

THE BROADSHEET

Issue III, 2013

What book would you take into seclusion?

Here's what members of the Merrimack English community had to say:

• “*The Great Gatsby*, because it allows the reader to unearth the reality beneath the roaring twenties and the American Dream.” - *Megan Hathaway, Class of 2013*

• “Undoubtedly *In Cold Blood* because I need ‘alone time’ to process my feelings about the killers and the death penalty.” - *Laura Dupre, Class of 2015*

• “*Harry Potter and the Sorcerer's Stone*, so I can be placed into that wonderful, magical world.” - *Jackie Bagley, Class of 2014*

• “*Lord of the Flies*, in order to reflect on the relationship between the civilized and wild.” - *Jacques Denault, Class of 2017*

• “Honestly, I wouldn't be able to take a book I've already read, because it's already lost any surprise factor which is what reading should be about. I'd rather make my own story on the island.” - *Diana Le, Class of 2015*

• “Erich Maria Remarque's *All Quiet on the Western Front*, because of its powerful anti-war stance and because my father's life was greatly changed after WWI when doctors at the veterans' hospital in Chelsea about 1921 opened him up and found a pocket of German gas in him which spread; he was never able to work again.” - *Professor Keohan*

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Why English Majors Succeed in the Marketplace

by Alison Leonard

*The Broadsheet conducted the following interview with **Heather Maietta**, Associate Vice President of Career and Corporate Engagement and Director of the O'Brien Center for Student Success*

Q: How do you think the English major can benefit students in terms of the workforce?

HM: Students majoring in English often possess skills that most, if not all, industries are seeking. English majors are able to write effectively and think critically – skills necessary for success in graduate school and the workforce.

Q: What skills do employers look for that the English program provides?

HM: According to Forbes list of the top ten skills employers are looking for, Critical Thinking and Complex Problem Solving lead the race. English programs teach students to think critically and communicate their thoughts effectively. As an English major, a student gains insight into thinking creatively, which helps him or her hone problem solving skills. The ability to conduct meaningful, comprehensive research is also another skill English programs stress.

Q: Characterize the corporate sector's view of the Humanities in general and of the English major in particular?

HM: There is a general misconception that students majoring in humanities are unemployable, but it is actually quite the opposite. Students majoring in humanities, and specifically English, are now sought after by employers - and this trend is growing. Companies are willing to train a new employee on the technical aspects of a job, but the soft skills like communicating, problem-solving, and attention to detail that a student brings to a position are very important. As Bracken Darrell, CEO of Logitech, recently said, "When I look at where our business is going, I think, boy, you do need to have a good technical understanding somewhere in there, to be relevant. But you're really differentiated if you understand humanities."

Q: What kinds of internships should English majors pursue to bolster their resumes?

HM: As for any major, students should pursue a co-op in their field of study if at all possible. Where this experience is completed is less important. Co-ops provide

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An official publication of the Merrimack College English Department, The Broadsheet is published monthly during the academic calendar year. Its mission is to celebrate the English Department's role in promoting the literary arts on campus, to acknowledge the accomplishments of faculty and students, to profile students and alumni, and to create a forum in which issues relevant to English studies can be discussed.

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- “John Berryman’s *The Dream Songs*. Who wants to be marooned without a wag?” - Professor Vatalaro
- “I’d have to say *Jane Eyre* because every time I read it I discover something new and interesting.” - Christina Pinciario, Class of 2013
- “Easy. *Frankenstein*, because it created the dominant myth of the modern era (perhaps the only major myth of the modern era).” - Professor Plunkett
- “*Jane Eyre*, because it’s my favorite book.” - Corinne Keddie, Class of 2014
- “I would take *The Blind Assassin* by Margaret Atwood because parts of it read like poetry, which I love, but there’s also this fantastic *Arabian Nights* framework I find utterly compelling: stories within a story, and the speaker telling the stories to keep herself alive.” - Danielle Jones Pruett, Writers House Program Coordinator
- “Marcel Proust’s *In Search of Lost Time*. I love the way Proust balances his sense of the transformative power of the imagination with a wistful acknowledgment of the vanity of human wishes.” - Professor Scherwatzky
- “At this exact moment in time, I would take Jeanette Winterson’s *Sexing the Cherry* with me. In the words of the novel: ‘Every journey conceals another journey within its lines: the path not taken and the forgotten angle.’ The island would cease to feel small the moment I opened this book.” - Professor McWhorter



