

RE-INVENTING TRADITIONS:

The Making of the Tri-University Doctoral Program

There are profound challenges facing the institutional health of Canadian universities, and a great number of history departments have already felt the strains and tensions. Most obvious is the relative decline in budgets and funding. Retirements no longer bring automatic replacement hirings. Undergraduate and graduate students are offered less variety and an increased size in classes and seminars. Also, libraries allocate less money to scholarly journals and the purchase of new releases, and university archives are becoming increasingly constrained in acquiring new fonds and generating more effective tools to use existing holdings. All of these challenges demand that history departments, to some degree, need to re-invent themselves.

At the University of Guelph, Wilfrid Laurier University, and the University of Waterloo this process of re-invention has begun with the implementation of a Tri-University Doctoral Program. Having admitted its first students in September of 1995, this program represents the combined efforts and resources of all three schools. While students enroll at the university where their supervisor is on faculty, they do their course work and fields at all three schools and have a supervising committee which is composed of members from a minimum of two of the departments. Furthermore, students in the program have full privileges from all three schools' libraries and other services. Upon graduation, students receive a degree from their "home" university but with recognition of the Tri-University Program on their transcripts.

The Tri-University Program originated as an idea among faculty at each school who recognized that their traditional programs were not feasible for an indefinite period. Guelph and Waterloo both had existing doctoral programs, each of which has received strong "A" ratings from peer reviews. Laurier meanwhile offered a diverse Master's-level program and its faculty were often brought in by Waterloo and Guelph to sit on supervisory committees or to act as external examiners. On the surface, then, each school was in a comfortable place. It was hardly surprising that when the idea of amalgamating the three schools department for a single doctoral program was first floated in the mid-1980s there was much hesitation and some well-entrenched resistance to the idea. Still, a strong core of faculty members at each school were convinced that the long-term prospects of budget cuts demanded that the status quo be re-thought.

The attraction of a joint program was not just a reaction to fiscal pressures from administrations. The combination of three faculties expanded each school's staff three-fold to fifty full-time professors. This allowed for new areas of specialization, for example Caribbean history, while enriching traditional strong areas in Canadian and European history. Almost immediately, the three departments became partners in one of the largest and most diverse doctoral programs in the country. The Tri-University Program was seen, therefore, as a way to attract an

even stronger pool of applicants for graduate study, post-doctoral scholars, and candidates for full-time faculty positions. Furthermore, it was hoped that as retirements occurred and replacements were not always hired, the expanded faculty base would provide security for areas of study that would otherwise be lost. From a pedagogical standpoint, graduate students now would have the benefit of a larger pool of scholars with whom to work and access to a wider range of ideas and viewpoints.

By the late-1980s formal discussions began to explore the possibility of establishing a joint program. Moving slowly to allow each faculty to discuss the implications of amalgamation, in particular the loss of departmental sovereignty over admissions, by the early 1990s a co-ordinating committee and a chair, Dr. James Snell of Guelph, had been organized and given the mandate to draw up the procedures and regulations which would govern the program. As such co-operation had already worked well in other disciplines at the three universities, there was enthusiastic support from university administrators.

Despite this enthusiasm, a number of critical administrative and pedagogical questions needed to be addressed by Dr. Snell and his committee before the program could be initiated. While it was decided that individual departments would retain their own funding of graduate students through the allocation of departmental scholarships and teaching assistantships, applicants to the program would be evaluated and directed to each school by an admissions committee made up of members from each school. Furthermore, it was decided to restrict acceptances to a maximum of six new students per year, ideally to be allocated two per school. By restricting the number of new students, the program would be able to retain a high faculty / student ratio, extend guaranteed funding to a greater number of semesters than most other programs, and still create a professional environment among students and faculty which would be diverse and personal. Other questions about the program's leadership, which rotates between the three schools, and the issue of teaching credits for faculty were resolved with the co-operation of not only the departments but the university administrations.

Besides the institutional advantages offered by the Tri-University structure, the program has made a strong commitment to pedagogical and professional issues. Perhaps most significantly, students have a wide variety of topics to study for their field requirements. Not only are a broad range of traditional courses of national histories offered, but students have the opportunity to take thematic fields. In 1996-97, for example, a minor field in "Community Studies" was offered and attracted urban and rural Canadianists, an early-modern Scottish historian, and a scholar studying Brazilian history. Given by Dr. Gil Stelter and Dr. Catharine Wilson, the readings covered a wide range of international history over a broad time span to explore such topics as

identity, boundaries, space, power, and social networks. As well, a doctoral seminar is held once-per-month for all the students in the program and it is directed by one or more of the faculty. This time together provides an opportunity to talk about issues like grantsmanship, lecturing, delivering papers at conferences, and other profession-related topics in a constructive and social environment. Also under the mandate of "professional development", students in the Tri-University Program are promised at least one teaching appointment. This component also involves a mentor from one of the faculties who is there to provide assistance when asked, and to evaluate the development of the student's ability to design and deliver an undergraduate class.

Under the leadership of Dr. Snell and now the new chair, Dr. Joyce Lorimer of Wilfrid Laurier University, the Tri-University Program continues to develop a program which is ready to face the fiscal and pedagogical challenges of the future. The primary advantages for faculty and students lie in the program's diversity and its favourable faculty / student ratio. Also, the opportunity to draw up a new mandate for a doctoral program has

allowed faculty and students to meet some of the new epistemological challenges offered by history as a discipline. That there are early signs of success is illustrated by the inauguration of discussions to bring each school's Master's-level programs into the Tri-University framework.

