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The international edition of the LMU Munich newsletter

Did *T. rex* pick on the little guys?

by Susanne Wedlich

For most dinosaur fans, Tyrannosaurus rex is the undisputed showstopper. But recent work by Dr. Oliver Rauhut and coworkers leaves its popular image as a perfect killing machine looking rather tarnished. The LMU palaeontologist has been able to show that tyrannosaurids were not always kingpins – and rather than tackling colossal herbivores, they preferred to ambush smaller fry.



▲ *Skull of Proceratosaurus. The specimen had been incorrectly classified for a long time, but the first detailed investigation of the skull, carried out under the leadership of Oliver Rauhut, then showed that this neglected fossil is the oldest known member of the tyrannosauroids.*

For the complete article, see www.en.lmu.de/news/insightlmu/2010/01_01.pdf

Green light for gray matter

by Julia Zahlten

21 Research Fellows from all over the world have just been welcomed as the first members of LMU's Young Center. The postdocs, representing various disciplines, will be receiving well-funded fellowships and be supported by LMU's most experienced scholars.

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Communicating literary studies

by Mike Gardner

The conceptualization of love, sadness and fear in literature and language is just one example of a wide range of phenomena addressed in interdisciplinary events organized by PhD students in "ProLit", one of LMU's most established doctoral programs.

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LMU's woman in New York

by Claudia Hellmann

LMU was among the first German universities to open an office abroad as early as 2005 – the German University Alliance in New York. Andrea Adam Moore, executive director of the office, reports what she does to strengthen LMU's transatlantic relations.

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Green light for gray matter

by Julia Zahlten

21 excellent postdocs drawn from all over the world have been welcomed as new members of the Young Center at LMU's Center for Advanced Studies (CAS). From now on, for the next two years, they will be able to devote their time and effort to their research topics and be part of a community with other young academics. The group is made up of those aspirants whose applications for one of the sought-after international Research Fellowships offered by LMU in 2009 were ultimately accepted.

"The conditions of this fellowship are excellent and really incomparable," says psychologist Dr. Paul Taylor. In December 2009, he came to LMU from Birkbeck College, London, to work on "The neuronal dynamics underlying the control of perception and action". "But one of the first things I will do in the next couple of weeks is taking a German class," the 29-year-old Briton says. "The Department of Psychology is very international, and the working language is English, but anyway I want to take the chance to learn some German."

Dedication to academic life

Silke Eisenbeiss can spare herself this effort: She is one of the three Germans who were lucky enough to get hold of one of the fellowships. "After my PhD in Innovation Management, I left university and started working for the German Government in Berlin," she explains. "But over time, I realized that I did miss the intellectual challenges and the autonomy of academia and was driven to go back to the world of science. The fellowship offers great conditions for a postdoc." Her postdoctoral project centers on "Ethical leadership and organizational performance".

Like every LMU Research Fellow, Silke Eisenbeiss and Paul Taylor have an academic mentor for the duration of their stay who helps them integrate into their host faculty and provides scientific expertise and advice. "I was lucky to know my current Support Professor before," says Paul Taylor. "After a seminar in London I went over to Professor Herman Müller, the chair of Experimental Psychology at LMU, and talked to him. He told me about the new fellowships and so I decided to apply."

Besides supporting the Fellows in establishing academic exchange within their own department, LMU creates favourable conditions for cross-disciplinary networking. "We want to en-

courage the young academics to form interdisciplinary working partnerships," explains Professor Christian Rapp, director of the CAS. "In addition, as members of the CAS, fellows can participate in various events, engage in scientific discussions and exchange ideas with experienced scholars, which may help them to further develop their careers by stimulating new approaches to their own research." The Young Center thus offers a wide range of useful services, such as providing the infrastructure for organizing scientific events, opportunity of participating in Workshops and Summer Schools and handling of administrative matters as well as inviting outstanding researchers from Germany and abroad for short-term visits. To put it in a nutshell: The young fellows benefit from the same support as the other CAS members, altogether the most prominent academics of LMU.

Exchange of experience

On top of the basic salary, the fellowships include equipment and travel costs. Thus the program allows the junior researchers to pursue their scientific interests from an early stage in their careers without having to compete for grants from external agencies. The fellows may also teach during their time at LMU: undergraduate or graduate courses, weekend or long-term seminars – the young academics can offer courses of their own design. "I think it is important to pass a sense of our dedication to our research topics on to the students," says Eisenbeiss.

After two years, the research performed by the Fellows will be subjected to expert evaluation. If the outcome of this assessment is positive, Fellowships may be extended for a further two years.

