worked, and lived in southern Illinois with her husband for twenty years, Helstern considers southern Illinois home. Since spending two years teaching at U of Texas-Pan American before coming to NDSU, for Helstern, being at NDSU means fewer borders between here and home.

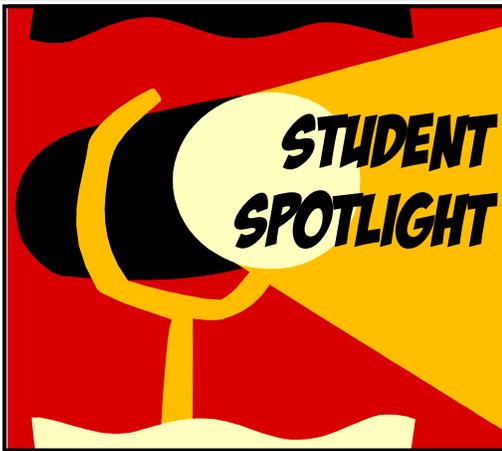
What’s Your Story?

We want to know where your initiative and ingenuity have taken your English degree. Plus, knowing your story can improve the curriculum for future students.

Send your updated story to: Tina.Young@ndsu.edu

For your story, please consider including:

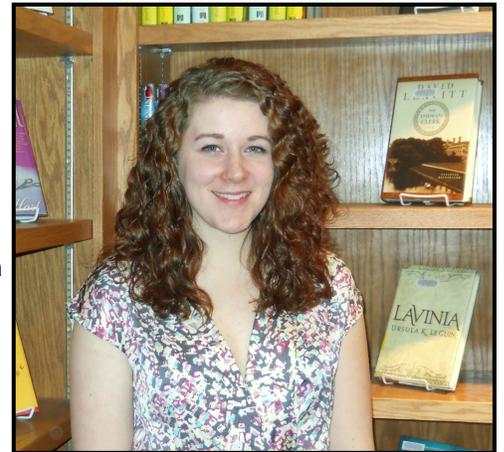
- Your graduation year and emphasis
- Whether you continued for an advanced degree
- Your career choices and opportunities
- What you (or we) might do differently
- Current position, locale, and photo



Linnea Nelson has had an interest in fine arts, literature, and creative writing for as long as she can remember, but as high school progressed she began to develop those interests, specifically in poetry. In 2009, Nelson attended the North Dakota Governor's School for English Studies, an experience that Nelson declares "revolutionized my understanding of what being an English major means, and also made my choice to pursue a degree in English at NDSU an easy one." Prior to attending Governor's School, Nelson anticipated earning a degree in music (as a bassoonist), but following her GS experience, she instead began to seriously seek publication. She's had the good fortune of having several poems published in periodicals such as *Tribeca Poetry Review* of New York City and *The New Writer* of the UK, before and during college. After attending the National Poetry Slam in 2010 and meeting former U.S. Poet Laureate, Billy Collins, just a couple of months later, she realized her fascination with the art of writing was taking a very permanent place

in her life and studies. Publication in NDSU's own literary journal, *Northern Eclecta*, is an annual highlight in her college career, and Nelson is "delighted to be serving as its Editor-in-Chief this year."

LINNEA NELSON



V. Elegy

When your beginning was over,
no one sought out a small, solemn boat and pair
of eager oars to sail
away and find you.
No one locked themselves up in a burning
lighthouse to watch for you.

I unlaced my boots and listened
for weeks to creaking furniture, soap
spreading itself over vital
skin, and flakes of winter slipping into
rooms where you and I had made
staggering accusations to
the human race for who knows
how long.

Our beautiful neighbor
continues to choke at his breakfast;
books and cupboards persist in
closing.

The foolish lights we considered walking
under, for the sake of breaking
the veritable world somewhat open,

still do not suggest
what exactly it is that
holds even the tallest of
mysteries together, and
still refuse
to go out.

Wherever you ended up,
I wonder if you, too, are noticing these things;

if it's any easier there to get the last word—

if you are still giving yourself away
in indiscernible quantities—

if, there, it is also true that some people never get
old enough to do what you did.

Nelson is also enjoying her role as Vice President of NDSU's Sigma Tau Delta chapter and is looking forward to presenting selections from *Flight From a Burning Tree*—a chapbook she penned and published as her senior Capstone project—at the 2013 Sigma Tau Delta National Conference in Portland, OR, in April 2013. The poems "IV. Because No One Has Ever Told You" and "V. Elegy" are excerpts from the *Burning Tree* chapbook and are part of her planned reading in Portland.