Professor McWhorter and students in discussion.

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deep learning over an extended time frame, helping students understand how their classroom knowledge impacts the world of work. Students also gain the sense of what it is like to operate in a professional environment. If a co-op is not possible, internships in a field that interests them are the next best thing.

English majors have a variety of options for internships, and should really focus their search on areas of interest. If interested in pursuing writing, places to consider might be newspapers or magazines, speech writing for political campaigns or executives, or copy writing for a variety of marketing firms. English majors are also sought after in all areas of business because of their attention to detail, strong articulation, and critical thinking. It is really about being multifaceted- having both broad knowledge and skills, as well as field-specific skills. The options are endless, and students can work with their career advisor in the O'Brien Center for Student Success to determine what areas they have interests in and how to go about that search process.

Q: What types of entry-level jobs are typically available to English majors?

HM: The Association of American Colleges and Universities conducted a recent survey of what employers want from new hires. The report, *It Takes More Than a Major: Employer Priorities for College Learning and Student Success*, shows that more than half of business executives want college graduates to have not only field-specific knowledge and skills, but a broad range of skills and knowledge. Less value is placed on the undergraduate major and more on a capacity to think critically, communicate clearly and solve complex problems.

There are so many entry level jobs that are available to English majors. Since English majors have solid, sought after skills, it really is based on specific student interests as to what field to focus their search. Some areas to consider are writing and editing, journalism, technical communications, publishing, teaching and education, as well as marketing, public relations, business, economics, sales, etc. The options are limitless!

Q: What services does the O'Brien Center offer that can be helpful to English majors/minors?

HM: The O'Brien Center for Student Success is a full service career development center that prepares students for the 21st-Century workforce. We work with students from matriculation to graduation and have a variety of programs that are available to all students - excellent services for English majors to take advantage of. We have internships, externships and co-ops, which provide students with necessary experiential learning sought after by employers and graduate schools.

We also have a Professional Mentor Exchange where students are paired with a mentor for a year-long development. Students are able to meet one on one with their career advisor at any time to discuss career exploration, resume and cover letter writing, the internship process, graduate school, and of course, post graduate employment.

Q: What minor fields would you recommend for English majors and why?

HM: Because English majors go into a wide variety of fields, there are a wide variety of minors they can choose from, and really they can choose anything! Popular minors for English students are economics, psychology, and business. Business is a popular one, because most jobs are part of a business and a broad understanding is helpful. Marketing or Communications are good minors as well; English students are already effective writers, but learning the trends of marketing, communication, and public relations would be helpful to understand consumers.

Alumni Panelists at English Career Night Prove that English-Specific Skills and Determination

Ensure Success After Graduation

by Alison Leonard

Six English Department alums gathered at the Merrimack Club on October 8 to share their success stories with 60 students, faculty, and other graduates of the English program. The annual event, co-sponsored by the English Department and the O'Brien Center for Student Success, is designed to give students an opportunity to see what types of careers are open to them after receiving a degree in English. The theme of the evening was that nearly every field is fair game, because English majors cultivate valuable writing and communication skills as part of their training. Members of the panel emphasized that few things other than a lack of imagination or absence of determination would hold someone back.