About the LMU Research Fellowships

The Research Fellowship scheme forms part of the "Academic Career Program", an initiative which is an integral part of the LMU excellent strategy and aims at providing optimal conditions for career development to outstanding junior academics. In the context of the program, the fellows will be able to build up long-term collaborations and contacts that will also serve to extend LMU's network of scientific contacts and enhance the international visibility of the institution.





Communicating literary studies

by Mike Gardner

The conceptualization of love, sadness and fear in literature and language is just one example of a wide range of phenomena addressed in interdisciplinary events organized by graduate students in “ProLit”, an international PhD program in literature ranking among LMU’s most established doctoral programs. The interdisciplinary approach of ProLit is combined with an innovative training concept.

Fabienne Imlinger studied comparative literature in Austria, and then started her doctoral thesis at the University of Frankfurt, writing about the autobiographies of hermaphrodites in Germany and France in the 19th century. A job offered at LMU that would back her studies prompted her to move to Munich. “What fascinated me here was the pool of 29 specialists from twelve different disciplines from whom I could pick those fitting in best, in my case with German and Romance literary studies,” she explains. “It looks like my topic has found the right place, but the program seems to be seeking such topics, too.”

Focal points help communicate and organize

What also appeals to her about ProLit is real common ground for students to exchange ideas and gain new perspectives. They have to attend courses in three different modules covering Literatures and The Literary, Literature and Culture and Literature and Theory. Two credits are required for two long presentations and discussions of the doctoral project in the “ProLit Colloquium”. Another two credits are acquired through seminar papers and presentations at conferences or at the annual two-day “ProLit Symposium”.

“The long presentations are a good focal point in organizing work,” says Sören Stange, who did a literary studies major in Potsdam and Berlin. His doctoral thesis addresses the not-knowing in literature, relating to Broch, Musil and Kafka, but also in physics and psychoanalysis around 1925, his ultimate interest being its aesthetic role. He started his project in April 2009 and plans to hand in his thesis in October 2011. The final, sixth semester is for the disputation of the thesis. “Another thing I like about ProLit is that its structure is efficient while still giving you scope to pursue academic activities such as arranging conferences,” Sören Stange says.



About doctoral studies at LMU Munich

Around 1,000 doctoral degrees are awarded in more than 100 subjects at LMU each year. Besides the traditional individual professorial supervision scheme, LMU is introducing an increasing number of international doctoral programs. In a series, insightLMU describes the academic profile and various services of these programs and gives useful tips on application conditions and contacts. For general information on doctoral studies at LMU, see www.graduatecenter.lmu.de

Alumni working in several areas

“Each ProLit student admitted to the program is given a mentor – one of the specialists – who monitors the project and gives advice,” explains Academic Coordinator Markus Wiefarn. “Students can contact any of the other specialists for further aid.” Candidates are required to defend their doctoral thesis by proving their abilities in academic innovation and interdisciplinary communication.

ProLit was launched in 2001. Some of its 26 alumni have continued an academic career, while others write or work, for example, for publishing firms, as librarians, at schools or in science management. Out of the current 41 ProLit students, 16 come from abroad, also including Africa, Asia and Latin America.

Constantin Sonkwé Tayim is one of them. He studied German language and literature and did a teacher training course in German in Cameroon. His doctoral thesis focuses on the presentation of Jewish in Jewish autobiographies of the emancipation era. “For me it is a great advantage that we can already teach during our doctorate,” he says. “And especially for anyone wishing to teach later on, being in a structured program with doctoral candidates who have studied various subjects is also very enriching.”

This communicative aspect of ProLit is taken up by German literature graduate Sayaka Oki, from Japan, who adds: “The program gives you the opportunity not only to present your efforts but also to get feedback. And you can get to know German and foreign doctoral students who have studied your subject, too. It is fun, and very helpful, to exchange views.”

RESEARCH



◀ In the early 1920, official discussions were held between Bolsheviks and Russian Orthodox intellectuals. That situation changed radically later in the decade.

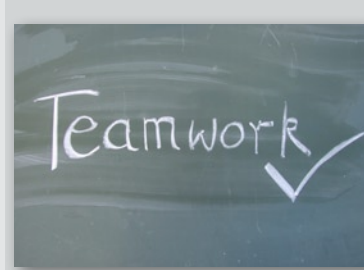
EUROPEAN RELIGIOUS HISTORY

Religion and politics: Intertwined perspectives on a tangled web

by Marcus Simon

In European history, religion and politics have always been tightly interwoven. After all, religious arguments can be invoked to justify as well as to question the political and social status quo. The historian Professor Martin Schulze Wessel is convinced that the nexus between religion and politics can be adequately treated only if one adopts transnational approaches. In particular, he argues that more attention should be paid to the course of religious history in Eastern and Southeastern Europe.