While amalgamation of graduate programs may not be ideal for all departments or even needed, the example of the Tri-University Program is significant because it represents the sort of intense re-thinking that history departments all over Canada need to consider as well as the possibility for real change. Budget cuts, declining enrollments in undergraduate courses, and even the blurring of disciplinary boundaries are all real challenges for administrators, faculty, and students. Indeed, while rooted in the past, the study of history and the training of historians must re-invent some of their institutional traditions to meet the challenges of today and tomorrow. At Guelph, Laurier, and Waterloo, a new generation of graduate students is being trained with this mandate. It will be interesting to see how other programs in other universities respond to this challenge.

John Walsh, Tri-University Program, University of Guelph

CALLS FOR PAPERS/DEMANDES DE COMMUNICATIONS

Association canadienne des études sur les femmes/Canadian Women's Studies Association. Congrès annuel/Annual Conference: 30 mai - 1^{er} juin 1998/30 May - 1^{er} June 1998. Les études des femmes: l'éclatement des frontières? / Women's Studies at the Cutting Edge? Veuillez soumettre un résumé de 100 mots et une notice biographique (50 mots ou moins) en trois copies à: / Please submit a 100 - word abstract and a 50 - word biographical note in triplicate to: Congrès de l'ACEF / CWSA Congress, Programme en Études des femmes / Women's Studies Program, Université d'Ottawa / University of Ottawa, Ottawa, ON, K1N 6N5; (tél) 613-520-6644; (télécopieur/fax) 613- 562-5994; etfem@uottawa.ca ou/ or hbourde@uottawa.ca. Date limite/Deadline: 31 décembre/December 1997.

1849: A Landmark Year in Canadian History? The beginnings of a common British North American Experience? British North America on the verge of major changes? Expressions of interest, calls for papers invited. Conference details and closing date to be announced. Correspondence to Prof. Ged Martin, Centre for Canadian Studies, 21 George Square, Edinburgh EH8 9LD Scotland, or e-mail ged.martin@ed.ac.uk.

American Society for Legal History, October 22-24, 1998, Seattle, Washington. Proposals for panels and papers invited; panels preferred. Proposals should include a statement of the common issues in the panel (500 words) as well as an abstract of each paper; e-mail submissions preferred. Send panel proposals with c.v. and e-mail addresses of each participant to Daniel R. Ernst, Professor of Law, Georgetown University Law Center, 600 New Jersey Ave., NW, Washington D.C. 20001. Tel. (202) 662-9475; FAX (202) 662-9444; e-mail ernst@law.georgetown.edu. Deadline for submissions Jan. 15, 1998.

CHA Meeting at Sherbrooke, 1999: The 1999 annual meeting of the Canadian Historical Association will be held at the Université de Sherbrooke. Peter Gossage and Christine Metayer are co-chairs of the programme committee. Planning is in the early stages, but electronic enquiries and suggestions are more than welcome. Contact us at pgossage@courrier.usherb.ca or cmetayer@courrier.usherb.ca.

New Frontiers in Graduate History: York University Graduate History Conference, Second Annual Meeting, March 13-14, 1998. Deadline for submissions Dec. 15, 1998. Contact Joseph Tohill, Dept. of History, York University, North York, ON M3J 1P3; e-mail jtohill@yorku.ca.

Congrès annuel de la S.H.C. à Sherbrooke, en 1999. Le congrès annuel de la Société historique du Canada aura lieu en 1999 à l'Université de Sherbrooke. Peter Gossage et Christine Metayer président le comité du programme et apprécieraient avoir vos idées et suggestions, même s'ils n'en sont qu'à une première étape de la planification. Veuillez leur faire parvenir vos commentaires aux deux adresses électroniques suivantes : pgossage@courrier.usherb.ca ou cmetayer@courrier.usherb.ca.

The Canadian Business History Conference, Fifth Annual Meeting, McMaster University, October 16-18, 1998. Deadline for proposals Jan. 15, 1998. Contact Ken Cruikshank, Dept. of History, McMaster University, Hamilton, ON L8S 4L9; FAX (905) 777-0158; e-mail cruiksha@mcmaster.ca.

Crossing the Boundaries VI, a Counter-Disciplinary Graduate Student Conference, March 27-28, 1998, SUNY Binghamton, Binghamton, NY. Submit one-page abstracts by January 15, 1998 to: Crossing the Boundaries VI, c/o Art History Department, SUNY Binghamton, Box 6000, NY, 13902, or e-mail proposals to bg21010@binghamton.edu. For further information contact Jean Cucuzzella, Dept. of Art History, tel. (607)785-8559, e-mail bg21010@binghamton.edu; or Sharon Smith, tel. (607)-723-2197, e-mail bf20558@binghamton.edu, Dept. of Art History, Binghamton 13902.

Merchants and Mariners: Maritime History Conference, August 8-14, 1999. A joint meeting of the Association for the History of the Northern Seas and the Canadian Nautical Research Society to be held in Corner Brook, Nfld. For additional information on the conference or on membership in the AHNS or CNRS, contact Dr Olaf U. Janzen, Division of Arts, Sir Wilfred Grenfell College, Corner Brook, NF A2H 6P9, tel. (709) 637-6282, FAX (709) 637-6159 or e-mail at olaf@beothuk.swgc.mun.ca.

Inserts in this issue/Insertions dans ce numéro

CHA Canada's Ethnic Groups Booklet no. 22/Brochure des Groupes ethniques du Canada n° 22; Invitation to the 19th International Congress of Historical Sciences/Invitation au XIX^e congrès international des sciences historiques; Books from McGill-Queen's University Press/Livres des Presses McGill-Queen's; Historical booklet no. 58/Brochure historique n° 58.