Institute for Learning in Retirement Annual Report 2010-2011

What will likely distinguish this, our fourteenth year, from others past and future is the visit of the Dalai Lama to Miami in October—a visit in which ILR participated by sponsoring two lectures in the art museum, a show in the performing arts series, and, most important, by securing much-coveted tickets for 147 seats, in blocks, for his talk in Millett Hall on October 21st. Perhaps it is too bad we couldn’t arrange to be similarly involved in the big event of the spring, namely, George Clooney’s filming in Oxford of scenes in his forthcoming movie. It would have been amusing to recognize ILR members among the extras who packed Hall Auditorium. But it was not to be. Miami students (not to mention star-struck faculty and staff) stole a march on us.

Curriculum

This missed opportunity notwithstanding, ILR has continued to serve its members well, first and foremost, by offering an appealing array of courses, several linked to the Dalai Lama’s visit. A second focus, following on the celebration of Miami’s Bicentennial in 2009-10, was on Oxford itself, past, present, and future. A constant every year is the Midday Lecture Series arranged by Betty Rogers, the variety of which—five lectures a term, year after year—is impressive, to say the least. This year was no exception. In all we offered 34 courses first term, with 204 members; second term, 32 courses, with 191 members. For this outcome, we are deeply indebted to the volunteers of the curriculum committee* and its volunteer-in-chief, Bill Gracie. The process of identifying subjects and instructors to teach them; of collecting and editing course-descriptions—Elinor Loucks’s work on the latter has been invaluable; of matching courses/teachers with appropriate venues; and of preparing the bulletin for printing is never-ending, work for the sequel term under way even as that for the present term is wrapping up. For example, with the expectation that “boomers” are most likely the future members of ILR, the committee is already well along in planning programs and courses for 2011-12 that explore the implications of this changing demographic for the ILR. In sum, the curriculum committee is surely the hardest and most dedicated workers among us. Tari Tharp’s position of chairing the Liaison Committee in providing liaisons for the instructors who request them is not the easiest, either, but she prevailed both terms, this year as well as last, with the help of volunteers.**

Special Events

Generating ideas for special events requires imagination; implementing them requires time and energy—lots of both. New joint-chairs Bob and Marilyn Johnson have proved equal to the task. To be sure, some of the 40 people who took the KitchenAid trip in September (which sold out and was arranged by Jack Haffey and Nancy Hoffmann the previous spring) came home with more shoes than they left with, but it was a lovely day in the pleasant and architecturally interesting community of Greenville that included the bonus of a visit to the private garden of Miami alumni Mike and Anne Randall on the way home. The “Over-The-Rhine Venture” in October (also sold out) to the new School for the Creative and Performing Arts and to the nearby Miami University Center for Community Engagement in Over-the-Rhine—the two connected by a pleasant walk, with a stop for lunch at the
Lavomatic Café—was both informative and at times inspiring. The ILR Board of Directors voted to donate a surprise discount on the lunch from the restaurant to the Miami Center in appreciation of the presentation and hospitality offered us by Director Tom Dutton and some half dozen Miami students-in-residence. It was a classic intergenerational moment in time that many of us were reluctant to see end. To our new part-time assistant Judy Macke we owe the pleasure of a second trip to Cincinnati in early December (which sold out in three days)—a visit to the William Howard Taft home in the morning and, after a leisurely lunch in North College Hill, a tour of the restored and lavishly decorated Laurel Court (built by the founder of Champion Paper Co.) guided by the new owners. The Macke family had taken the tour the year before. Yet to come in April and May are (1) a visit to the Midwest Culinary Institute, with lunch in Cincinnati State’s Overlook Café, followed by a bus tour of Spring Grove Cemetery, and (2) a visit to the WLWT Channel 5 Newsroom and to the Cincinnati History Museum at the Museum Center, with lunch at Olives restaurant. A special event of another kind was the memorial concert in March for one of ILR’s founding members Luan Luce by the Hamilton-Fairfield Symphony Orchestra Chorale, of which she was an exuberant member. ILR advertised the concert and handled ticket sales. As with Curriculum, Special Events requires the dedication of many volunteers, who not only make suggestions, but frequently check them out before recommending them.***

The opening and closing social events that frame the two terms—the fall “Kick-Off Party” (89 attended) and the spring re-named “First Annual Pasta Luncheon” (91 attended)—Jenny Davis’ happy idea—met with great favor, the latter both for the variety of tasty pastas prepared by Paesano’s Pasta House and for the greater likelihood of reaching the Commons Building of The Knolls of Oxford still upright because not encumbered by a dish of food when traversing icy snow and ice. It would be difficult to exaggerate the generosity and hospitality of The Knolls of Oxford and its staff in allowing us to host such social events (including the annual meeting) in the Auditorium, not to mention scheduling board and committee meetings in the Board Room, and classes in both The Commons and The Clubhouse. Our gratitude goes to Tim McGowan, Vicky Trostel, Kelley Needham, Kelli Riggs, and Laura Lacy for their invaluable support in 2010-2011.

