A Journey Out of History...
Modern Languages Past, Present, and Future

by Susan G. Polansky, Teaching Professor of Hispanic Studies and Head, Department of Modern Languages

My very first official visit to Carnegie Mellon was to interview for a position as a Lecturer in Spanish in the History Department. Yes, the History Department. At that time, Modern Languages was a program in the History Department. My interview took place on January 28, 1986, the morning of the Challenger disaster. I can still picture on the television screen in the History Department the plume of the disaster on the sunny sky backdrop. Days like that make an indelible impression. They heighten appreciation for the important people in your life and for the positive forces that give meaning to your life. Carnegie Mellon has been a wonderful and important part of my life for these more than two decades. Though perhaps stories of people who sleep very little at Carnegie Mellon may be somewhat exaggerated, here people do work very hard and feel the positive value of their work. My view from the Department of Modern Languages offers a compelling example of this. Thanks to the enormous efforts of so many who were directed by my predecessors Barbara Freed and Dick Tucker, our Modern Languages family of staff, students, and faculty shares a story of our remarkable growth.

In the late 1980’s, a unit with five fulltime faculty members and a handful of adjunct faculty taught undergraduate courses in French, German, Italian, Japanese, Russian, and Spanish. Today Modern Languages is a richly diverse department with undergraduate and graduate programs taught by more than fifty fulltime faculty, adjunct faculty, and graduate students. Through the early 1990’s we experienced a period of rapid expansion and established department status in the Spring of 1993. Here are some striking indications of our remarkable growth:

• In Fall 1992, total enrollment in Modern Languages was 488 students. In Fall 2007, 1347 students (including faculty and staff) from all colleges of the University are taking Modern Languages courses. Annual increases have been impressive over the years. Fall 2007 enrollment in Modern Languages is up more than thirteen percent (13%) from Fall 2006. In addition, students at CMU-Q are studying Elementary and Intermediate Spanish and interact with our students here in Pittsburgh.

• In Fall 1992, Modern Languages offered one section of Chinese to five students. In Fall 2007, 386 students are studying Chinese across twenty-one (21) sections taught by three fulltime faculty, as well as adjunct faculty and graduate students. Students can pursue a minor or a major in Chinese in a fully articulated program. In addition, majors and minors are available in French and Francophone Studies, German, Hispanic Studies, and Japanese, as well as in European Studies and Russian Studies, and Modern Languages also collaborates with other departments of the College of Humanities and Social Sciences to offer interdisciplinary concentrations in International Relations and Linguistics.

• In 1996, Modern Languages began a Ph.D. program in Second Language Acquisition (SLA). With the aim of creating insightful researchers capable of using analytical and empirical methods to illuminate and understand the acquisition, use, and maintenance of second languages, this broadly interdisciplinary doctoral program provides students and future professionals with a theoretical grounding in linguistics and cognitive psychology, combined with training in qualitative and quantitative research methodology.

• Shared locally, nationally, and internationally, the research of Modern Languages faculty in second language acquisition, literary and cultural studies, and technology-enhanced learning has also inspired a wealth of opportunities for significant involvement of graduate and undergraduate students. Our students have worked and studied in public school districts in the Pittsburgh area and beyond to promote the acquisition of second languages from elementary through to college level. They have produced a wide variety of critical writings and presentations, visual creations, screens and translations in the target languages. Our web-based language-on-line programs in Chinese, French, and Spanish have opened avenues for examination of learning and teaching methodologies.

Carnegie Mellon students’ dedication to language study is noteworthy. In a survey of the Class of 2006, approximately forty-six percent (46%) of graduating seniors had taken at least one language course during their undergraduate years here. We do not have a language requirement in place, although students can elect a language to fulfill certain distribution requirements. Our statistics compare favorably with a national scene—where there is much room for improvement—since roughly twelve percent (12%) of undergraduate students in the United States study a foreign language at all during their college careers. An interesting aside: last December, Pittsburgh’s City Paper readers rated Carnegie Mellon’s Modern Languages program number one.

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Jerry H. Griffin, Professor, Department of Mechanical Engineering, Carnegie Institute of Technology, will act as Vice President of Engineering at Blade Diagnostics Corporation in Pittsburgh.

Lori L. Holt, Associate Professor, Psychology, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, plans to investigate the development of auditory expertise.

Pamela Jennings, Assistant Professor, Art and Human Computer Interaction, College of Fine Arts, will be working on research funded by the National Science Foundation CreativeIT program.

