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Convergence

A publication for students and alumni of DePaul University's MALS and IDS Programs
Winter/Spring 2016

Entering the Conference World

Susan Jacobs, Associate Director

This year, for the third time, DePaul hosted two exceptional conference experiences for our graduate students. On Feb. 6, the Office of Adult Student Affairs hosted the Graduate Thesis and Dissertation Conference, followed by the March 4 LAS Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference. MALS/IDS administrators and students play an active role in both events, which offer excellent opportunities for academic support, graduate-level networking, and presentation experience.

The Graduate Thesis and Dissertation Conference (Feb. 6, 2016) welcomed students from all colleges throughout the university. Grad students attended numerous sessions that explore DePaul's academic resources, from Dr. David Gitomer's talk about getting started in the thesis process through research and writing techniques covered by the Library

and the Writing Center, to final presentation, including building a Digication portfolio to showcase the finished project.

I hosted a "First Person Panel" bringing together students from multiple disciplines, at various stages of thesis development, for an informal conversation about the entire process. This year's panel included students Megan Metzger (IDS) and Rachel Conrad (IDS); they were joined by Galina Khartulari (COMM), Larry Melton (SNL), and Latienda Williams (Computer and Digital Media). Panelists shared their insights regarding time and stress management, effective use of technology to organize research, maximizing DePaul's many resources, and strategies that help students incorporate exciting new discoveries that arise during active research.

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Above: Dr. David Gitomer helps thesis writers at the start of their journey.

Below: The First Person Panel features (from L to R) S. Jacobs, R. Conrad, M. Metzger, L. Melton, L. Williams, and G. Khartulari.



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Director's Letter



This Convergence is full of conference talk. Presenting papers at conferences is indeed a rite of passage for people in the academic world. I was so nervous my first time that my throat and mouth were too parched to produce audible speech. I stared at my pages, too frightened to look at the audience. Even though I knew that the 20 minutes allotted for my paper meant that it shouldn't be longer than about 12 pages, I thought I could read quickly and get through

the whole 23-page article. When the moderator held up the "5 minutes" sign, I realized I would have to omit some key material and skip to the end, rendering my conclusion incoherent, or at least mysterious.

Since that first experience, I've delivered dozens of papers at conferences, sometimes to hundreds of people, and sometimes in a near-empty room to a small handful interested in my highly specialized field of research. I've learned that real-time audiences can't process the kind of detail necessary in a footnoted article. I've learned that if I am hurrying to finish the audience gets anxious and can't listen for my main points. So I edit my paper to the proper time limit, emphasizing the key points with a few engaging examples. I've learned, mostly from teaching, how to connect warmly and confidently through body language and tone of voice.

Conferences are of course about networking, and about building confidence in oral communication. But the audience experience can be different depending on the type of conference. If it's a professional conference the audience may ask you further questions about the topic you're presenting on, or share their own professional experience in the field. If you're at an academic conference, your ideas may be tested by scholars who are themselves working on, or know of similar research. Sometimes these people are showing off. The only response is to say "thank you" and let it go. But often the audience contributions are valuable in helping you to refine your ideas by leading you to other research or giving you new ways of looking at what you've already done. This can be true for seasoned scholars as well as novice conference presenters.

When you respond to a "Call for Papers" for an upcoming conference, your proposal will be read by the conference organizers. If selected, it will be grouped with other papers on related topics to form a panel. While all conference panels have moderators who keep track of time and manage the Q & A, many academic conferences also have respondents. These are senior scholars who have read all the papers beforehand, and are given time after the presentations and before the audience Q & A to summarize the papers, make connections between them, and suggest questions that the panel as a whole raises for the field.

One of the most enjoyable aspects of presenting at conferences is having people come up to you at other times during the conference and comment on your paper. Someone may be planning to produce an edited volume on your topic and ask you to consider expanding your paper for publication. If your presentation is in the form of a poster, a large visual display on an easel, you'll often get instant feedback from the people strolling by. Whatever format your presentation takes, the experience will help you grow as a professional, and actually provide a lot of enjoyment and satisfaction. Our students have discovered that their conference presentations have helped them build their capstone projects, advance in their professions, and get accepted to advanced degree programs.