For the complete article, see www.en.lmu.de/news/insightlmu/2010/01_02.pdf



◀ School is the only institution in our complex and fragmented society which still makes an attempt to instil common values, says Joachim Kahlert.

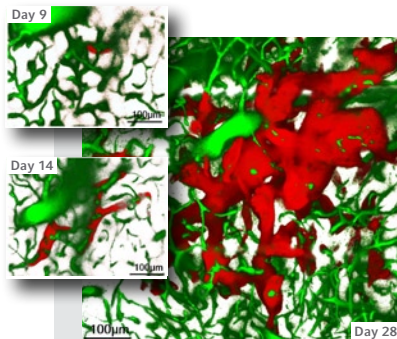
PRIMARY SCHOOL EDUCATION

Learning to give lessons in living

by Marcus Simon

Schoolteachers are increasingly being expected to bring sophisticated social skills to the classroom. The Teacher Training Center (LBZ) at LMU Munich is responding to this demand, recognizing that teachers need more than a sound knowledge base in their school subjects. According to Professor Joachim Kahlert, Director of the LBZ, "we need to impart to the young a core curriculum that equips them to experience and participate fully in our democratic culture."

For the complete article, see www.en.lmu.de/news/insightlmu/2010/01_03.pdf



◀ With two-photon microscopy, the behavior of a single metastasizing melanoma (skin cancer, red) cell can be followed for weeks in an experimental animal.

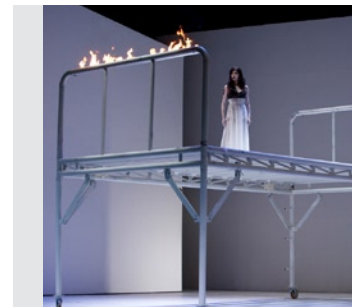
NEUROLOGY

Caught in the act

by Christine Amrhein

Some 10 % of cancer patients develop metastases in the brain – often long after successful treatment of the primary tumor. In such cases, the prognosis is generally poor. The mechanisms responsible for the appearance of brain metastases have long been mysterious. Now a research team led by LMU neurologists Dr. Frank Winkler and Professor Jochen Herms has followed, in real time, the multistep process that enables cancer cells to establish metastases, and seen that many of them get stuck along the way.

For the complete article, see www.en.lmu.de/news/insightlmu/2010/01_04.pdf



◀ "When a contemporary director brings Wagner's 'Ring' to the stage today, it is not at all clear what the take-home message is meant to be. You have a choice of interpretations," says Jürgen Schläder.

THEATRE STUDIES

All the world's a stage?

by Maximilian G. Burkhart

Theatre studies is reinventing itself. For Professor Jürgen Schläder, theatre is the only truly three-dimensional art form, and the boundaries between drama, music theatre, dance, performance art, film and digital media are becoming less distinct. He and his colleagues at the LMUexcellent-sponsored research center "Sound and Movement" identify the combination and confrontation of sound and movement as the defining characteristic of innovative and experimental theatre today.

For the complete article, see www.en.lmu.de/news/insightlmu/2010/01_05.pdf



LMU's woman in New York

by Claudia Hellmann

Andrea Adam Moore's job as Executive Director of the German University Alliance has always been a busy one, but recently her travel schedule has increased greatly. She has just returned to New York from her honeymoon in South America, the following day she is off to Washington, followed by a trip to Boston and then on to Berlin. Higher education fairs, study abroad meetings at partner institutions, events and congresses – she is on the road a lot, speaking about the changes in the German higher education system or introducing the two German universities she represents, Freie Universität Berlin and LMU Munich, and paving the way for new collaborations with universities in North America.

“Even in times of unlimited information online it is a considerable advantage to have ‘a foot in the door’, to see new developments happen, to be close to partner institutions and to know the key contacts,” she explains the importance of having a liaison office in the North American higher education market where Germany and even less one particular university is not necessarily always on the radar.

Informing on trends and developments

Raising visibility and communicating the latest developments in German higher education to US and Canadian universities – as well as the other way around – are key aspects of her job. “I tell people here about new developments like the Excellence Initiative and the Bologna Process and new services like LMU's Dual Career Service,” she says. “A lot has happened in recent years and if you haven't been to Germany in a while, one might be surprised.” Back in Germany she reports on issues like the growing emphasis on undergraduate research, special postdoc services and community-based learning, developments which might eventually influence universities in Germany.