The first to speak was Martha Knittell, class of 2000, who is the Senior Program Manager and Program Leader at Genzyme. In her early career, Knittell worked as a technical and "batch" writer before attaining the senior management position. She said that her ability to communicate effectively and explain concepts clearly represent two of her most important skills, skills she credits to her studies at Merrimack.

Kelly Hussey, class of 2009, spoke next about her position as an editor for Decisions Resources. Hussey noted that the ability to pay close attention to detail, a foundational skill in English studies, has proved to be a crucial one in advancing her career. She gave practical advice to the audience by stressing the importance of proper preparation for job interviews, and the willingness to take any position and work your way up. Hussey's own career took off after she "temped" briefly and was called back later for a full-time job at the same company, because her work ethic and attention to language impressed the employer.

Robert Koosa, class of 1995, and Attorney for Bonner, Kiernan, Trebach and Crociata, worked as a teacher for three years in the Lawrence School System before pursuing a career in law. He explained that many of the skills learned in English transfer into law practice, such as identifying the needs and goals of a specific audience, writing succinctly and carefully, and presenting convincing arguments. The best way to improve your writing is to keep practicing; the benefits are certainly worth the effort, he said.

Jessica Furtado, class of 2012, spoke next about her dual career as a Circulation Assistant for Stevens Memorial Library and as the founding owner of a business called "All You Need is Pug" that handcrafts various pet products. Good Morning America heard about the venture and contacted Furtado to learn more about her products for a possible feature story they might be able to run as a spot-filler for the program. She credits her strong writing skills as being very important in promoting her business. As far as

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Group gathers to honor Kate Murphy

Catherine Murphy Remembered in Conference Room Re-Dedication

by Jennifer Hanselman

The Catherine A. Murphy Faculty Conference Room proved too small for the crowd that gathered on October 11 to remember its namesake. After moving to a nearby classroom, English Department Chair Steven Scherwatzky began the event by welcoming the many students, faculty, and border terrier enthusiasts in attendance, and thanking them for taking the time to look back on Professor Catherine Murphy's contributions to Merrimack and to the English Department. Two speakers, Internationally-known scholar of Irish Literature Professor Maureen O'Rourke Murphy (Professor Murphy's sister-in-law), and Bud Jennings, local teacher, fiction writer, and former student of Catherine Murphy, offered their perspectives about "Kate" Murphy as a person, an educator, and a member of the Merrimack faculty.

Catherine Murphy specialized in Irish Literature, earning her Ph. D. from Trinity College, Dublin in October of 1967, and at Merrimack taught courses in Irish Literature and fiction writing, wrote fiction herself, and served as department chair. Bud Jennings and Maureen Murphy testified to the strength of Kate Murphy's achievements in teaching, and scholarship, but also did a wonderful job of reminding the group about Kate's love of border terriers, her habit of smoking cigarettes while drinking coffee, and her "real love for people".

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her position at the library, Furtado beat out other candidates with Master of Library Sciences degrees, because of her strong resume and her impressive writing and communication skills.

Following Furtado, Leah DeSalvo, class of 2011, spoke about her career as an English teacher at Haverhill High School. As one of the only panelists who had mapped out her specific career plans while in college, DeSalvo spoke about the benefits of teaching and gave practical advice to aspiring teachers. Hired right out of college, she praised the education she gained as an English and Education major at Merrimack and provided practical advice regarding career paths and courses of study for aspiring teachers.

The final panelist to address the group was Josh Roberts, class of 1999. He currently holds the position of Managing Editor at Smarter Travel Media. Roberts underscored the importance of finding an internship as a vital step toward ensuring future success. The unpaid internship he landed at Marvel Comics during his senior year proved to be crucial in putting him on a fast track to other jobs in the publishing industry. Dr. Steven Scherwatzky, serving as master of ceremonies for the event, recalled Roberts' apprehension about his career while Josh was still a student, showing that many English majors don't end up doing what they thought they would, yet go on to be largely successful as a result of the training with which the English major has supplied them.

