Out of Time, But Not Out of Mind

Student publication puts literary spin on all things defunct

Remember the vitality of the VCR? The jolting jingle of a wind-up alarm clock? The importance of wonderful handwriting, or when chalkboards were essential teaching tools?

*Defunct Magazine* remembers these things, taking readers back to the contemporary times of objects, ideas, TV shows, and belief systems of the past. Founded by a team of University of Iowa writers, the new online magazine is published at www.defunctmag.com.

Robin Hemley, director of the UI Nonfiction Writing Program and a professor of English in the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, along with 15 graduate students, established the biannual publication. It features essays by students on the magazine’s staff, along with work by established authors and contributions from the public.

“One thing I don’t want is for our pieces to focus on nostalgia,” Hemley says. “I don’t want to see, ‘Oh wouldn’t it be nice to drive Studebakers again.’ These writings are smart, witty, funny, and insightful. Nostalgia will find its way in somehow, but I don’t want that to be the central focus.”

*Defunct Magazine’s* stances on topics of the past are expansive and entertaining. Some conclusions contributors have reached include how Jheri Curl hairstyles foil everything; how the Internet has incapacitated the traveling encyclopedia salesman; and how leaf blowers are wrecking all lawn rakes in its wake.

Amy Butcher, graduate student in the UI Nonfiction Writing Program and the magazine’s managing editor, says submissions are increasing weekly and that feedback from readers has been positive.

“They really like it. Although it is kind of a niche market, people have embraced the magazine’s focus,” Butcher says. “I never thought we would publish as many people as we have.”

Nearly 15 previously published authors have appeared in the first two issues of *Defunct Magazine*, and a recent blog appearance in the *Atlantic* is expected to fuel interest in the magazine.

“Really great published authors and fantastically skilled Iowa students are showing strong interests in what we are doing,” says UI Nonfiction Writing Program graduate student Rachel Yoder, the magazine’s senior editor. “I don’t see us becoming defunct anytime soon.” —Travis Varner
UI Dance Marathon Tops $1 Million—Again

The 17th annual University of Iowa Dance Marathon raised a record-breaking $1,220,146.17 for pediatric cancer programs at University of Iowa Children’s Hospital. That figure is up approximately $100,000 from last year, and marks the fourth year in a row that the student organization has brought in more than $1 million.

A total of 1,150 dancers participated in the February event—24 hours of nonstop dancing in the Main Lounge of the Iowa Memorial Union. More than 1,000 family members of patients also were in attendance, the largest turnout in event history.

The largest student philanthropic organization on campus, UI Dance Marathon has raised more than $9.8 million since its inception to support pediatric oncology programs at UI Children’s Hospital.

For the Record

“Looking at this piece is witnessing history. Students witness an

"We’re trying to prepare our people to protect themselves by empowering them with options," he says. "The don’t have to be in someone’s gun—it could be a bat or a knife—and it might not happen on campus. Violent incidents can happen anywhere."
If there’s any doubt whether grassroots campaigning makes a difference in Iowa—and Iowa are projected nationwide,” Tolbert says. “So Iowa picks presidents, not just corn.”

But it has its benefits, according to Redlawsk. “The caucuses would still winnow the field, and force candidates to talk to voters, but the national primary would provide a meaningful chance for everyone in the country to vote on the nominations.”

“Most elections are winner-take-all,” Tolbert says. “There’s more at stake.”

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Redlawsk says. “The caucuses would still winnow the field and force candidates to talk to voters, but the national primary would provide a meaningful chance for everyone in the country to vote on the nominations.”

Within the caucus window, the authors believe small states should go first. “Part of what’s special about the Iowa caucuses is that it’s a grassroots effort that brings people together to discuss issues. It’s a grassroots effort that brings people together to discuss issues.”

And throughout this gradual process, many market analysts. Reporters descend upon the state for months, scrutinizing who will win and blasting the results out to a worldwide audience. All that attention influences how voters in other states view the candidates, who gets funding, and, ultimately, who wins the nomination.

A peculiar kind of primary


Why Iowa?

That hurt Romney’s momentum going forward, and as doubts about Huckabee’s electability mounted, the primary race opened up for John McCain.

One man, one vote, one seat, and the person with 51 percent gets it, while the other 49 percent gets nothing. In the caucuses, on the Democratic Side, you may have six delegates that are divided up through proportional representation. It’s fair.”

Calling for change

What’s next? The caucuses come first, so the power of small states has compared to the rest of the country. “If you propose a ‘caucus window’ during which any state could hold a caucus, then the candidates would meet in a national primary in which all states would resolve the nominations by voting in a single day. “We think this would provide the best of both worlds,” Redlawsk says. “The caucuses would still winnow the field and force candidates to talk to voters, but the national primary would provide a meaningful chance for everyone in the country to vote on the nomination.”

Those who do not win the Iowa caucuses have little chance of winning the nomination. “We think this would provide the best of both worlds,” Redlawsk says. “The caucuses would still winnow the field and force candidates to talk to voters, but the national primary would provide a meaningful chance for everyone in the country to vote on the nomination.”