Warm Regards,

David Gitomer, Ph.D.
Director, MALS/IDS



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Program News

Entering the Conference World Continued from page 1

The LAS Interdisciplinary Graduate Student Conference (March 4, 2016) provided graduate students the opportunity to check out the entire conference experience; students submit paper or poster proposals, go through the selection process, and then if selected, present their work amongst their academic peers and professors. The audience is built-in and welcoming; fellow students, professors, advisors, and friends are encouraged to attend.

Attending conferences does more than add to students' credentials. Professional development in the academic and business worlds takes place at the conference level for both presenters and participants. Dr. Gitomer and I participate annually in the Association of Graduate Liberal Studies Programs (AGLSP) Conference. We attend annual AGLSP conferences to build our graduate studies network and strengthen our program resources (visit <http://www.aglsp.org/> for more information). The conference also offers a vibrant forum for graduate liberal studies students from around the country to share their studies.

As part of my own professional development, I presented at the 2015 Aldo Leopold Conference at UW Baraboo, WI: "Building a Land Ethic: Teaching and Learning Across the Disciplines." The conference bridged my passion for interdisciplinary teaching/learning and

Leopold's Land Ethics theories. My presentation described my experiences teaching Leopold's *A Sand County Almanac* to my DePaul freshman Honors students. This led to an invitation to publish in the Leopold Foundation's blog: <http://www.aldoleopold.org/post/interdisciplinary-a-sand-county-almanac/>. Participating in the conference recharged my intellectual batteries and extended my network in many directions.

Experience shows us that DePaul students are hungry to network with their academic colleagues through every stage of Thesis/Dissertation development. By participating in both events, students gain the experience needed to confidently enter the competitive world of academic conferences. Students add to their credentials in the process.

As for those external registration fees to conferences outside of DePaul, while not avoidable, DePaul can help students with some of the expense. Some colleges like LAS offer limited stipends to cover admission fees; some support offices, like Adult Student Affairs, can help graduate students locate funding agencies that might be able to help defray expenses. Whether attending conferences in DeKalb, IL or Paris, France, DePaul's graduate students are ready to enter the academic conference world.

Josh Cook: Here to Help



In August 2015, Josh Cook joined the MALS / IDS family as the new Student Assistant. Josh is a second year masters student in the College of Education with a focus on Secondary Social Science and History. Before coming to DePaul, Josh received his Bachelors of Arts in Political Science from the University of Wisconsin.

Josh is an avid cinophile and worked for four years as a film editor in Los Angeles prior to returning to the Midwest and continuing his education. He may have fallen out of love with the industry but still loves film. In addition to film, Josh is a huge college sports fan with a blog (<https://bigtenandcounting.wordpress.com>) and a podcast called Illegal Motion available on iTunes and other sites. You can reach him via email at jcook40@depaul.mail.edu, by phone at 773-325-7840 or by bike on the Lake Shore Path this spring.



Program News

Digication: A Behind The Scenes Look

A Conversation with Sarah Brown

Josh Cook, Student Assistant

The Internet has shaped our lives in countless ways and like so many other fields, education is no exception. From electronic courses to registration to simply emailing your professor, the daily routine of university life is increasingly digital. This dramatic shift includes electronic portfolios. Talking with [Sarah Brown](#), the senior Technology Consultant and Project Lead for e-portfolios at DePaul, one quickly realizes the growing importance of e-portfolios in education.

Sarah got her start in this field with DePaul's College of Education's internal tech support in the 2009-2010 academic year. This small, localized COE program quickly gained university-wide emphasis and the pilot program led DePaul to settle on [Digication](#) for e-portfolio purposes. By the 2010-2011 school year, e-portfolios became available for the entire DePaul student body.