John Lafferty, Professor, Department of Computer Science, School of Computer Science, plans to complete the writing of a textbook on Statistical Machine Learning.

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Letters

Dear Editor:

I am neither an economist nor a biologer researcher, but upon reading the recent featured reprint (Focus, Oct 2007) of the paper on the economics of stem-cell research, I was struck by how much the authors missed the point of the whole stem-cell research debate.

The main issue of the debate is not whether embryonic stem-cell research is potentially profitable (although, with recent promising results from adult stem cell research, this may be debated), it is whether research that depends on the destruction of human embryos is evil.

There are numerous examples of potential research directions that could be very productive economically, but are evil, as defined by current law. To pick a far-less controversial example than hESC, consider research that involves launching computer viruses to deal with broad spread-network vulnerabilities or to eliminate wide-spread malicious software. This could result in large savings in computer security efforts, I would also certainly result in the loss of large amounts of intellectual property. It is also, very properly, illegal under current Federal and state laws. So the principle that there are profitable (dollar-wise) directions of research that we forgo due to the morality is readily established by example.

The question remains: is hESC research evil? Without dealing with that issue, the paper constitutes a red herring in the public debate, despite the obvious talent and intellectual prowess of the authors.

Timothy J. Shimeall, Ph.D.
Adjunct Prof. Heinz School Staff
CERT/NetSA

Dear Editor:

I wanted to make a comment on the front page article for Focus (A River Runs Through It), but I can’t see a good feedback mechanism for this sort of thing, nor was there mention of who wrote the article, so I thought I’d write to you. I’m a staff member in Computing Services.

My only comment was with the first paragraph of the article which says the city sewer system “is in need of serious federal funding”. I thought this is just the sort of thinking that created the problem. Why does this require *federal* funding? Pittsburgh city sewers are a Pittsburgh city problem, and waiting for a bailout from Washington DC is just turning more local authority over to the draconian federal government. And we all know what a bangup job national bureaucrats do fixing local problems. I don’t want the IRS taking my money to fix a local problem in some other city, and their money shouldn’t be taken to fix ours. If there isn’t money in Pittsburgh coffers to fix local problems, then we need new local politicians. Money should be saved over time for these things, and repairs done along the way, before the problem reaches this magnitude and we all go running to FEMA anxious to have someone to blame.

Kevin

This is by no means making a statement about the current Administration or Congress in Washington DC. The separation of local city, state, and federal authority is fundamental to the makeup of our country.

That’s my opinion; I could be wrong.

Thank you for your time,

Mark Adams
Computing Services
Plays at the Chosky:
A review of Three Sisters
by Jean Alexander,
Head, Hunt Reference, University Libraries and Treasurer, Faculty Senate

Compared with other performances that I’ve seen (more than I’d care to admit), this is a youthful and spontaneous Three Sisters, and not only because of the age of the cast. I realized in a new way that this is a play about young men and women going through a universal search for identity, love, work, and meaning in life.

Carnegie Mellon’s School of Drama opened the 2007-08 season with a fine production of Chekhov’s Three Sisters, directed by Vladimir Mironov of Drama Centre London. This tragic-comedy—which at its premier baffled even Stanislavsky, director of the Moscow Art Theater—is now so familiar to international audiences that ossification is always a danger, along with the opposite extreme of novelty for novelty’s sake. This fall’s production shows a deep understanding of Chekhov’s characters and their social milieu, as well as the poetic structure that pervades but never confines the richly ambiguous meaning of the drama.

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Faculty & Staff Annual Fund
Thank you: Your gifts make an impact!

by Carole Panno, Senior Associate Director of Annual Giving

Thank you to the 872 members of our campus community who contributed to the 2006-2007 Faculty & Staff Annual Fund. Support like yours is essential to Carnegie Mellon.

Each year, the university relies on annual giving to make a world of difference on campus for the students, our most precious asset. Annual gifts are expendable, which means they are used immediately to meet the university’s most pressing needs.

Living and working in a diverse environment such as ours with the brightest students and faculty from across disciplines, as well as an extremely dedicated staff, can greatly enhance the experiences of all members of the campus community, but in particular, those of our students. However, relationship alone cannot provide all that our students need for a well-rounded and comprehensive student experience; funding is necessary, too, as tuition cannot fully cover all costs associated with educating our students.