Publicity

Jack Haffey, our one-person publicity committee, has again this year explored and pursued new ways of attracting additional members. With the expert assistance of Tim Jones and Suzanne Clark in Miami’s Advancement Services Office, he sent information about classes and special events, electronically, to eligible Miami alumni/ae in the Cincinnati area and sent the bulletin, again electronically, to retirement homes and libraries in southwestern Ohio. He has, at the same time, continued to blitz Oxford and Hamilton with posters; to announce ILR news in the The Oxford Press and The Hamilton Journal News; and, at the start of each term, to emblazon the intersection of High Street and Campus Avenue with the two-sided ILR banner.

Consonant with Jack’s effort to boost our numbers, the board clarified the definition of membership, preferring the one in the Bylaws and Standing Rules—“50 years of age or older and upon payment of the membership fee.” Contrary to our name, members need not be retired. The bulletins and other
publications will drop all reference to this condition. (Incidentally, Judy Macke’s analysis of medical forms revealed that the average age of current members is 73.)

Further Contributions

Other board members have served in special ways: Treasurer Pat Baugher’s scrutiny of the budget report repeatedly reminded the rest of us when budget considerations should inform our discussion; Bob Wendel has been attentive to serving the interests of Hamilton/Fairfield in ILR and concerned with how to encourage and promote them; Sue Jones and Diane Thomas volunteered to undertake the long over-due task of updating the Standing Rules, with the result that the newsletter was deleted as anachronism; the space committee and the committee on service-and intergenerational-learning were excised, the objectives for which they were created now met by the curriculum committee. For example, Tari Tharp invited members to participate in an intergenerational book discussion with fifth graders from the Talawanda School District; Miami faculty Donna McCollum and Hays Cummins asked the ILR to help them populate an intergenerational workshop in Belize this summer by publicizing it to members via e-mail and website; the board agreed to do so. Buffy Hanna, representative of Scripps, kept us abreast of developments in the field of gerontology and, in particular, of opportunities to learn about them through local programs spread over the academic year. In convincing new members to join the board—Lee Hamill, Bob Johnson, and Dan Szuhay—as old members Pat Baugher, Frank Jordan, and Mark Plageman—step down, Jenny Davis, assisted by Judith de Luce and Bob Johnson has once again demonstrated her considerable powers of persuasion. And, as in the previous year, Diane Thomas has provided the board with prompt, accurate, and detailed minutes of all meetings. An invaluable service!

Partnering with Miami University’s Voice of America Learning Center

For some time ILR has speculated about taking advantage of the new VOAL Center in West Chester. Last year, at the invitation of ILR’s counterpart at the University of Cincinnati, Osher Lifelong Learning Institute, we jointly hosted a program on the Ohio Innocence Project based at UC. In February of this year David Macejko, Director of Advancement for the VOAL Center, and Tom Hayden, retiring superintendent of the Lakota School District, asked if they might meet with the board to discuss ILR offering classes at VOAL Center in the near future. This meeting culminated in an invitation to hold the March board meeting at the VOAL Center, to be preceded by a tour, lunch, and presentation that would answer questions raised in Oxford (afterward refined into “a wish list” by Judith de Luce, Pat Baugher, Betty Rogers, and Buffy Hanna and forwarded to David Macejko). The invitation was readily accepted. Following the tour, our concerns expressed in the wish list were addressed generally by David Macejko, supplemented by remarks from Tom Hayden and by oncoming board member Dan Szuhay. In a wide-ranging video presentation by Rod Nimitz, Director of the VOAL Center, we were given the demographics that prompted VOAL Center to approach ILR. Convinced of the potential for this enterprise, the board agreed to proceed with the idea of a trial run in the form of a day of courses, perhaps two in the morning and two in the afternoon, with subjects and instructors to be determined by select members of the ILR board and the VOAL Center staff. We departed convinced that this is an idea whose time has come and grateful for the opportunity to partner with the staff of the VOAL Center and interested
citizens of the area like Tom Hayden.

Sustainability

In the event, the visit and its outcome were more opportune than we realized. It was only a matter of time, or so it appears in hindsight, until ILR, like all Miami programs, would be required to become self-sustaining. Still, the word in early March that we must do so by July 1, 2011, was a shock. Cheryl Young, Director of Lifelong Learning, had previously notified ILR that the program must move to a self-sustaining financial model. However, due to the increasing demands on Lifelong Learning staff from credit workshops, the reality of the current budget crisis and decreases in staffing at the university, Cheryl made the decision to move this deadline forward to July 1, 2011.