“It doesn’t have to be Iowa, but Iowa has 30 years of practice at it,” Tolbert says. “Candidates who can’t afford media advertising but have good ideas can come here and have a chance. It’s a small state, so it’s possible. You can’t do that kind of grassroots campaigning with 40 million people in California.”

“It doesn’t have to be Iowa, but Iowa has 30 years of practice going first—and picking a little more than corn.” –Tolbert

86 percent of Iowa caucus-goers had fun in 2008. The caucuses also provide an opportunity to develop a policy platform. And the authors argue, caucusing is more representative than other methods of voting. “Better electors are winnable votes,” Tolbert says. “There’s one seat, and the person with 51 percent gets it, while the person with 49 percent gets nothing. In the caucuses, on the Democratic Side, you may have six delegates that are divided up through proportional representation. It’s fair.”

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Food in America

UI professor discusses how identity, politics, and culture meet at the nation’s tables

Lauren Rabinovits has researched gender and American cinema, Korean American community parks, popular culture, and technology, and culture, but what really pulls her interest today is food. The professor of American studies and cinema and comparative literature in the UI College of Liberal Arts and Sciences has taught the increasingly popular class Food in America for the last few years. The course is both a historical survey of food and a look into the business of food in American life today—from the rise of the meatpacking and other industries at the turn of the 20th century to America as a “fast food nation” in the popular nutrition- and sustainability-oriented culture.

Rabinovits received a 2010 Regents Degree for Faculty Excellence, which recognizes faculty members for work representing a significant contribution to excellence in public education.

What does the food we eat tell us about American culture and history?

This is a big question. One author of a book on food and politics asked, “What really piques her interest?”

She says, “For many people, now and in the past, their first meeting at the nation’s tables was and got them a little more involved in some outreach. I think sometimes they’re feeling like rock stars, because there’s been a lot of interest in them being here, but I have a plan for myself. Getting the PhD is a good opportunity, and not everyone can get it. I think key cog in getting this is to do their best on the measurements. Most of this stuff is unavailable, so it’s a good opportunity to come here and try. We have a good theoretical background in Iraq, and the business is broken there. It’s a hard nut to crack, but in the end I will be able to change the country.”

A dream fulfilled

I love the way people come here from Iraq—students, who were selected through a highly competitive stipulation that they return home after graduation to help rebuild Iraq’s higher-education infrastructure. The students were conditionally accepted into different graduate programs, and are taking ESL classes in preparation for the Test of English as a Foreign Language. Most of this stuff is unavailable, so it’s a good opportunity to come here and try.

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For 75 years, the Iowa Writers’ Workshop has been cultivating scribes.
Researchers Use Common Car Sensors to Detect Drunk Driving

Nearly a third of all U.S. traffic fatalities involve alcohol-impaired driving. That could decrease in the future, thanks to a study of how car sensors can be used to detect drunk driving.

Timothy L. Brown, the study’s coprincipal investigator, and Nadine Adams’ drive impairment program manager, “These are common sensors that look at how drivers steer and use their phones while driving. It’s the last frontier for detecting driver impairment.”

The investigators since have received a new $1 million contract to explore the possibility of using similar systems to detect driver impairment.

The goals was to demonstrate that existing sensors on a typical vehicle can be used to detect impaired driving from alcohol. Translation: using sensors on a typical vehicle to detect alcohol impairment based on driver behavior.

The result showed that it is possible to detect a vehicle-based system that can detect alcohol impairment based on driver behavior. In addition, the algorithm detected alcohol impairment with BAC levels at and above 0.08 percent and below 0.05 percent. That’s 75% to 80% accuracy, a result comparable to a standard field sobriety test.

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“Alcoholism costs billions of dollars to the economy every year, and it ruins lives,” says O’Leary, whose previous research has focused on genetics and schizophrenia and on how marijuana affects the brain and self-control.

He hopes to change that with a $2.6 million grant he received in 2009 with colleagues at the National Institute on Alcohol Abuse and Alcoholism (NIAAA). The grant is aimed at studying how self-control is affected in at-risk teens—O’Leary is assembling two groups of 96 teens—one with a family history of alcoholism and one without. Unlike previous studies, O’Leary’s also will control for externalizing disorders, like attention deficit disorder or conduct disorder, within the at-risk group. That will help determine whether alcoholism can be isolated or if it’s a part of a spectrum of abnormalities.

Before entering a luxury resort in Hawaii, researchers are using a new technology that allows him to dive deeper into the brain to potentially detect an intervention or a therapy to prevent or treat schizophrenia and on how marijuana affects the brain and self-control.

The study, conducted on campus at the National Advanced Driving Simulator (NADS) and funded by the U.S. Department of Transportation’s National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, recently demonstrated the feasibility of a non-invasive breath analysis technique to detect alcohol impairment based on driver behavior.

