

NELC NEWS

Letter from the Chair

The year 2014-15 was very active in Yale NELC. Graduate students ran and participated in departmental and university-wide initiatives; our terrific language lecturers ran many fine activities; and we have received authorization to begin filling our empty faculty lines. **Eckart Frahm** spearheaded a successful grant application to the NEH to continue the [Cuneiform Commentaries Project](#), just in time to kick off celebrations of NELC's 175th anniversary as a scholarly and pedagogical discipline at Yale (see p.4). **John and Colleen Darnell's** translation of *Alice in Wonderland* into hieroglyphs



caught the eye of the *Wall Street Journal*. Finally, July 2015 marked the departure of **Bentley Layton**, the Goff Chair of Religious Studies, of **Ulla Kasten**, Associate Curator of the Babylonian Collection, and of **Lee Payne**, the Collection's conservator. They will all be much missed.

Activities 2014-2015

Student news



Four PhDs, one MPhil, and one MA were awarded in 2014-15.



Exciting results from a summer dig; students participate in YISAP; a tenure track job in Georgia.

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Faculty and research news



Enrique Jiménez wins a prize at the International Association for Assyriology.



NELC welcomes two post-doctoral fellows to the Egyptology team.

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We are sad to report that William W. Hallo, the William M. Laffan Professor Emeritus of Assyriology and Babylonian Literature, died on March 27 at the age of 87. Professor Hallo spent his career studying, teaching, and writing about Assyriology, Archaeology, Biblical studies, Semitic studies, and Babylonian literature. During his four decades at Yale he also served as Curator of the Babylonian Collection and as head of Morse College from 1982-87. His colleague, Eckart Frahm, remembers him as one who “not only did work on texts, especially Sumerian ones, he also worked on

Bill Hallo



problems. He shaped major debates, most importantly in the area of historiography, and when he claimed that ancient Mesopotamia and Egypt represented ‘the first half of history,’ he coined a phrase that would become an enduring motto in his field.”

Memorial contributions may be made to Congregation Mishkan Israel, 785 Ridge Rd., Hamden, CT; or Congregation Beth El-Keser Israel, 85 Harrison St., New Haven, CT. Yale will hold a memorial service for Professor Hallo on Thursday, October 29, at 4pm in the Slifka Center on Wall Street. Read more [here](#).

Congratulations to our newly minted PhDs

Four NELC students received their PhDs from the University in 2014-15. In May, **Niv Allon** returned to Yale to collect his diploma along with **Marina Brown** and **Matteo di Giovanni**. Joining them on the stage was **Hasan Alsulami**, MA in Arabic Studies.



Niv Allon and Marina Brown

Allon, whose thesis was examined in the fall of 2014, wrote on “Writing, Violence and the Military: Visualizing Literacies at the Time of Horemhab (1550-1295 BCE)”;

he continues his Egyptology research at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City.



Matteo di Giovanni

Brown and **di Giovanni** shared the 2015 Horwitz Prize. **Marina’s** dissertation, “Keeping Enemies Closer: Ascribed

Material Agency in Ancient Egyptian Rock Inscriptions and the Projection of Presence and Power in Liminal Regions,” will form the basis of her post-doctoral work in the coming year (see p.5); **Matteo’s** dissertation on Aristotle’s *Metaphysics* forms part of an extensive research project that he is pursuing in his faculty position in the Philosophy department at Ludwig-Maximilians-Universität München.

Hadi Jorati completed his second PhD with a dissertation that was successfully examined in the fall of 2014, on “Science and Society in Medieval Islam: Nasir al-Din Tusi and the Politics of Patronage”; he is an assistant professor at the Ohio State University.



Hadi Jorati

Finally, **Geoff Moseley** earned an MPhil in Classics and NELC, a self-designed program combining Greek, Arabic, and philosophy.



