IMA: An Association of Independent Scholars

By Rhoda Gilman

The Institute for Minnesota Archaeology (IMA) was founded in 1982, just a year before the Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum. Like the Forum, it was created through the initiative of unemployed scholars as a response to the depression of the early 1980s. Since then it has become a shining example of what independent scholarship can achieve for the increase and dissemination of knowledge and for the status of scholars themselves.

Archaeologists, by the very nature of their craft, are independent scholars. They are defined by a methodology rather than a single field of study. Although some of them still find niches in academia, mainly in anthropology or classical studies departments, the field has moved dramatically in the past generation toward independence.

Most archaeology now is conducted in an interdisciplinary setting, often by a team of scholars from various fields. Many archaeologists are now employed either as consultants or by contracting firms that perform the cultural resources surveys required by environmental and historic preservation laws. Others work for a variety of museums and historical agencies to provide the information that guides historic restoration and preservation programs.

State budget cutbacks in 1981 gutted the archaeology program of the Minnesota Historical Society, which had grown up over a period of 20 years in tandem with the expanding network of state historic sites and the new State Historic Preservation Office. In early 1982 nearly a dozen archaeologists suddenly found themselves without jobs and with projects to which they had given years of work left in limbo. Some abandoned the field altogether; some became "contract" archaeologists, hiring out to private firms and government agencies for short-term projects; and three of them, along with one other associate, decided to form a new nonprofit organization that would continue and extend the study of Minnesota's buried past.

The four who signed the IMA articles of incorporation were Douglas Birk, Clark Dobbs, Ted Lofstrom, and Tom Trow. Today, fourteen years later, Birk and Dobbs are still senior members of the staff. The mission of the organization is still, as stated in 1982, "to interpret our past, to involve the public in Minnesota archaeology through education and citizen participation in IMA research activities, and to promote archaeological site preservation through the stewardship of the unique and irreplaceable archaeological record."

The road was not easy. Grant funds and local public agencies supported the first seasons of field work near Red Wing and Little Falls, but the IMA itself operated out of homes and a post office box. Not until 1984 was laboratory space rented and full-time staff member Kim Breakey hired. Two years later Doug Birk was named Independent Scholar of the Year under an award program conducted by the Minnesota Humanities Commission in cooperation with the Independent Scholars' Forum. The achievements cited

Continued on page 4

President's Column

By Ross Corson

First of all, on behalf of the Forum's Board of Directors, I wish to offer one warm welcome and one heartfelt thank-you.

We are delighted to welcome Curt Hillstrom as a new member of the Forum's Board. Curt is actually returning to the Board after a hiatus of several years. In the meantime, he has been responsible for the Forum's member database—and we are grateful that he will also continue with this important assignment.

We also wish to thank Jack Parker for his generous service. Although he is retiring from the Board, he has graciously agreed to continue writing regular articles for the newsletter, bringing to our attention the not-so-well-known library resources in

Continued on page 2
President's Column

Continued from page 1

Minnesota which are available to independent scholars.

Second, an update: In the previous newsletter, we asked members to let us know if they were interested in the possibility of the Forum offering discounted-priced access to the Internet. While there was some positive response, it was not enough to make us eligible for a group discount. In any case, our proposal has been overtaken by events in the fast-changing online scene. The proliferation of companies and organizations providing Internet access means there is no shortage of options for independent scholars (at least those with computers and modems). So, we are considering other ways to help independent scholars make the most of the Internet.

Third, an invitation: I hope you might join us for the “Works in Progress” programs this spring. These programs are an opportunity for independent scholars to make brief presentations about their research or writing in progress; in turn, they are an opportunity for those present to learn about what other independent scholars are doing and to offer their feedback. Last year’s presentations always inspired vigorous discussions. Forum members will be receiving promotional flyers in the mail for upcoming programs. Please try to come—and invite a friend or colleague.

Finally, congratulations are in order: Once a scholarly work-in-progress is completed, it sometimes takes the form of a book. I am delighted to note that the books of three Forum members are among the nominees for the 1996 Minnesota Book Awards.