Sarah's position allows for close contact with the [Writing Center](#) and the technical aspects of Digication. Her first piece of advice is to respect the white space and avoid walls of texts at all costs. Designing any website for scanability is ideal. Include images, even a stock photo of a tree in

a post about nature, to break up that dreaded text wall. She stresses utilizing linking features. Even if a link goes to another part of your own e-portfolio, it is wise to have that URL.

Sarah emphasizes that students should not leave their e-portfolios for the last minute. For MALS/IDS students, Sarah suggests starting at least a year before graduating; our MALS/IDS guidelines require that the portfolio be populated no later than during courses 6-8, even in draft form. She says, "It is different from writing a paper because you will want someone to look at it or make a Writing Center Appointment." She continues, "User testing will help a ton. It is releasing a website. Step away, breathe, and come back to the project."

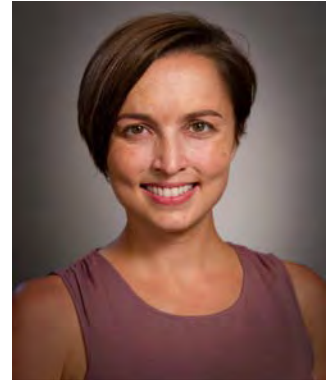


PHOTO PROVIDED BY SARAH BROWN

video clip or other visual presentation is a great tool when submitting an e-portfolio to potential employers.

As DePaul offers a growing number of online classes, our curriculum will always include personalized, face-to-face academic settings. Online and hybrid learning will grow but Sarah stresses that online portfolios don't replace traditional classroom experience; Digication acts as a flexible, multi-dimensional representation of each student's academic growth.

Most universities have some form of e-portfolio tool but DePaul's is special. The CEO of Digication praised DPU's flexibility and implementation of this platform. As more students create their individualized e-portfolios, students gain an effective and professional means of presenting the finished results of their academic journeys. Digication's multi-modal options offer an excellent tool for our interdisciplinary students' very innovative work.

Still not convinced of the benefits of e-portfolio? Take a look at DePaul's opening Digication page, and stroll through some of [our growing student samples](#).

“Online portfolios don't replace traditional classroom experience; Digication acts as a flexible, multi-dimensional representation of each student's academic growth”

When it comes to Digication, the Writing Center should be the first destination for assistance. Sarah describes the Writing Center as “an excellent expert audience which can provide feedback on page design and the paper itself.”

This hybrid of pure writing assistance and technological support makes working with the center one of Sarah's favorite parts of her job.

Sarah's last piece of advice is to not think of an e-portfolio as a static academic document, but like a CV for how often it needs to be updated. Use e-portfolio's flexibility to your advantage. For instance a



Kevin Moffat's portfolio homepage demonstrates how easy it is to make a bold statement in Digication.

Hakki Gurkan: Building Leadership Skills



Hakki Gurkan, MALS, 2016

My education in DePaul University's Master of Arts degree in Liberal Studies (MALS) has ended. Winter Quarter 2016 marks the culmination of my studies in a formal setting. I emphasize formal setting because I never cease to study and learn from all that happens around me. I have an insatiable desire to learn and MALS pushed me towards exploration. Not just exploration in an abstract sense, but to explore in a concrete manner, to develop so that I can deftly handle any challenges and obstacles. Simply put, I've become a better leader and have been able to excel in my field while continually looking to better myself as a person.

The interdisciplinary MALS program taught me to see every issue from multiple perspectives. This sets me apart from some of my technically trained peers and colleagues. My diverse academic background gives me an edge and shapes how I approach work and dealing with the general public in my day-to-day activities as a Chicago police officer. I can bring an alternative point of view to professional challenges. The world has become more complex --- liberal studies programs, such as DePaul's MALS program, are exceedingly relevant because they prepare students to adapt to changing circumstances.