Geoff Moseley

Graduate Student & Alumni News

Tasha Dobbin-Bennett ’14 writes: “I began in May 2014 as the Papyrologist at the Beinecke Rare Book and Manuscript Library, where my primary responsibility



Conserving papyri at the Yale University Library

was the Yale Papyrus Collection, which numbers almost 7000 inventoried items. Working closely with the Beinecke and Sterling Memorial Libraries, I updated the catalog, digitized the majority of the Collection, and prepared it for a large-scale data migration. But the highlight of my position was working alongside the Special Collections Conservation team to clean, repair, and house papyri. I never get tired of seeing a previously dirty, scrunched up ball of papyrus straightened, cleaned, and ready for a scholar to read. It really is thrilling when you realize that you are stepping into a moment within a person’s life, albeit often as much as 2000 years later!” After eight years in New Haven Tasha and her family will be moving to Georgia where she has been appointed Assistant Professor of Art History and Studio Arts at Oxford College of Emory University. **Nick Kraus** has been involved with the Jezreel Valley Regional Project, which continues to uncover at Megiddo the only Roman legionary camp so far excavated in the eastern empire from the 2nd-3rd centuries CE. Working under the auspices of the IAA and the Albright Institute of Archaeological Research, the team has

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Faculty news

In 2014, **Dimitri Gutas** was elected an honorary member of the Turkish Academy of Sciences and a corresponding member of the Academy of Athens. Also in 2014, the revised edition of his *Avicenna and the Aristotelian Tradition: Introduction to Reading Avicenna's Philosophical Works* (Brill) won The World Prize for the Book of the Year of the Islamic Republic of Iran. A collection of his articles on Avicenna was published by Variorum, *Orientations of Avicenna's Philosophy. Essays on His Life, Method, Heritage* (Ashgate 2014). In addition to his work on the Cuneiform Commentaries Project, **Eckart Frahm** served



Yale - Museum of Persipolis

on the Steering Committee for YISAP, and served the Department ably as DGS. **Ben** and **Karen Foster** led an AYA group to Iran in May. **Ben** has a new book forthcoming in

November 2015 with Routledge: *The Age of Agade: Inventing Empire in Ancient Mesopotamia*. **John Coleman Darnell** had an active year teaching and conducting archaeological expeditions to Elkab, where **Alberto Urcia** assisted him, incorporating new technologies into field research (see also below). Also in Egypt, Associate Research Scholar **Gillian Pyke** continued her work with Professor Steven Davis (Religious Studies) in the YMAP South and North projects. **Sarab Al Ani** presented her work at the NY Arabic Teachers Council conference, "Towards a More Effective Testing of Arabic L2 Reading Comprehension." She also organized a workshop by Elinor Holand, who led students and faculty in an exploration of Arabic script calligraphy. **Sarab,**

Muhammad Aziz, Dina Roginsky, Shiri Goren, and Farkhondeh Shayesteh all did rigorous ACTFL training for OPI testing. **Muhammad** and **Sarab** taught Arabic in



Muhammad Aziz observes

Yale's Summer Session. **Jonas Elbousty** arranged and coordinated the Yale Study Abroad program in Arabic, which was held in Rabat, Morocco. He and the other Arabic lecturers had three students win prestigious CASA fellowships, and are proud to announce that Yale's Arabic placement test is now available online. **Aziz** and **Elbousty** have also finished work on *Advanced Arabic Literary Reader*, which will be published in December 2015.

Etem Erol was promoted to Senior Lecturer I and taught Ottoman (along with his regular load of Turkish courses) to enthusiastic students in the Spring. Yale students led by **Farkhondeh Shayesteh** visited the Beinecke Library. The collection includes [numerous manuscripts written in modern Persian](#), including centuries-old editions of the Shahnameh (the Book of Kings), the Eskandarnameh (the Book of Alexander), and poetry by Hafez. The collection also contains texts written in Pahlavi or Middle Persian, which help to convey a sense of the long history of Persian language and literature. Students were also able to view the beautiful illustrative miniatures, a distinctive Persian art form that appears in many of the manuscripts.