Gifts to the Faculty & Staff Annual Fund help provide critical funding for departments, academic programs, and extra-curricular campus initiatives. Inside the classroom, money is used to develop multi-disciplinary and community-based courses, requiring students to think globally, collaborate with peers and faculty from across disciplines, and understand and respect issues from many perspectives. In short, our support helps the university continue to provide students with an education which empowers them to become thinkers, inventors, and leaders.

The generosity of the campus community also enables the university to extend learning beyond the classroom. Gifts to the Annual Fund help to support a wide array of activities affecting a student’s overall educational experience. For instance, contributions can fund travel to technical conferences, musical performances, or educational competitions. In addition, the university provides countless activities and organizations for everyone allowing students to learn and discover who they really are. In fact, more than 225 recognized student organizations provide students with the opportunity to get to know others with similar interests ranging from Fencing to Intramural Sports, Dancers’ Symposium, or the Thistle Yearbook, just to name a few. Students are also able to expand their thinking, develop social skills, and have fun at various events like provocative talks sponsored by the University Lecture Series, UC movies, concerts, personal development workshops, and more. These activities create a vibrant campus community and enhance the overall student experience. And, to reiterate, tuition alone does not cover the full cost of a student’s education – not even the academic costs!

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Regardless of the origins of this particular notion of the importance of existing ideas to the creation of new ones, I find the choice of words we use to express it rather curious. Words like “borrow,” “steal,” and “theft” all originally refer to violations of property rights over physical objects, and all have taken on ethical connotations that go well beyond the economic issue of property. When I borrow a colleague’s pen to jot down an email address, I deny my colleague the use of her pen for the period over which I’ve borrowed it. But, since this period is generally limited and the use of the pen is granted by the owner, borrowing is generally viewed as a socially acceptable activity, as long as I don’t engage in it overly often. Stealing my colleague’s pen, on the other hand, is done without permission and denies her the use of it forever, an activity which Western society not only frowns on but actively seeks to deter.

But how is it that we have come to apply these words to the imitation of good ideas? Ideas have no physical reality, so the “borrowing” or “theft” of an idea cannot in any way deny the use of the idea to the idea’s creator, and yet, when we talk of music or DVD downloads from the internet, the most frequently used word in the discussion is “piracy,” with its connotations of black eye-patches, skulls-and-crossbones, pillage and murder.

But the second problem is what economists call “rent seeking” behavior. When entrepreneurs know that there is an opportunity to make money from the imitation of market failure. This perceived market failure stems from the assumption that once a good idea is revealed, it can be quickly and freely shared by all. If the actual creation and expression of these ideas is costly, then (so the argument goes) innovators will not be able to recoup the investment they make in coming up with innovations since they can’t exclude non-payers from using their ideas unless the innovators have some kind of enforceable monopoly rights over their creations. This notion is enshrined in the U.S. Constitution under the so-called Copyright Clause, which gives Congress the power to provide limited terms of patent and copyright protection in order to “promote the progress of science and the useful arts.”

This idea is also the basis for a number of theories of economic growth and what has come to be called Schumpeterian competition after Joseph Schumpeter, who first proposed it in the 1940’s. The argument runs as follows: costly investments in what economists have come to call human capital – education, basic research and corporate R&D – lead to innovations that drive growth. However, because these ideas can be freely copied and applied, innovators cannot recoup their investments. By providing intellectual property protection, however, society can insure that these investments get made, and stimulate new innovations which, in a process Schumpeter called creative destruction, lead to still more growth and innovation.

Boldrin and Levine take major issue with both of these arguments for intellectual property protection. The first part of the book focuses primarily on patents and the effect of patent monopolies on innovation. Economists dislike monopoly for two well-known reasons. First, monopolies generally restrict the supply of their product in order to keep prices and profits high. This generally results in under provision of the good the monopolist produces, relative to the social optimum. The second problem is what economists call “rent seeking” behavior. When entrepreneurs know that there is an opportunity to make monopoly profits, they compete to be the first to establish a monopoly position. Since only one firm emerges victorious, the resources losing firms have invested in the race to monopoly are simply wasted. Boldrin and Levine identify a second inefficiency associated with rent seeking behavior, when an established monopoly devotes resources to maintaining its monopoly position. This kind of rent seeking behavior manifests itself in lobbying of legislatures or government regulators for favorable treatment that will help sustain the monopoly, and in litigation in the case of IP monopolies to prevent innovation that would endanger the monopolist’s hold on market.