Promoting research and study opportunities, connecting with potential new partner institutions and advising students and researchers are also important goals of the New York office. How informed people are and what misconceptions Adam Moore has to fight can vary greatly. “Most US students know that education is less expensive in Germany compared to the US, but that quality is still very good. Scientists on the other hand usually think that working conditions are not optimal,



▼ Skyline of New York City

▲ Andrea Adam



regarding equipment, student/faculty ratio, salaries and so on. And here is where my work is important: to put numbers into context, to make the picture more complete and to inform about recent developments and improvements.” When it comes to student exchange, she tries to find out what the students want and expect – after all Berlin and Munich are two very different cities, and LMU and FU are very different universities. „People imagine that this is the greatest challenge of my job, the competition within my own consortium,” she says. „But in fact FU and LMU have few partners in common and their Master and PhD programs vary greatly. Actually, it makes my job more interesting because my portfolio is broader.”

Raising awareness at home

Her task for the coming year is to raise awareness at her home institutions and to promote her services internally. Not enough people know about the New York office or what she can do for them – one thing she needs to change. “It's not like China where people are glad to have a contact,” she sighs, referring to her colleague Thomas Zimmer, who represents LMU there. “When it comes to the US, many people think they can easily organize everything themselves.” But she sees herself as a mediator who can set up contacts and get information. A new part-time assistant will be hired to help her cope with the increasing workload, so that she has more time for her various tasks and can develop contacts for LMU and FU in a more pointed fashion. Should she find additional time on her hands, she would like to look into rallying the North American alumni of her two institutions – a treasure yet to be discovered by German universities.





New Humboldt Research Fellow at LMU

Once again, an Alexander von Humboldt Research Fellow has chosen to conduct her research at LMU. Dr. Agnès Vokaer shall be researching at the Institute of Prehistoric and Early Medieval Archaeology and Archaeology of the Roman Provinces for one year. In her project, this visiting researcher from Belgium is investigating the production and trade of ceramics in Northern Syria from the late Roman to the Umayyad period. Her studies will be focusing both on analyzing the late antique urban economy and exploring the trade links and exchange of goods – and ceramics in particular – between city centers and rural areas. The Alexander von Humboldt Foundation enables highly qualified postdoctoral academics from abroad to carry out their research project in Germany, choosing their own host. Accordingly, the number of fellows is an indicator of an institution's international contacts and reputation.

100 million euros funding for Munich Biotech cluster

The Munich-based biotech cluster "m4 – a new dimension in drug development" has been selected as one of only five research clusters within the Germany-wide "Spitzencluster" competition launched by the Federal Ministry of Education and Research. The biotech cluster is coordinated by the BioM Biotech Cluster Development GmbH in Munich-Martinsried. It mainly builds on the research performance achieved by LMU and the Technische Universität München, as well as on the efforts of several Munich-based and internationally renowned extra-university research institutions. Over the next five years, the m4-cluster will be receiving up to 100 million euros to investigate new methods to tailor personalized therapies, carry out their clinical development and advance their industrial application. As such, personalized medicine promises to herald a new standard of health care, resolving problems and challenges in drug development.

Bruno Latour receives UG culture prize

The Münchner Universitätsgesellschaft (UG), the association of friends and supporters of LMU Munich, presented the Prize for Cultural Achievement 2009 to French sociologist and philosopher Bruno Latour in a ceremony on February 8, 2010. In the citation, the jury states that "Bruno Latour is one of the most influential, intelligent and best known contributors to the field of Science Studies". He is regarded as an outstanding exponent of so-called actor-network theory, a sociological framework concerned with elucidating the significance and effects of scientific and technical innovations. During his visit to Munich, Latour gave a seminar on his work for a selected group of junior researchers. The Prize, which is worth 25,000 euros, celebrates eminent individuals in the fields of literature, art or the humanities whose works have brought them popular recognition as artists or academics.

Three LMU scientists receive EU research grants

Three LMU scientists have been awarded Advanced Investigator Grants by the European Research Council (ERC), which promotes top-level basic research through a highly competitive Europe-wide selection process. Pediatrician and epidemiologist Erika von Mutius will receive about two million euros to find new strategies for the prevention of asthma and allergies. Geologist Donald Bruce Dingwell has been awarded nearly three million euros to investigate the effects of volcanic activity on the Earth's system. And physicist Ferenc Krausz will employ his ERC grant of 2.5 million euros to obtain time-resolved images of atomic and electronic motions in atoms and molecules. In addition, linguist Adamantios I. Gafos of New York University, who also receives an Advanced Investigator Award, has been invited to carry out his winning project at LMU.

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