In addition to her work on *Northern Eclecta* and Sigma Tau Delta, Nelson is also a member of NDSU's Blue Key Honor Society, a group of junior and senior students responsible for the NDSU Homecoming Bison Brevities production and the NDSU Distinguished Educator Award. This spring, she became a member-at-large on the Board of Student Publications for NDSU which oversees *The Spectrum* and *Northern Eclecta*. This position is giving her a greater understanding of the business side of publications.

In the fall, Nelson will be taking English courses at Leeds Metropolitan University in Leeds, England for a study abroad experience. Planning a return to her ancestral roots during her stay in England, Nelson will research her ancestry from the Isle of Man and be visiting some of the British Isles. Nelson is slated to graduate in May, 2014. Following graduation she plans to pursue an MFA in Creative Writing.

IV. Because No One Has Ever Told You

it begins like this

you walk along the bank
of a river at night talking
to your dog about the stars
& the smell of the night is with you
& your breath trails
behind you
& you are brave

you have held thousands upon thousands
of things in your hands
sometimes just air
& other times you may have thought it was nothing at all

& a quietness overcomes you
that cannot be explained away

KrisAnn Norby-Jahner — Blaine, MN



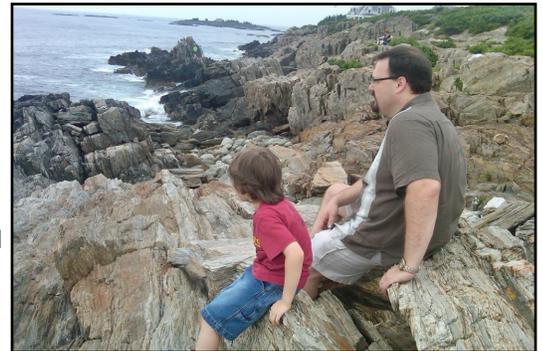
Since graduating from the MA literature program in 2005, I kept myself busy in advanced education. I moved on to a PhD program in literature at Kent State University in Ohio in 2005 where I taught English courses until 2007 when I became ABD, which marked the completion of my coursework and the qualified doctoral examinations. I continued to work on my dissertation (a “law and literature” study), while earning my JD from Hamline University School of Law in 2010. I began practicing law at Mansfield Tanick & Cohen P.A. in Minneapolis as an employment and ERISA litigation lawyer, but now I’m an attorney at Hellmuth & Johnson PLLC in Edina. I also teach legal research and writing, employment law, moot court, and legal studies courses at Hamline University and the University of

Minnesota Law School. I find my background and education in English and in Law to work hand in hand: A successful lawyer must have good writing skills, communication, analytical ability, and the drive to learn every day, making my English literature background the foundation for my legal practice. I currently live in Blaine with my husband, Doug, our two-year-old son, Ethan, and our newborn daughter, Kaurie.

Alumni in Action

Anthony Ellertson — Stevens Point, WI

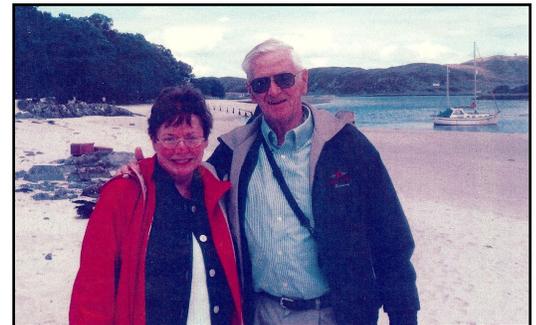
I received my Masters from NDSU and then I went on to complete a PhD in Rhetoric and Professional Communication at Iowa State University. I have been working with interactive media, games, and mobile devices for the majority of the last 12 years. My dissertation centered on an eportfolio project using the Rich Internet Application model. After completing my dissertation at Iowa State I accepted a faculty position in the Web & Digital Media Development program at the University of Wisconsin-Stevens Point. While here, I created the first games class at UWSP, and continue to teach serious and casual gaming for both the Web browser and mobile devices. In 2010, the WDMD program was placed in the Top 50 Game Design programs in the country by the Princeton Review and Game Pro. I am currently involved in a series of grant projects with a talented staff of student developers. Our goal is to leverage our knowledge of mobile development and games toward the creation of enhanced therapy tools and applications for children with Autism and other communicative disorders. I am also a co-principal investigator on a series of projects with the health care industry in Wisconsin that are reimagining in and out patient care utilizing gesture based navigation, augmented reality, RFID technologies, and other mobile solutions.