Boldrin and Levine, in the book’s Introduction, tell the story of James Watt, the Scottish entrepreneur and inventor whose improvement of early, inefficient steam engines in the 1760’s made automated manufacturing processes possible and marked the earliest phase of the industrial revolution in England. Watt obtained patents on his improvements and, with financial backing from a friend, began manufacturing his more powerful steam engine. Watt also aggressively pursued rivals who attempted to produce even more efficient and powerful steam engines, using his patents to block their innovations. Boldrin and Levine note that during the period between 1775 and 1800, in which Watt’s
patents were in place, the U.K. added around 750 horsepower of steam engines per year. After Watt's patents expired and other inventors were able to freely improve on his engine, the U.K. added over 4,000 horse-

power per year over the next thirty years. Arguably, Watt’s defense of his monopoly over the steam engine can be viewed as having set back the full onset of the Industrial Revolution by a quarter century.

The key observation that Boldrin and Levine take away from this and the many other examples they look at in the book is that young innovative companies pursuing the development of new technologies benefit signifi-
cantly from the absence of IP protection. This view is supported not only by historical evidence, but also by current patent pooling practices in high tech industries, whereby firms who are otherwise competing enter into agreements to inexpensively cross-license patents, knowing that while their innovations will likely benefit competitors, their competitors innova-
tions will also benefit them. Only as an industry matures and the pace of innovation slows do IP protections start to become important in helping to maintain the bottom line, which would seem to contradict the notion that without IP protection, innovation won’t occur.

Much of the second part of the book is devoted to showing that for most ideas, the free availability of the idea does not result in a collapse of the market for new ideas and innovations. As Boldrin and Levine point out in looking at a number of historical ideas whose free use should have been quickly and immediately replicated, given the obvious usefulness of the idea once revealed. One such example is the wheel. Once you see a wheel in action, it is clear what it can do and how it might be useful. And yet, as Boldrin and Levine note, the Mayans were aware of wheels and used them extensively in children’s toys, but never came up with useful cars or even wheelbarrows. Agriculture is another remarkably useful idea that took centuries to spread through the human population. Despite the relative simplicity of methods for domesticating both plants and animals for the provision of food, history tells us that agricultural practices spread at the remarkably slow pace of about a kilometer per year, most likely as practices and ideas were passed from parents to children.

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cated, can be cheaply applied to make undeserved profits for copiers also turns out to be suspect.

The assumption that good ideas, once communicated, can be cheaply ap-
plied to make undeserved profits for copiers also turns out to be suspect. Taking more modern examples, Boldrin and Levine point out that a com-
puter operating system that implements an idea like the Xerox/Macintosh/ Windows graphical user interface (GUI) is clearly a good and useful idea, but unless you are trained in computer engineering, actually producing a workable version of the idea is virtually impossible. And even with such training, it takes time to actually implement your own version of the idea and take it to market. So, for such ideas, there will always be significant first-mover advantages to innovating, even without intellectual property protections. Indeed, as Boldrin and Levine note, one reason we see the same graphical interface idea implemented across Unix, Linux, Windows and Apple operating systems is that this idea was developed in a period in which patenting of software was not allowed. Apple (an early mover in implementing a GUI operating system) certainly made money from the idea. Microsoft has also made a fortune on the Windows operating sys-
tem, despite its significant delay in adopting the actual windowing idea. Obviously, if people can make money from acting commercially on these ideas, it’s hard to see where the market is failing us.

Even books, which were the first embodiment of ideas to receive IP pro-
tection historically can, in fact, make money without such protection. Boldrin and Levine cite the case of the report of the September 11 Com-
mision. As a U.S. Government document, this report was exempt from copyright protection. The Commission negotiated a deal with the W.W. Norton publishing company that granted Norton the right to publish the authorized version of the report, and to release the published report si-
multaneously with the electronic release of the report by the Commission. The New York Times, in collaboration with another publisher, St. Martins, describing the Norton deal as a “royalty free windfall,” used the lack of copyright to publish its own version of the report shortly after the initial release of the official web version and Norton’s authorized version. Nor-
ton was required, as part of its agreement with the Commission to donate any profits from the deal to charity, and it ended up turning over $600,000 to selected charities. Industry estimates, however, suggest that Norton in fact earned something approaching $1 million on the report. Presumably, the New York Times and St. Martins also turned a profit on their unaux-
thorized version. And all of this happened under competition without IP protection.

