

Editorial Introduction

by Laura A. Helmreich

Welcome to the 2018 Spring issue of the Undergraduate Research Journal! We've had a great semester at the URJ. We were pleased to welcome Timmy Vilgates and Katherine Latona to the URJ editorial board, and they've been a great addition this semester. Timmy is a history graduate student and is working to start a sister journal to the URJ for graduate history research, and Katherine is an undergraduate studying art history. Timmy and Katherine are introducing themselves on pages 3 and 4 of the journal.

The URJ is anticipating the publication of our next issue at the end of the summer semester. We haven't published a summer issue since 2009 and we're very excited for the opportunity. This semester, we're proud to present four excellent papers from our undergraduate student body.

The first paper looks at graphic novels as a format for memoirs. Author Eric Haverkamp examines the memoir "Fun Home" and discusses how the interaction of images and words create a complex story. The second paper, titled "Democracy in Post-Communist Romania" looks at the changing government systems in Romania in the 1990's. Nicole Gardner evaluates the development of democratic government through the treatment and views of women.

The third paper, by Carl Churchill, examines the history of freelance Christian soldiers in the 12th and 13th centuries. "Scoundrels, Dogs and Heathens: Christian Mercenaries in the Almohad Caliphate, 1121-1269" details the development of Christian armies fighting for Muslim rulers, highlighting the differences between slave soldiers and mercenaries. The last paper, "Insights into Victorian Spiritualism through *Jane Eyre* and *Wuthering Heights*" by Monica Postma, explains how the rise of spiritualism in the Victorian era influenced the writing of the Brontë's, drawing from two of their most well-known works.

The URJ would like to extend our sincerest thanks to all of our dedicated reviewers. The journal would not be possible without the reviewer team working hard to provide feedback to authors and recommendations to the editorial board. The reviewer team is listed on the next page, and the top reviewers this semester are highlighted. Thank you to all of our authors, reviewers, editors, faculty advisors, and readers!

Acknowledging the URJ's Reviewers

The *Undergraduate Research Journal* would like to thank the following reviewers that helped make this issue possible.

Olivia Allen	Kimberley Haskins	Addison Rhodes
Jacob Bostick	Van Hovenga	Britney Robertson*
William V. Brown	Kate Iversen	Sara Rodriguez
Kelsey Calhoun	Ben Loftin	John Sedmak
Lennix Caragao	Neal Lonsky	Hannah Shelton
Christopher Chacon	Bethany Lundy	Alex Sielaff
Megan Cohen	Allison Lutz	Cody Stahl
Abbie Culbertson	Jana MacInnis	Courtney Stears*
Linds Evans	Elle Markley*	Michael L. Stephen*
Cassandra Geesey	Sarah Marshall	Thad Swan
Sara Goldman	Daniel Morvant	Katlyn Warren
Courtney Goodrum	Autumn Moser	Sasith Weerasundara
Camilla Haddock	Kimberly Parker	Lisa Wilkening
Jacqueline Halverson	Luke Petersen	Lorenzo Young

* indicates Top Reviewer status

Interested in helping review for our next issue or have questions about the peer review process?
Contact Susan Vandagriff at svandagr@uccs.edu.

Introducing Timmy Vilgiate

I first got involved with the URJ in Fall 2017, when Kellen DeAlba, one of the officers in our chapter of the historical honors society Phi Alpha Theta, suggested creating a history journal for graduate students. After meeting with Dr. Michelle Neely and Laura Helmrich, the lead editor of this journal, they suggested the creation of a joint position which would help with the publication of the Spring 2018 issue and work towards creating a graduate history journal. At first this task seemed very daunting, but thanks to the support and help of Dr. Neely and Laura, we are now well on our way to publishing a pilot issue of a graduate history journal in Fall 2018. I would also like to thank Dr. Christina Jimenez, the chair of the history department, for enabling this position to be created; Dr. Samantha Christiansen, the faculty advisor of Phi Alpha Theta, for helping to create guidelines for submissions; and all the other faculty in our department. Lastly, I'd also like to thank Susan Vandagriff and Tabatha Farney from the Kraemer Family Library for all their technical expertise and hard work that has made both of these journals possible.

Working on this issue has been a fun, rewarding process. I always wanted to submit something to the URJ as an undergraduate student, and wish that I had. As a venue for undergraduate student research, it provides students with a valuable avenue to share their research with the scholarly community, and to grow as writers and researchers. Participating in peer review workshops and visiting classes to talk about the URJ has taught me a lot about not only the publication process itself, but about writing and editing in general. It's been encouraging to see so many people interested not only in submitting to the journal, but also in reviewing for the journal this semester. Thank you to everyone who submitted, and to everyone who reviewed.

Introducing Katherine Latona

As an art history major who enjoys performing research on a wide variety of topics, I was pleasantly surprised to learn about the URJ during last Fall's Mountain Lion Research Day. That day I was presenting my poster on monuments and cultural identity, which sparked considerable engaged conversation and would later become the topic of my senior thesis. As an audience member, Michelle Neely introduced me to the journal and extended a cordial invitation to submit my work and possibly become more involved in the reviewing and editing processes. Though I had no real experience in the field, working with the URJ seemed like an exceptional chance to sharpen my professional and writing skills, and I could not let the opportunity pass.

One of my main goals as part of the journal's board is to increase participation from my fellow art historians and other disciplines from the Visual and Performing Arts department. I strongly believe in both interdisciplinary approaches and the benefits of an education in the arts, which encourages heavy analysis and critical thinking – two of the most crucial academic tools.

Then, as an individual, my objective is to learn as much as I can about publication processes; a topic that captured my interest from an early age and something that connects directly to my formal field of study. As member of academia, art historians seek to publish their work as a means of sharing our research and findings with our peers. Nevertheless, I also strongly support the idea of making academic research – and the art – more accessible to a more universal audience.

Working on this issue has been a pleasure and a valuable learning experience. I was able to make a contribution during the initial reviewing process of submissions, and I have become more familiarized with layout editing processes. Every issue is a result of dedication and team work and I am happy to be part of such a wonderful group of research-enthusiasts.