Mitzi Brunsdale — Mayville, ND

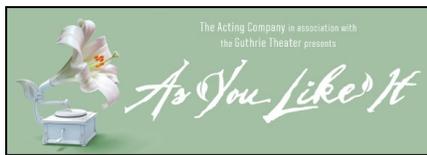
After graduate courses at Indiana University in mathematics, comparative literature, and Russian, I returned to NDSU and earned one of its first Master’s degrees in English; soon after, I married John E. Brunsdale, also an NDSU graduate, and became a farm wife for decades—and I’m proud of it. We raised our three daughters on our farm near Mayville, and when they were all in school I earned my Ph.D. at UND in English and German under a Danforth Graduate Fellowship for Women, the only one, I think, to have been awarded to a North Dakotan. I’ve been teaching English courses as a member of the Mayville State University faculty ever since.

For seventeen years, I had a byline with *The Houston Post*, critiquing fiction and Russian dissident literature, and I also reviewed fiction for *The Chicago Tribune* and *The Armchair Detective*. Currently I review for *The Strand Magazine* and *Publishers Weekly*, and I’m a member of the National Book Critics Circle. I write for scholarly purposes, like my critical book-length biographies of Sigrid Undset, Dorothy L. Sayers, and George Orwell and my study for Twayne on James Joyce’s short fiction; but I truly enjoy writing for undergraduates and general readers. I told Twayne I would get down on my knees to do a critical biography of the Yorkshire veterinarian James Herriot, a book that was pure joy to write, and more recently ABC-CLIO published my *Gumshoes: A Dictionary of Literary Detectives* and my two-volume *Icons of Mystery and Crime Detection*—from Batman to Zorro.





In early February, 45 students from the Honors Program and the English department



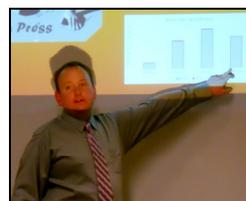
attended a February performance of Shakespeare's *As You Like It* at the Guthrie Theater in Minneapolis. The annual event began ten years ago, in 2003, as an initiative of the Honors Program and its Student Council and has been co-organized by Dr. Paul Homan (Modern Languages) and, since 2008, Dr. Verena Theile (English). The trips, by chartered bus, have been underwritten with funds from English, Honors, and the Dean of Arts, Humanities, and Social Sciences; these contributions have broadened participation by substantially reducing ticket and travel costs to each student. To make the most of the experience, arrangements are made each year so that, in addition to seeing a performance by one of the country's most respected theater companies, students are able to participate in a talk-back session with the actors following the play during which they can ask the actors questions about the play, their interpretation, the director's vision, and other aspects of the performance. Past performances include *Henry V* (2009), *Macbeth* (2010), *The Winter's Tale* (2011), and *Julius Caesar* (2012).



Greetings from Shakespeare @ The Guthrie (2013)

The English Club held a book sale in the Minard Hall Annex in early February. English Club and Sigma Tau Delta also hosted an open poetry reading in the Weber Reading Room in the library to commemorate Black History Month. All readings were selections of African American Literature. Sigma Tau Delta held a bake sale in early March to raise funds for members attending the Sigma Tau Delta National Conference being held in Portland, OR in April 2013.

As registration for summer and fall courses looms right around the corner, the English department held its 2nd annual spring advising event themed "Look into your Future." The looking ahead luncheon offered students a free lunch for a priceless future. Department advisors, professors, career services representatives, and area professionals were available, giving students opportunities to see what direction a degree in English can take them.