My military service has been, and continues to be, a tremendously positive impact on my personal life. I am fiercely proud of my duties, having worked with capable and equally proud men and women of the armed forces. The military helped develop my leadership skills and reinforced my belief in selfless service, being part of a greater cause and leading by example. My military participation inspired me to continue working in the realm of public service. This experience, along with my law enforcement career, also informed my decision to focus the latter half of the MALS program on elective courses through DePaul's School of Public Service with a focus on leadership.

International experience, foreign language skills, and cross-cultural communication are especially useful skills that prospective employers value. As part of my MALS studies, I participated in two short-term Study Abroad Programs. I traveled to Ireland and Belgium for three courses. I had the opportunity to immerse myself into the local cultures because our class assignments entailed talking to locals and meeting public officials, as well as members of non-profit organizations. By interacting with locals, I developed an appreciation for the cultures and their differences from my own.

I spent approximately three weeks in Dublin, Ireland and took two classes while there. "Leadership and Management" concentrated on key factors that affect employee behavior and the nature and purpose of leader and managerial roles while "The Fundamentals of Human Resources Management" explored human resource issues facing employees with supervisory responsibilities in public service organizations. I also participated in an intensive week-long course in Brussels, Belgium called "Understanding the International Global Sector: Impact and Influence of the European Union and NATO." The course focused on the international public sector, including relationships with non-governmental organizations

(NGO's) and the nonprofit sector.

In today's increasingly global society, it is important to possess the skills to communicate across cultures -- and this means understanding more than just a different language. Whether through a military deployment, or study abroad or just traveling for leisure, participating in the day-to-day life of new locales gave me first-hand understanding and new appreciation of diverse cultures. Overall, I learned a lot more about myself during those trips abroad than many years spent at home and these lessons continue to positively impact my life.

Fittingly, my last two classes in the MALS program were "Ethical Leadership in Public Service" and "Values-centered Leadership." "Ethical Leadership" provided the framework for personal and professional ethical decision-making applied in the context of diverse workplaces and international organizations, while "Values-centered Leadership" explored service leadership and included modules dedicated to four topics: Service Leadership, Leadership and Diversity, International Leadership and Ethical Leadership. In developing the next generation of leaders in government, academia and the nonprofit arenas, these courses were designed to aide emerging leaders through the study and practice of differing approaches to leadership all the while staying true to DePaul University's mission to give back to the community.

While the skills a liberal studies major possesses may not be as obvious or quantifiable as those of an engineer or a scientist, they are certainly present and valuable. My liberal studies education fueled my curiosity, strengthened my critical thinking and writing skills and made me knowledgeable on a variety of subjects. My academic and professional profiles have definitely benefited from coursework in areas such as public service, political science, literature and religion. DePaul's MALS Program allowed me to task my intellect, to nourish and feed it!

First-Person Discoveries

Megan Metzger: RuPaul, Television, and DePaul's IDS

Megan Metzger, IDS, 2016

After college I fumbled from job to job, not really finding my calling, wondering if “finding my calling” was even a thing. It wasn’t until ten years later I heard Academia’s siren song, all because of a drag queen on TV. My affinity for pop culture runs deep. As a kid raised by TV, when I fell in love with a piece of media, I soaked up every trivial tidbit I could about it, which, in a pre-Internet world, required major effort. In 1993, when RuPaul first sashayed on MTV to her hit “Supermodel (You Better Work),” I thought the leggy drag queen was the most beautiful woman ever. Not only was RuPaul beautiful, her celebrity seemed to usher in an unforeseen era of LGBTQ visibility in mainstream media. Her reality show, RuPaul’s Drag Race, a drag competition where queens vie to become “America’s Next Drag Superstar,” premiered in 2009. A reality show about drag queens was a marriage of two of my favorite things, so of course I became a fan. But after its season four premiere, I became a superfan. Season four introduced viewers to Sharon Needles, a punk rock queen from Pittsburgh. Sharon’s unabashed love for Elvira, Mistress of the Dark and Tammy Faye Bakker were endearing because,



RuPaul at a release party, 2007

like me, I could tell Sharon Needles loved her stuff too. I felt those same obsessive feelings bubbling up again. But the “fangirl” feelings didn’t quite feel appropriate coming from a grown woman, so I decided to turn the feelings into my livelihood somehow. Enter grad school.