But, you might be asking yourself, what about something like music, which in digital form can be distributed quite rapidly over the internet without ever compensating the artist who created it? Boldrin and Levine include the following quote from musician Courtney Love about the economics of popular music:

This story is about a bidding-war band that gets a huge deal with a 20 percent royalty rate and a million-dollar advance. (No bidding-war band ever got a 20 percent royalty, but whatever.) … The spend half the money to record their album. That leaves the band with $500,000. They pay $100,000 to their manager for 20 percent commission. They pay $25,000 each to their lawyer and business manager. That leaves $350,000 for the four band members to split. After $170,000 in taxes, there’s $180,000 left. That comes out to $45,000 per person. That’s $45,000 to live on for a year until the record gets released. The record is a big hit and sells a million copies. So, this band releases two singles and makes two videos. The two videos cost a million dollars to make and 50 percent of the video production costs are recouped out of the band’s royalties. The band gets $200,000 in tour support, which is 100 percent recoupable. The record company spends $300,000 on independent radio promotion … which is charged to the band. Since the original million-dollar advance is also re-
coupable, the band owes $2 million to the record company. If all of the million records are sold at full price with no discounts or record clubs, the band earns $2 million in royalties, since their 20 percent royalty works out to $2 a record.

Obviously, under the current business model for the mainstream music industry, the money a popular band can make pays a lot of salaries. But the purpose of copyright protection is not job creation or protection, but the promotion of useful arts and sciences. From the numbers above, if the band were able to produce 10 good songs and sell them to the highest bid-
er for $35,000 per song, they would earn enough as a group as under the current business model. For iTunes alone, recovering the cost of one song would require them to sell 3,500 downloads. Since iTunes sells an esti-

mated 2 million songs per day, they could spend the $35,000 per song per day and market over 500 new songs a day. It would certainly seem, then, that with judicious screening and niche marketing, iTunes alone would be a viable customer for a business model that involved simple interac-
tions between artists and retailers, without the current intermediation of the record industry. This argument becomes even more compelling when we take account of competition, both from other large companies like Mi-
crosoft and Amazon that want to sell music, and companies like Google which are looking at the possibility of giving music away as a way of selling advertising targeted at specific users of their service. Boldrin and Levine also note that the same technology that has made copying and dis-

distribution of digitized music files so cheap has also made the process of re-

cording music cheaper by three orders of magnitude. Obviously, this isn’t a market that has failed; it’s one that is in a transition induced by a new and effective technology for producing and distributing music.
Manfred Paulini, Associate Professor, Department of Physics, Mellon College of Science, plans to co-lead the B Physics Group of the CDF experiment at Fermilab and to get more deeply involved in the CMS experiment at CERN in Geneva, Switzerland. This will allow him to further build up a CMU group working on CMS. Paulini will spend part of his time at Fermilab near Chicago and at CERN.

Rob A. Rutenbar, Professor, Department of Electrical & Computer Engineering, Carnegie Institute of Technology, will work on a comprehensive graduate-level textbook on CAD for integrated circuit design, and explore the commercial applications of his recent work on moving speech recognition from software in custom silicon-based hardware.

Scott A. Sandage, Associate Professor, History Department, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, was awarded a senior faculty fellowship from the National Endowment for the Humanities. He will be working on his second book, *Half-Breed Creek: A Tall Tale of Race on the Frontier, 1804-1941*.

Vishal Singh, Assistant Professor of Marketing, Tepper School of Business, will be continuing his work on several research projects at New York University, Stern School of Business.

G. Richard Tucker, Professor, Modern Languages Department, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, will complete work on a monograph, tentatively title *Early Language Learning*. This monograph will summarize the findings from 12 years of classroom based research with Rick Donato at the University of Pittsburgh on the learning and teaching of Spanish as a second language with students and teachers in Chartiers Valley School District.

Erik Ydstie, Professor, Department of Chemical Engineering, Carnegie Institute of Technology, plans to write a new undergraduate textbook on process dynamics and control. He will also work with iLS Inc., a CMU startup company, on developing self-optimizing and adaptive control methods to save energy in the chemical industries and make power generation more efficient.

**Fall Semester 2007**

Kenya C. Dworkin, Associate Professor with Tenure, Modern Language Department, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, will dedicate her time to continuing her exploration of the cultural history of the twentieth-century. Also, she will focus on interethic relations between Sephardic Jews and Puerto Ricans, and the politics and history of discrimination that isolated them from greater society.