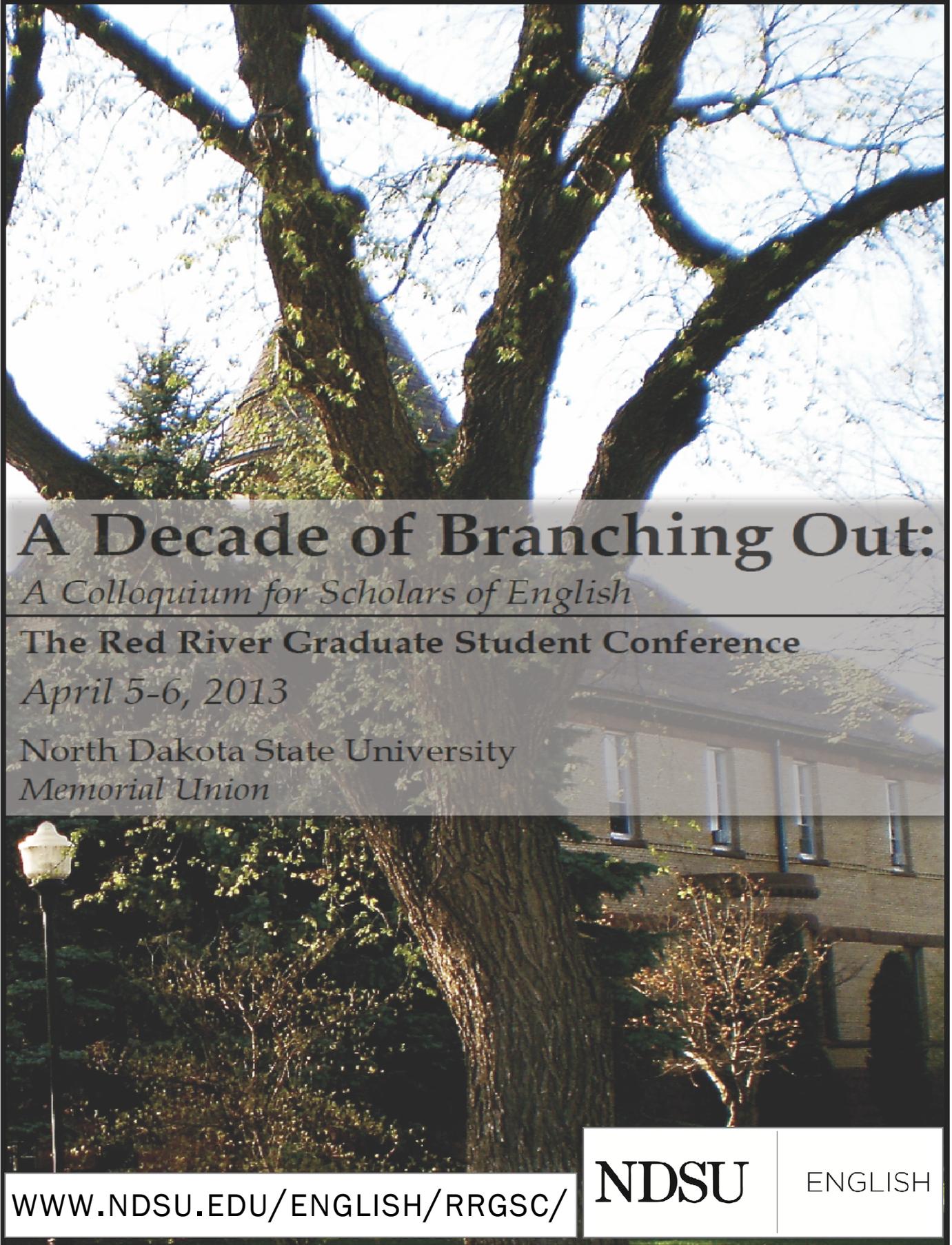


The Cosgrove Seminars kicked off its spring reading series to a full house with the Trends in E-Publishing panel presentation held February 28, 2013. Self-publishing electronic books is changing the way writers get their work to

audiences. Writer and publisher Ryan Christiansen and award-winning author ML Harveland discussed their experiences in electronic publishing. Christiansen is the editor and publisher of Knuckledown Press. Harveland's self-published e-novel, *The Seventh Soul*, won a 2012 Indie Reader Discovery Award.



The English Department presented an Upper Division Writing Spring Brown Bag session in early March. The session was open to all, including 110/120 instructors, and the theme was Paperless Strategies in the Classroom. Presenters and topics included Dr. Josh Webster's work with Google sites, Dr. Andrew Mara discussing Blackboard rubrics, Cody Kaiser shared his insights on Weebly, and Steven Hammer explored digital writing for audiences beyond the classroom.



A Decade of Branching Out:

A Colloquium for Scholars of English

The Red River Graduate Student Conference

April 5-6, 2013

North Dakota State University

Memorial Union

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