I pursued graduate work with the intention to write my master’s thesis about RuPaul’s Drag Race. The IDS program at DePaul offers the perfect means to make this happen. Unlike other programs that can delay academic goals with extraneous requisite classes, I was able to custom tailor my curriculum. This meant lots of media and gender classes. At DePaul not only did I become intimately familiar with the work of theorists like Michel Foucault and Audre Lorde, I also acquired skills that transcended the classroom. Skills like how to be more critical as a media consumer, or how to be a better feminist.

The IDS program at DePaul also helped me find my calling: TV scholar. My goal as a television scholar is to avoid giving into the trap of designating only certain kinds of TV as “worthy” of academic pursuit. I like to analyze all media, especially the “trash.” This is evident in the papers I wrote at DePaul with topics like othering as seen on 1970s game shows, displays of sexual



PHOTO PROVIDED BY MEGAN METZGER

Megan, left, and Sharon Needles at the 2012 Drag Stars at Sea cruise where fans and drag queens interact.

hierarchy in 1980s teen comedies, and Beverly Hills, 90210 character redemption through contemporary fan production. While it saddens me that my time at DePaul is drawing to a close, I’m happy to report I’ll be continuing my studies as a PhD candidate at UI Champagne this coming fall. I am forever indebted to the IDS program at DePaul for allowing me to harness my pop culture predilections into a viable academic profession.

Megan presents at The Graduate Thesis and Dissertation Conference.



New Student Spotlight

Rachel Conrad and Third Culture Kids

Josh Cook, Student Assistant

Rachel Conrad is an education explorer. She taught English for the past ten years both stateside and abroad, including an international school in Vienna. In addition to teaching, she has chaired her high school's English department and developed curriculum for several courses, including prestigious AP classes. Prior to coming to DePaul, Rachel earned dual degrees from Southeastern University. She holds a BS in Secondary English Education and a BA in English and Intercultural Studies.

Rachel loves the field of education and plans to stay within that scope after finishing her IDS degree at DePaul. She uses personal narrative to work with international students, sometimes referred to as third culture kids, in order to “help them through their identity negotiation processes.”

Rachel hopes her studies will lead to work for international agencies and/or schools to continue writing curriculum but has further academic aspirations. “I would definitely like to see my thesis project eventually segue into a doctorate” Rachel explained.

It has not even been a year in a new city and new school but Rachel already enjoys her experiences here in Chicago and DePaul's IDS program. “I've been really impressed with how helpful people are, and how quickly everyone has connected me to other people they think might be interested in my topic.”

While her professors have been encouraging, Rachel faces a challenge unique to interdisciplinary studies. “Because my topic is such a compilation, there's no cohort or even one professor (that I've discovered yet) who is an expert in my field of study. But hey, that also means I've got center stage on any presenting/publication opportunities that may arise.” Rachel actively watches for publishing and presenting opportunities throughout the disciplines. “Because my interests cover several fields of study such as education, communications and rhetoric, I'd like to make as many connections as possible and learn from the best each field has to offer.”

Rachel is already looking ahead to her capstone. She plans to reach out to former

students to gather their personal narratives about their transcultural experiences. She will then analyze this information to explore effective identity formation of third culture kids. This foresight reflects what all teachers must do: prepare. While missing some aspects of her classroom in Orlando, Rachel appreciates diving into her own studies. “Honestly, after teaching and writing curriculum and obeying the ever-changing demands of state education for the past decade, I'm finding the freedom and singular concentration of the academic life highly liberating.”



PHOTO PROVIDED BY RACHEL CONRAD

Sana Bell, Aspiring Legal Mind

Josh Cook, Student Assistant

Sana Bell may not have traveled far geographically to DePaul, but academically, she plans to maximize her scholarly journey, which will ultimately include a career as a lawyer. Sana, a south side native, graduated from the University of Illinois at Chicago just last May. While at UIC she earned a BA in Political Science with a concentration in Law and Society.