Marakee Harrel, Associate Teaching Professor, Philosophy, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, plans to develop an outline tutorial for *Logos*, an argument mapping software program that she has been developing with Matthew Easterday from HCII.

John R. Hayes, Professor, Department of Psychology, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, will conduct an extensive review of the development of cognitive processes in writing. He plans to create a sequence of models tracking the development of young writers.

Sono Tatano Hayes, Associate Teaching Professor, Modern Languages Department, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, will devote time to preparing a textbook for use in a 3rd year (Advanced) Japanese course.

**Spring 2008**

Cliff Davidson, Professor, Department of Civil and Environmental Engineering, Carnegie Institute of Technology, plans to compose a course and textbook introduction to sustainable engineering.

Alan Frieze, Professor, Department of Mathematical Sciences, Mellon College of Science, is writing a textbook on Random Graphs and Networks.

Clark Glymour, Alumni University Professor, Philosophy, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, plans to continue writing and to publish on the elitist imposition of permanent public sculpture, the intellectual bankruptcy of academic defenders of the practice, and the moral shallowness of those empowered to authorize public placement.

Christian W. Hallstein, Professor, Department of Modern Languages, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, plans to edit a translation of an early nineteenth century medical/legal text by Johann Christian August Claus and write an article on the sermons of the German Cultural Historian and critic Johann Gottfried Herder.

Paul J. Healy, Assistant Professor, Department of Economics, Tepper School of Business, will continue work on existing research projects with Professors Moore and Kogan at the Tepper School and will begin new projects on strategic behavior and economic mechanisms using Ohio State’s Experimental Economics laboratory.

Dmitry Kramkov, Professor, Mathematical Sciences, Mellon College of Science, plans to travel to other universities and conferences. Professor Kramkov will be attending workshops and conferences in Edinburgh, Vienna, Oberwolfach and London. He will be visiting University of Oxford for two months and University of Paris 6 for one month.

Frederick Lanni, Associate Professor, Department of Biological Sciences, Mellon College of Science, plans to do some experimental work with close colleagues, in which these projects will lead to publications and grant proposals, and to improved instrumentation capabilities within the Department and MBIC.

Andreco Rittivoi, Associate Professor, English Department, College of Humanities and Social Sciences, plans to continue her work on her current research project (titled *The Nation Abroad*) in which she is studying the argumentation strategies of Eastern European refugees and exiles who, at the beginning of the Cold War, found themselves simultaneously negotiating two tasks often conceived as mutually exclusive.

Peter Spirtes, Professor, Department of Philosophy, college of Humanities and Social Sciences, will work on a project to define token causation in terms of type causation, and to apply the definition to problems in explanation and moral and legal responsibility.

Luc Tartar, Professor, Department of Mathematical Sciences, Mellon College of Science, plans to finish the writing of lecture notes of graduate courses taught at CMU in the last few years, and continue a joint research work with Amit Acharya on a mathematical theory of dislocations, at Politecnico di Milano, Milan, and Italy.

**Annual Fund continued from page 3**

Whether you’ve designated your past gifts to the Carnegie Mellon Fund (allowing funds to be used where most needed), your college or department’s priority projects, the University Libraries, or student research (such as a Small Undergraduate Research Grant), you’ve enhanced the opportunities we are able to provide to our students. SURG, for example, provided more than 400 students with research funding in 2006-2007, providing them with the opportunity to author proposals, collaborate with faculty, and make new discoveries. Whether it’s the ability to carry out a research project, perform at an audition abroad, or participate in a national conference, these experiences are invaluable to our students. In fact, we’ve heard students say it best when claiming one of the best gifts they’ve received at Carnegie Mellon is the “gift of opportunity!” So, we thank you, again, for your generosity.

To learn more about the 2007-2008 Faculty & Staff Annual Fund, please contact Carole Panno in the Office of Annual Giving at 412-268-1617 or cplg@andrew.cmu.edu. We also invite you to visit us on the web at: www.cmu.edu/give.
Carnegie Mellon’s campus as the best spot in the area for having a non-English conversation!