Persian students visit Beinecke

Digital Archaeology specialist **Alberto Urcia** writes: "In 1961 the Penn-Yale expedition was launched under the direction of W.K. Simpson. This initiative investigated Bronze Age Nubian cemeteries in the area of Toshka West; the New Kingdom tombs of the princes of Miam at Toshka East, the most famous of which is Heka-nefer; and the important rock inscriptions at Gebel Agg. Much of the archaeological material from the Middle Nubian sites remains unpublished. In 2008, the Peabody Museum

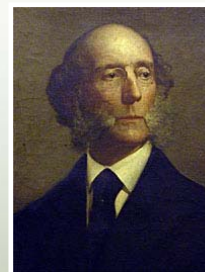
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of Natural History in collaboration with Yale Egyptology began a re-examination of the material from Toshka West Cemeteries B, C, and D, the site of Gebel Agg, and other sites, based on excavation records and objects now stored at West Campus. **Maria Gatto** (NELC Research Fellow 2008-13) is coordinating the project and the Nubian section, working along with **Colleen Darnell**, who is responsible for the Egyptian artifacts, and **Renee Leary**, who is doing the fundamental work of review, description, and database entry. **Alberto** is curating the graphic documentation, integrating the archive with new high-resolution photographs (in collaboration with YDC2 and the Department of Anthropology), producing maps, and managing layout for the upcoming publication. We look forward to discovering this amazing collection, including the history of the Expedition and its participation in the UNESCO campaign for the safeguarding of these endangered ancient cultures.” Many cultural events were hosted by the Hebrew program this year, including screenings of the provocative comedy “Zero Motivation” and of “The Band’s Visit” (jointly by the Arabic and Hebrew programs). Israeli author Assaf Gavron gave a talk about his novel *The Hilltop*, followed by an honest conversation in Hebrew with advanced students and members of the community on writing amidst political and social crisis. Students in Conversational Hebrew expanded their culinary reach as well as linguistic horizons while cooking together with Israeli chef Avinadav Levy. Students in **Dina Roginsky’s** spring class participated in a theater workshop offered by Israeli director and Yale school of Drama student, Yagil Eliraz. The program also supported a production of “Cabaret,” directed by a student of our program, and co-sponsored the dance performance “Archive” by Arkadi Zaidis, which embodies the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. **Dina** was one of the panelists in the thought-provoking roundtable after Zaidis’ performance. More collaboration is planned for next year, including the Hebrew-Arabic theater performance “In Between” by Palestinian-Israeli Ibrahim Miari. **Dina** is working on a survey to better understand the motivations and expectations of our Hebrew students and presented part of the results in Tel Aviv in June 2015. Hebrew Language Coordinator **Ayala Dvoretzky** continues her active participation and presentation of talks in the annual Yale Pedagogy Workshop for Foreign Language Teaching Fellows and Instructors. Finally, **Shiri Goren** was promoted to Senior Lector II and elected to the new FAS Senate.



Edward Elbridge Salisbury celebrations



“Sincere, devout, high-minded, generous”

2016 marks the 175th anniversary of the appointment of E. E. Salisbury as the first professor of Arabic and Sanskrit in the U.S. Salisbury both developed America’s first formal academic program in what were then known as Oriental languages, and offered Yale’s first graduate classes. Salisbury’s wide-ranging expertise and interests are now pursued in the departments of NELC, East Asian Languages and Literature, History, History of Art, and Religious Studies; in the work carried on by CMES, YISAP, and SASC; in the University Art Gallery, the Center for British Art, Sterling and Beinecke libraries; and in the Babylonian Collection. We plan events across Yale throughout 2016, each celebrating a different aspect of Salisbury’s legacy. Please contact the chair of the organizing committee, kishwar.rizvi@yale.edu, for more information.



Salisbury’s tomb in Grove Street Cemetery

Graduate Student and Alumni News (continued)

uncovered some of the camp's main streets and a building that was possibly the commander's residence. Tel Megiddo is a vital strategic site in the area; the discovery of the Roman camp will be of crucial importance to understanding the organization and the mechanics of Roman imperialism in the period. **Nick** also

earned a qualification from the Yale Initiative for the Study of Antiquity and the Premodern world (YISAP) this spring, with a capstone project on commentary in antiquity. After