At an impromptu board meeting on March 25th, attended by Cheryl and the Lifelong Learning staff Donna Gouvan and Judy Macke, members explored the implications of this news and determined how best to proceed. Two committees were formed: one to enable us to become self-sustaining in the short term, i.e., by the July 1st deadline; and one, in the long term, i.e., by identifying sources of money beyond the membership fee and charges for special events so that we will not have to “live hand-to-mouth,” so to speak. One obvious such source, of course, is donations from members and “friends,” which, as it turns out, we did in the spring bulletin, with promising results. Besides sums of money, we received the donation of the loan of a Colonial Services Westover bus for one special events trip this spring.

The most serious set-back to the ILR is, of course, the loss of our Program Associate, Donna Gouvan, and, in effect, since Nancy Hoffmann’s long leave of absence and subsequent resignation, our “Program Manager” for the last year. To put it succinctly, Donna has performed this job with consummate skill, grace, unfailing good-humor, and manifest devotion to ILR. Truth to tell, she has “spoiled” us by doing things we could—and should have been doing for ourselves. She will be sorely missed as we struggle to become self-sustaining but, at the same time, a standard to emulate.

Not that Donna had relinquished her own job responsibilities in Lifelong Learning when taking on Nancy’s, but she was able to turn some of it over to our new part-time assistant Judy Macke, while simultaneously training her. Judy has more than lived up to the high expectations her dossier and interview promised, relieving Donna of much of the responsibility for supervising special events and for matching courses with suitable venues and insuring that requested technology is on hand and working properly. In retrospect the decision to hire a part-time assistant for ILR has proved to be timely, if not prescient.

As well, we are grateful to Lifelong Learning Director, Cheryl Young, who has been an advocate for ILR with those who question its value; to Design and Promotions Manager, Kim Logsdon, who has provided timely updates and links to news and other events, overseen the distribution and tabulation of online class surveys, and designed and produced materials, including special events flyers and semester bulletins; and to others in the office—Debbie Davidson, Lindsay Carpenter, Jessica Williamson, Laura
Johnson—whose assistance has been behind the scenes but not the less worthy for that.

Coincident with the hard news that the future of a self-sustaining ILR is now, and not some distant future, we received a message from a couple who plan to move from Asheville to Oxford within the next six months, giving us advanced notice, as it were, of their intent to be actively involved in both The Knolls and ILR. Heartening news! We want to be ready for them and, we trust, others like them. It will be a busy summer.

Respectfully submitted by:

Frank Jordan, 2010-11 Chair, Institute for Learning in Retirement
Donna Gouvan, Program Associate, Miami University’s Lifelong Learning Office

* Curriculum Committee members are Bill Gracie—Chair, Beverly Bach, Nelly Bly Cogan, Jenny Davis, Judith de Luce, Ann Dunlevy, John Eicher, Margo Ellis, Barb Eshbaugh, Donna Gouvan, Lee Hamill, Frank Jordan, Cynthia Kelley, Barbara Kleefeld, Elinor Loucks, Judy Macke, Betty Rogers, Gail Williamson, and Joan Witt

**Special Events Committee members are Bob & Marilyn Johnson—Co-Chairs, Donna Gouvan, Jack Haffey, Carol Hennessey, Karen Kullman, Frank Jordan, Judy Macke, Mary Jean Priest, Linda Williams, and Joan Witt

***Liaison Committee members are Tari Tharp—Chair, Gerry Carleton, Ann Evans, Donna Gouvan, Judy Macke, Sharon Peterson, Dawn Pfohl, and Pauly Zody
Lifelong Learning @ Miami University

Article IX, Section 1 of the By-Laws specifies, “There shall be an annual meeting of the membership each calendar year at which the Board of Directors and the officers shall be elected and annual reports shall be presented and received.”

1.) Board of Directors, and 2.) Officers, prepared by the Board Development Committee (Nominating Committee) as prescribed by the By-Laws. The Board consists of 12 members, each serving three years with a limit of two consecutive terms.

Current ILR Board Members 2010-2011

Officers
Frank Jordan-Chair (leaving board)
Judith de Luce-Vice Chair
Diane Thomas-Secretary
Pat Baugher-Treasurer (leaving board)

Members at Large
Jenny Davis
William Gracie
Jack Haffey
Sue Jones
Mark Plageman (leaving board)
Betty Rogers
Tari Tharp
Bob Wendel

Ex Officio Members
Buffy Hanna
Donna Gouvan
Judy Macke
Cheryl Young

Slate of Candidates 2011-2012

Officers
Judith de Luce-Chair
Tari Tharp-Vice Chair
Diane Thomas-Secretary
Sue Jones-Treasurer

Members at Large
Jenny Davis
William Gracie
Jack Haffey
Lee Hamill (new member)
Robert Johnson (new member)
Betty Rogers
Dan Szuhay (new member)
Bob Wendel

Ex Officio Members
Buffy Hanna
Judy Macke
Cheryl Young