Thanks to the support of friends and former Modern Languages students, the Department enjoys special curricular and extracurricular activities that enhance language learning opportunities beyond our classes on campus. The generous endowment provided by Modern Languages alumnus trustee Patti Askwith Kenner funds study abroad scholarships and a variety of activities intended to enhance international understanding, communication, exchange, and appreciation for the attitudes, values, and traditions of the groups whose languages we teach. Examples include the celebration of the Chinese Moon Festival and the Mexican Day of the Dead, covering publication expenses associated with the production of Polyglot, the multilingual publication written and produced by Modern Languages undergraduate students, and class excursions to cultural events. Much appreciated support from Ms. Lena Foo makes possible diverse initiatives of our Chinese program, and much valued contributions of the Picketing family, the Max Kade Foundation, and Dr. Abel M. Bomberault, Sr. fund students for study in China, Germany, and the French-speaking world respectively.

Some of our majors have told us that they took a first language course and a dynamic teacher led them to continue. Some have seen the value added of language study to working in business, technology, social sciences, architecture, international relations, service professions, or other fields. Others have been motivated by the desire to study abroad or to communicate with a new friend or boyfriend. (Some of my colleagues and students know that my own first inspiration to engage in language study began before college with a handsome high school Spanish teacher!) On a serious note, through language study our students have sought insight into other cultures as well as their own. They have gained valuable cross-cultural awareness as they have learned about the perspectives of others and how they see the world.

This goal of pursuing understanding of the languages spoken by others happens to be a key message of what many consider the first modern novel, The Ingenious Gentleman or Knight Don Quijote de la Mancha, written in 1605 by Spanish writer Miguel de Cervantes. Don Quijote turned four hundred a few years ago, but Cervantes’s message still resonates, as conveyed by the interactions of his two main characters, the mismatched knight Don Quijote and his squire Sancho Panza. Don Quijote is the tall, emaciated, fastidious, well-educated idealist. Sancho Panza is plump, squat, uneducated, and practical. Yet as the communication between them develops, they are able to understand and respect each other and the world around them, to like each other, and to need each other. As each learns the language of the other, in their growing relationship, we can see a marvelous sharing and exchanging. From his master Don Quijote, Sancho Panza learns to see beyond his own narrow existence. And amidst Don Quijote’s wild pursuits, we find moments of very practical wisdom in the style of his squire Sancho. Cervantes clearly upholds the positives of their evolving relationship, this “sanchification” of Don Quijote and “quixotization” of Sancho Panza.

In one memorable episode that shows this interaction, Don Quijote sees a common barber’s shaving basin (bacío) as the magical golden helmet (yelmo) of Mambrino and attacks the barber to recover this treasure, but he does tell Sancho: “what seems to you a barber’s basin seems to me the helmet of Mambrino, and will seem another thing to someone else” (Don Quijote, translated by Edith Grossman; Ecco, HarperCollins 2003, page 195). And later in the novel, when Sancho and Don Quijote meet up again with the barber, Sancho has learned to appreciate the vision of Don Quijote, and even coins a new word baciyelmo — “basinhelmit” or “basihelm”—to bring together the two world views. Sancho points to the object and tells the barber that there is no doubt that this is the same helmet Don Quijote had won: “Because from the time my master won it until now, he’s fought only one battle wearing it, and that was when he freed the luckless men in chains; if it wasn’t for this “basihelm”, things wouldn’t have gone too well for him because there was a lot of stone throwing in that fight” (390). Sancho’s language learning shows amusingly how he makes the bridge between worlds.

Today the role of language learning to promote understanding among diverse peoples and cultures should not be underestimated. The Department of Modern Languages occupies a key place in this pursuit, and looks ahead to intersecting with elements of the University’s agenda for the Twenty-first century and its goals related to internationalization and global education, diversity, the Pittsburgh community, interdisciplinary research and the bridging of humanities and the arts, and our students’ curricular and metacurricular development. If we look at ourselves in the light of the recent report of the Modern Language Association of America entitled “Foreign Languages and Higher Education: New Structures for a Changed World” (http://www.mla.org/report), our Department has been evolving well in the direction recommended. We have been working in support of “a broad, intellectually driven approach to teaching language and culture in higher education” and to create coherent curricula “in which language, culture, and literature are taught as a continuous whole, supported by alliances with other departments and expressed through interdisciplinary courses”. Our students report that their language skills and intercultural expertise have enriched them personally and have increased their professional opportunities in this global Twenty-first century. We take great pride in their accomplishments, and we look to them as future leaders and examples to others. I look forward to continuing this journey and working with my dedicated colleagues to cultivate inquiry, learning, and teaching in our Department and University.