Nick Kraus on site

spending a year doing in research in Germany, **Shiyanthi Thavapalan** has returned to Yale to continue working on her dissertation. **Shana Zaia** and **Mary Frazer** are making great progress on their dissertations: **Shana** is teaching Akkadian, while **Mary** is collaborating actively on the CCP project. **Matthew Glassman**, **Julia Goetz**, and **Michael Rapoport** all successfully passed their third-year comprehensive exams: congratulations! **Julia** is also completing an MPhil. **Matt** returned to excavate at Khirbet el Maqatir in Israel this summer, and took the YISAP core seminar on Commentary last spring. **Esraa al-Shammari** is continuing her PhD studies at UPenn this fall. **Mareike Koerner** '14 has been reappointed as a Visiting Assistant Professor in Religion at Trinity College in Hartford, just up the road from New Haven. **Alicia Cunningham-**

Cunningham-Bryant



Bryant '12, Assistant Professor of Intellectual Heritage at Temple University, has been promoted to Associate Director for Special Programs. Bringing an interdisciplinary and diachronic approach to link a traditional great books

program with non-traditional primary sources and experiential learning, she is creating a revolutionary core program. Her NELC training is never far away, she writes, as she teaches *Gilgamesh* every year and always brings in Egyptological texts and art.

Postdoctoral Fellows

Agnete Wisti Lassen, the Kohut Post-Doctoral Associate at the Babylonian Collection, organized the Ancient Textiles Symposium in November 2014 which brought together scholars from Yale, Brevard College, and Copenhagen (see also p.6).



The International Association for Assyriology awards an annual prize for the best Assyriological article written after the PhD. This year's winner, announced at the 61st Rencontre Assyriologique Internationale in Bern, Switzerland, is **Enrique Jiménez**, post-doctoral researcher in the Department and Senior Editor of Yale's [Cuneiform Commentary Project](#) (see p.1). He received the prize for



“New Fragments of Gilgameš and Other Literary Texts from Kuyunjik,” *Iraq* 76 (2014).

NELC welcomes two new Simpson post-doctoral researchers for the fall of 2015. One, **Marina Brown**, is an old friend (see p.2): she will develop the rock-art database that forms the core of her dissertation into a digital resource.



Christina Geisen comes to us from Toronto, where she wrote a PhD on “Basilophoric personal names in Ancient Egypt and Mesopotamia.” She has additional specialties in Islamic Studies and Pre- and Early History, and has been an SSHRC postdoctoral fellow; most recently, she has served as epigrapher with the Penn-Yale-IFA group in Abydos. While at Yale she will teach Ancient Egyptian as well as conducting her own research.

Please send us your news!! Email miguel.perez-cabello@yale.edu or send to the address below

YALE NELC

Yale University, P.O. Box 208324
New Haven, CT 06520-8324

[Recipient]

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Are you interested in writing in Arabic? Submit an article to **Accent**, Yale's multilingual undergraduate publication. The theme of this issue is "Ritual." For details please e-mail: nolan.phillips@yale.edu

Bons voyages

Bentley Layton, who has taught at Yale since 1976, retired at the end of the academic year 2014-15.



In his long and distinguished career he played important roles in Religious Studies, Classics, and History, but above all in NELC where his judgment and enthusiasm were always welcome. His field-changing academic work

in Coptic, the history of Christianity, monasticism, and manuscript studies—among others—helped redefine all these areas; his emphasis on the importance of rethinking boundaries between fields, not least in his establishment and leadership of the inspirational Greco-Roman lunch, changed us all for the better. Happily, he is not planning to leave New Haven, but will enjoy his well-earned emeritus status in and around the Yale campus.

Ulla Kasten retires this summer as Associate Curator and Museum Editor of the Yale Babylonian Collection. She studied archaeology

in Athens and Copenhagen, and cultural history in Istanbul. Since her move to the US she has excavated in Syria, translated books on Archaeology and Assyriology, and written a widely used manual on conserving tablets. Beyond all that, she has served as trusted mentor and friend to generations of NELC students and faculty. She will be succeeded in the Collection by **Agnete Wisti Lassen** (see p.5).



Thanks to Chris Kraus and especially to the indefatigable Arturo Perez-Cabello for writing and editing. This is the second installment of NELC News.