“Similarly, if we can identify risk factors associated with alcoholism, which O’Leary says could lead to preemptive interventions. It’s the last frontier for detecting driver impairment.”

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Prison choir aims to help rehabilitate inmates

By the time the beginning of each rehearsal is marked with anxious anticipation. Choir members come in from the room with wide smiles and bright eyes, and a young boy named Oliver Nanage is the only thing that distinguishes the inmates from the volunteers.

After briefly recapitulating, the singers begin with a familiar piece, “Beautify, Me,” and then spend the remainder of the session practicing pieces for the group’s next concert program. The choir always concludes with “May You Walk in Beauty.” Individual names, taken at random, are then announced by Vocal Director, manager, and lead soprano, “schmidt.” “Once we began singing, I realized people are just like everyone else, except they made a mistake, and I thought, ‘yes, they may have done something wrong, but they aren’t doing anything wrong to me.’

Creating hope

Participating in the choir has been a positive experience for the inmates, too. Ron, an inmate and choir member who requested his last name be withheld, says the choir gives everyone a feeling of life and a wonderful experience. "In the beginning, there was fear, but he assured me, ‘Will be as good as you set it up.’ He said, ‘The choir; people from the outside do accept us, and the cumulative effect of everyone's e f f o r t s ends in great joy.'"

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New Course Takes Aim at Student Veteran Dropout Rate

During a presentation at the Iowa City Veterans Affairs Medical Center (VAMC), College of Education doctoral student Tamara Woods detected an emerging problem: While student veterans often struggle with failing or poor grades due to issues such as post-traumatic stress disorder, traumatic brain injury, depression, anxiety, sleep problems, chronic pain, and musculoskeletal problems, Woods collaborated with her mentor—Michael Hall, a VAMC neuropsychologist and adjunct faculty member in the Carver College of Medicine and the College of Education—to create a course titled Life After War. Post-Deployment Issues: Resilience, recovery, and persistence.

The pair first offered the course on campus in fall 2010; in spring 2011, they expanded to include a similar classroom in Des Moines via distance learning.

Need Campus Info? There’s an App—or Two—for That

The University has launched UI Mobile, a smartphone application that provides users easy access to news and event headlines, campus maps, library services, course information, and even the name of residence hall laundry machines.

The app, currently available at m.uiowa.edu/app as a free download for Apple iPhone or Android devices, is the latest mobile initiative by UI Information Technology Services. Previous efforts focused on creating mobile web services available at m.uiowa.edu. The new app provides alternative ways to access information. Another new application for iPhones and iPads focuses on the writing traditions of The University of Iowa and Iowa City, a member of the UNESCO Creative Cities Network. The Iowa City UNESCO City of Literature app—“City of Lit”—is available at crystalpalaces.org. It features information on the community’s rich literary heritage, highlighting authors and local sites of interest.

Scottish Highlanders Celebrate Anniversary with Reunion, Exhibit

For decades, a squad of bagpipe-bearing, kilts-clad University of Iowa students rounded Hawkeye football fans, ruffled shoulders with celebrities, and SORTD = trained the United States and Europe. The UI Scottish Highlanders, officially disbanded in 2008, but proud alumni are keeping their story alive.

In fall 2011, the University’s Kanto Athletic Hall of Fame will unveil a permanent exhibit featuring Highlanders uniform and reproductions of three bass drum heads the group used to collect signatures from notables like Bob Hope, Art Linkletter, and President John F. Kennedy, as well as other memorabilia and historic info. The Highlanders will also mark the 75th anniversary of their founding with a Sept. 4 reunion on campus. The event coincides with the annual Fry Fest and the Iowa–Tennessee Tech football game.

U.S. Department of Defense travel funds, sponsored by the Office of the Provost, will cover the costs of travel and expenses for the reunion. Alumni and friends are encouraged to attend the reunion, visit the exhibit, and to help fund future reunion events.

Advocacy Network Gives Alumni a Voice

Help spread good news about The University of Iowa by participating in the Hawkeye Caucus.

The Hawkeye Caucus is an advocacy network for University alumni and friends to which they can provide feedback to the University’s goals with regard to state legislators. Members sign up to receive regular e-mail updates filled with timely information that can empower them to advocate on behalf of the University. Join with Hawkeyes across the state—and the nation—in raising your voice to support The University of Iowa. For more information, see www.uiowa.edu/advocate or check out our Facebook.com/UIHawkeyeCaucus or @hawkeyecaucus on Twitter.
What’s in a Name?
In an area near Selma, Iowa, that is believed to have housed the last large village of the Iowa Indian tribe in the state, volunteers sifted through soil last November to search for artifacts.

The University of Iowa’s Office of the State Archaeologist received a grant to study the site—home to up to 1,000 people between 1765 and 1820—and determine how best to preserve it.

By analyzing results from the dig, which included a geophysical survey, metal detecting, surface collection, auger testing, and soil coring, researchers hope to learn more about the State of Iowa’s namesake.