From The Focus Archives.....

compiled by Erin Goldberger

30 YEARS AGO
November 1977

Carnegie Mellon University’s Department of Modern Languages is in the process of an experiment with “intensive language instruction.” Hal Rennert and Ramon Layera express concern over the role that language plays in the new roles that language plays in the new...
the handling of the “philosophizing” speeches of Vershinin, Tusenbach, and others. These tend to be treated ironically or comically, and it may be that they are the least comprehensible element of Chekhov to a contemporary audience (not only in Three Sisters, but also in Uncle Vanya).

The play moves along at a brisk pace (none of those pregnant silences favored by the melancholy school of Chekhovianism) yet never seems rushed. Andrey’s dialogue with the deaf Ferapont, the conversation between Tusenbach and Solyony, the histrionics of Irina and later Masha, the three sisters’ intimate talk about love and marriage—all are masterful. The audience responded enthusiastically to the farcical bits (Chekhov called the play “a vaudeville”).

Technical aspects of this production deserve separate praise, starting with the charming turn-of-the-century costumes and highly functional sets. The sense of nature outdoors and a household within, horizontal and vertical planes, spaciousness and confinement, all subtly reinforce the deeper meanings of the play, for example, in the use of screens in Act III and of balustrades in Act IV. Chekhov provided specific stage directions on movements, props, sounds and music both for dramatic and symbolic effect. Take the use of fire and light, for example. The play with matches between Vershinin and Masha creates a magic circle of love that shuts out the surrounding world. Natasha’s frantic inspection of the house candle in hand represents her increasing dominance of a formerly private space. The town fire in Act III serves as a dramatic and psychological catharsis, and at the same time physically brings the townspeople, including Vershinin, into the Prozorov house.

Last but not least, the translation by Michael Frayn, although British, sounded natural and idiomatic as spoken by this cast of talented actors.

Three Sisters....
continued from page 3

POD PEOPLE!!!

Have the pod people arrived? Well, no. Perhaps only one pod person as the accompanying photo indicates. One pod person at a time that is.

Located where it will be most useful and most in demand, this relaxing sleep site occupies a quiet corner in Hunt Library. The student with the keyboard appears to be typing in instructions for the machine, but this is apparently an optical illusion. Our informants tell us that the pod has only one instruction, and that is to initiate vibrations after a set period of time has passed, some say 15 minutes, others say three hours. The vibrations are not pleasurable we hear, and are intended to signal “time’s up”!

Spear....
continued from page 5

legitimate Jones adventure over a starring role in “Indy Does Dallas.” But again, intellectual property protection isn’t about job support. It’s about creating new and useful arts.

Are our children and students really thieves, pirates or otherwise criminal because they download music?

So, let me track back to my initial question: are our children and students really thieves, pirates or otherwise criminal because they download music? From a purely legal standpoint, the answer to this is an obvious yes. From an ethical perspective, though, the answer is far from clear. When I ask this question of my own students, the answer I typically hear is: “No, we aren’t deadbeats. We download because we can’t afford to pay the full price of a CD, particularly when all we want are the 5 good songs. We’re happy to pay for concerts by musicians we like, since they make more money through this venue than they do selling CDs, and we’re happy to be supporting them. We also don’t mind paying what is still a high price per song at iTunes because at least we don’t have to buy all the filler that comes on a typical CD.” While these are primarily economic arguments, the moral kernel in this defense of downloading is that the music industry, because it is effectively a monopoly, provides a deficient product at prices beyond the reach of many music consumer and quite poorly compensates the people who actually create the music. In the absence of the music industry’s ability to effectively enforce the existing copyright laws, we have a situation in which one moral and economic bad has begotten another. But, as Boldrin and Levine show again and again in their book, this is nothing new. It’s just that, at least for entertainment, the technology of digital computers and the internet has exposed this long-standing moral shortcoming of current intellectual property laws in a particularly stark way.

So given the demand that is likely once word gets round, we think some kind of sign up system is necessary, as in the gym when waiting for a treadmill. CMU’s home page of fast fact tells us that there are 10,000 students and 4000 faculty and staff here. At 15 minutes a shot, with the library open about 115 hours per week, one should get a second shot at 15 minutes rest every 30 weeks or so. Sounds good to us. Unless the time allowed is three hours, then the wait period increases to three years. Sigh.

While waiting, and to keep alert, just grab a coffee at the nearby coffee shop taking up space on the first floor of Hunt.

photos by Alan Kennedy