A number of alumni in the audience supplemented the panelists' stories with brief job narratives of their own. At the conclusion, one first-year student in the audience, Jacques Denault, found it "interesting how everyone fell into what they are doing now." Allie Lynch, who attended the Career Night event, was particularly impressed with Furtado. She said, "She seemed so passionate about everything she was doing and I do not think there is any better form of success than that." As a senior, Lynch also found Career Night to be very interesting and helpful, and recommends all English majors and minors attend in the future. "I was totally intrigued and found myself perusing different websites looking at job openings and different internships the very next day," she said. "After Career Night, you begin to get a better grasp on what is out there and what interests you most."

Overall, Career Night was largely motivating and reassuring, especially for those seniors in the room contemplating their own career options in the upcoming months. In particular, the wide range of job opportunities that the panelists represented was impressive, and it was inspiring to hear about their success as students begin to think about their own futures. One of the most important things that can be taken away from Career Night is to recognize the valuable skills learned in the English major and to sell oneself in light of those skills when applying and interviewing for jobs. As all the panelists demonstrated, writing and communication skills are in high-demand.

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Maureen O'Rourke Murphy recalled that Kate had a "unique way of including students and bringing students in". She also coached Merrimack's most successful College Bowl team and arranged internships for English majors. But perhaps the most important topic in Maureen Murphy's remarks regarded Kate's contribution to scholarship devoted to the work of Irish short story writer, Mary Lavin. Murphy arranged a hallmark (and now often quoted) interview in November of 1967 with Lavin, who was visiting Kate at Merrimack, in which Lavin discussed her short fiction with a group of Kate's students. The interview, conducted largely by Kate's students, produced a treasure trove of insight about Lavin's approach to writing short fiction, most notably the metaphor that a short story becomes "an arrow in flight." Maureen Murphy noted that scholars working on Lavin continue to build on that passage from the Merrimack interview in their own work. At the conclusion of Maureen Murphy's presentation on Kate Murphy's contribution to Lavin Studies, Professor Scherwatzky presented the original typescript of this interview to the Director of the McQuade Library, Kathryn Geoffrion Scannell.

Bud Jennings, a graduate of the Merrimack English program who had been enrolled in Kate's Creative Writing workshop, shared his memories about Kate's mentorship of him, her sharp wit, and unwavering commitment to her students and to her writing. Jennings finished his remarks by reading from his novel, *In and Out of Paris*.

English department faculty member Kevin Plunkett then read an elegy called "October Roses," by Irish poet Ian Blake. Plunkett read the same work at the original conference room dedication ten years ago.

The Reverend Kevin Dwyer, OSA, closed the event by blessing the Murphy Conference Room, as he had done during its dedication.



Alumni Panelists at English Major Career Night.

What's New at the Writers House?

Students Help Design Writers House Future

by Laura Stevens

25 students and three faculty members attended a student advisory meeting at the Writers House on October 10 at 3:30 PM. Attendees gathered in a circle before the fireplace, and Andrea Cohen began the meeting by stating simply that the Writers House is for “creative writing, reading, and thinking.” She envisions the Writers House as becoming a student-centered space. She then welcomed students and asked them to introduce themselves. Freshmen, sophomores, juniors, and seniors representing many majors expressed one commonality in their introductions: a love of reading and writing, and a desire to bring more reading and creative writing into the Merrimack community.

Students and faculty then broke into smaller groups to share ideas for this new space on campus, which is the only one of its kind in New England. It was clear from these discussions that the Writers House will not just be a hangout space or lounge. Some of the most popular ideas proposed were poetry slams, formal and informal meetings of student reading and writing groups, film screenings, workshops devoted to teaching students about the publishing process, and a student-run literary magazine. Students expressed excitement about the professional writers who will visit the Writers House to speak. One student was overheard saying he is excited Merrimack developed a program to “bring in people to inspire us.”