Passionate about social justice and the law, Sana's DePaul studies include a combination of Women and Gender Studies and Social Research, focusing on African and Black Diaspora. She plans to use her IDS degree as a continuation of a larger academic and professional pursuit. “My ultimate goal for my degree is enrichment to prepare me for further professional study in law school and a PhD program, so that I can one day be a lawyer fighting for social justice and a professor at a university.”

This laser-point focus is nothing new for Sana. She was President of Students for African American Sisterhood for two years at UIC, participated in a Pre-Law institute with the Council on Legal Education Opportunity Program at the University of Mississippi, and interned for the City of Chicago Commissioner on Human Relations.



PHOTO PROVIDED BY SANA BELL

Sana chose DePaul because of “its location and the atmosphere. It is more welcoming and student friendly than my alma mater. It also feels like faculty and staff really care about the students.” She also appreciates that IDS gives the flexibility to tailor her program to her specific academic goals and interests.

Like any new grad student, Sana is finding the emphasis different in a graduate program than she did at UIC. “The biggest challenge diving into this advanced degree was adjusting to the level of analysis required for my readings and papers for class. In grad school I find myself researching everything that comes my way and doing three times the reading required to have a better understanding of the material and add to the class discussion.”

Sana is not disappointed with the increasing demands. “The biggest reward is that my love for learning is constantly filled. I've done so much reading and have been exposed to so many different viewpoints on things that I thought were so simple. I look forward to a successful completion.”

Sana is succeeding on an academic front while being a single parent to her son. She concedes it is difficult to balance family life and education but by careful planning and good communication with her professors, Sana is finding a way to get all the pieces in place. To get more insight into this multifaceted life, follow her on Instagram [@sanabythebell](https://www.instagram.com/sanabythebell).

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Online Resources: Meant to be used

Adult Student Affairs
[studentaffairs.depaul.edu/
adultstudentservices](http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/adultstudentservices)

Alumni Association
alumni.depaul.edu

Alumni Sharing Knowledge (ASK)
ask.depaul.edu

Campus Events
events.depaul.edu

The Career Center
careercenter.depaul.edu

Course Catalog
sr.depaul.edu/coursecatalog

Digication
depaul.digication.com/

Financial Aid
[depaul.edu/admission-and-aid/
financial-aid](http://depaul.edu/admission-and-aid/financial-aid)

Financial Fitness
financialfitness.depaul.edu

Genius Squad
[offices.depaul.edu/is/support/Pages/
genius-squad.aspx](http://offices.depaul.edu/is/support/Pages/genius-squad.aspx)

LAS Grad Student Services
[las.depaul.edu/student-resources/
graduate-student-support/Pages/
default.aspx](http://las.depaul.edu/student-resources/graduate-student-support/Pages/default.aspx)

Learning Commons
[library.depaul.edu/get-help/Pages/
learning-commons.aspx](http://library.depaul.edu/get-help/Pages/learning-commons.aspx)

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www.densejoyousmodern.com

Office for Academic Advising Support
oaas.depaul.edu

Productive Student uServices (PLuS)
studentaffairs.depaul.edu/plus

Steans Center
steans.depaul.edu

Student Involvement
[studentaffairs.depaul.edu/
involvement](http://studentaffairs.depaul.edu/involvement)

Student Legal Services
sls.depaul.edu

Student Life
[depaul.edu/student-life/Pages/
student-organizations.aspx](http://depaul.edu/student-life/Pages/student-organizations.aspx)

Study Abroad
studyabroad.depaul.edu

Technology Training
[offices.depaul.edu/is/services/
technology-training/topics/Pages/
default.aspx](http://offices.depaul.edu/is/services/technology-training/topics/Pages/default.aspx)

University Counseling Services
studentaffairs.depaul.edu/ucs

Via Sapientiae: The Institutional
Repository at DePaul University
via.library.depaul.edu

Writing Center
condor.depaul.edu/writing/