This was the first of many student-centered meetings to be held in the Writers House. Director Cohen plans to form a Student Advisory Group to meet once per month to discuss programming, student activities such as the literary magazine, as well as recommendations for what books to purchase to fill the Writers House ample shelf space.

Students not able to attend this initial advisory meeting should contact Andrea Cohen, or program coordinator Danielle Jones-Pruett at their Merrimack email addresses.



Students in discussion groups at the first Writers House Meeting

Gail Caldwell Makes Her Stories Better than Life

by Jennifer Hanselman

A crowd of 70 students, faculty, and staff gathered at the Writers House to listen to a presentation by Gail Caldwell, on Wednesday, October 2. Caldwell's credentials include serving as a staff writer for the *Boston Globe* for twenty years. She became chief book critic, and in 2001 was awarded the Pulitzer Prize for Distinguished Criticism. Her Writers House presentation featured excerpts from her forthcoming (2014) memoir titled *New Life, No Instructions*, devoted to her childhood polio affliction and the recent hip-replacement surgery that she says changed everything for her. She also read excerpts from her memoir *Take the Long Way Home*, which details her friendship with Caroline Knapp, author of *Drinking: A Love Story*, who died of cancer in 2002.

Caldwell was the second writer to appear at the Writers House, and to begin her talk, she noted how excited she was to see the new space. She talked about the progression of “writers houses” she has experienced – the kinds of spaces she had used to read and write in throughout her life. Specifically, she recalled that her bedroom closet might have functioned as her first writers house. She also told the audience that she prefers the memoir as a literary form, because the memoir allows her to focus on events in or on portions of her life. Instead of having to write about everything that happened to her, she can choose the most interesting or emotional moments.

She then read an excerpt from *New Life, No Instructions*, which will be published in April 2014. It was clear throughout her reading that this is an important story for her to tell, and even though Caldwell was reading her words from a page, the emotion in her voice was unmistakable. Listening to her speak, it was easy to understand and even relate to the struggles she encountered during her recovery.

After that short excerpt, she followed with one from the previously published *Take the Long Way Home*, about the loss of her friend Caroline. The passages she chose seemed to resonate with the audience, for they focused less on Knapp and more on the feelings of grief and loss Caldwell endured. It was evidently difficult for many in the audience not to recall their own losses as Caldwell shared hers; a number of people looked visibly moved.

Caldwell also answered several questions from the audience. Although some questions focused on her work at the *Boston Globe*, she was also asked about her writing process. She discussed how different it is to write for a deadline (like she did every week with her book reviews) as opposed to writing her memoirs, and the different challenges of each.

With memoirs, “the story has to be better than...your life,” Caldwell said. Just telling the facts as they happened is not good enough – there must be more to the narrative. The faces of the audience members, some of whom were brought to tears, demonstrated that her writing definitely embodies this ideal blend of factual evidence with eloquence and sensitivity. Caldwell's prose has the capacity to transport readers and listeners into an inner world of suffering and hope that has a lasting effect on them.

Upcoming Events

Wednesday, November 13, 3:30 pm in the Writers House-Seamus Heaney Memorial Reading. Members of the English community will be paying tribute to Heaney's work. All members of the Merrimack Community are welcome.

Friday, November 15, 3:00 pm in the Writers House-Reading with Lucas Mann. Mann will read from *Class A: Baseball in the Middle of Everywhere*.

New Courses for Spring 2014

The New England Shore
Creative Writing: Screenwriting
Chaucer in Popular Culture

The Broadsheet Production Staff

Jennifer Hanselman

Alison Leonard

Laura Stevens

Faculty Advisor:

Professor Paul Vatalaro

Reminder: Advising Appointment Dates

Juniors: Wednesday, November 6-Friday, November 8
Sophomores: Wednesday, November 13-Friday, November 15
Freshman: Wednesday, November 20-Friday, November 22



Students, faculty, and alumni enjoying English Major Career Night.