Now in its 8th year, the Minnesota Book Awards recognizes and celebrates the works of Minnesota authors. Since 1988, more than 300 Minnesota-written books have been Award nominees—representing what one fan calls “the best reading list in Minnesota.” Volunteer judges reviewed several hundred new Minnesota-written books available for sale in 1995 and selected 70 nominees as outstanding representatives in 17 categories, ranging from poetry to history to books for younger children. Award recipients will be selected from among the nominees.

The Forum members, their books, and the award categories are:

Joseph Amato and Janet Timmerman, editors, At the Headwaters: The 1993 Flood in Southwestern Minnesota: 40 Photos and 40 Essays. Southwest State University. (Minnesota)


Paul Gruchow, Grass Roots: The Universe of Home. Milkweed Editions. (Non-fiction)

In addition, the volunteer coordinator of the annual Minnesota Book Awards is Forum Board member Roger Sween (who, nonetheless, is scrupulously impartial).

If you’re interested, the full list of 1996 nominees, as well as the nominees and recipients from previous years, is available on the Internet at http://www.metronet.lib.mn.us/cfb/. The list is also available by calling 612-646-0475.

All Forum members are invited to attend the 1996 Minnesota Book Awards ceremony, which is free and open to the public. It will be held at 7:00 p.m. on Saturday, April 13, at the Minnesota History Center in St. Paul. A reception will immediately follow the ceremony, with opportunities for autographs and meeting the nominees.
A Library of Cultural Insights

By John Parker

We have a lot of advantages as independent scholars in Minnesota, especially in the richness of our libraries, some vast and all-encompassing, others gems of special interest.

Celtic literature a history, for example, are the heart and soul of the Special Collections Department of the O'Shaughnessy-Frey Library Center at the University of St. Thomas in St. Paul. This world-class collection began in 1917 with the gift of 500 volumes by the Ancient Order of Hibernians of Minnesota. The collection has grown steadily since then through gifts and purchases to its present size of more than two thousand volumes.

Focus on Ireland and Scotland

The focus of the collection is primarily on the history, church history, religion, antiquities, folk lore, art and music of Ireland and Scotland—but reaches out to Welsh, Manx, Cornish and Breton cultures as well. We need only to reflect on the high culture of early Christian Ireland—with its strong missionary impulses, its beautifully illuminated manuscripts, its contributions to the quest literature of Europe's Middle Ages—to find Celtic threads deeply woven into Western culture. The Irish tradition of artistic presentation of noble texts so monumentally displayed in the Book of Kells is continued in Ireland in the Dolmen Press, a fine-arts press which has published many of Ireland's major poets of this century. The O'Shaughnessy-Frey Library Center holds some 200 first editions of this distinguished publishing house.

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Culture of Luxembourg

Less well known to most of us than the Celtic culture is that of Luxembourg, and here again the University of St. Thomas is emerging with a prominent collection. In 1993, through gift and purchase, the Special Collections Department acquired a founding collection of rare books, maps and periodicals relating to the history and culture of Luxembourg. Additional materials have been acquired for the collection in the past two years, and it now contains some 460 volumes. Continued growth is anticipated.

The materials are in French, English, German and Letzbeugergesch. The latter is the native language of the Duchy of Luxembourg, and it is still spoken there. It contains German, French, Latin, and Celtic elements. Luxembourg settlement in the United States is centered in the Midwest, and among the resources of this collection is a complete run on microfilm of a newspaper in Letzbeugergesch published for the new immigrants between 1871 and 1917 in Iowa.

Other Special Collections

Maybe you want something more traditional? St. Thomas has a collection of some 300 volumes of French journals, letters, and memoirs reflecting court and aristocratic life between 1500 and 1815. Or if you are looking for in-depth coverage of authors of recent vintage, the Special Collections Department has nearly two thousand volumes of the works of Hilaire Belloc and G. K. Chesterton, English Roman Catholic authors who have enjoyed great prominence in the 20th century. The collection also includes some correspondence of Belloc.

The head of Special Collections at the O'Shaughnessy-Frey Library Center is Dr. John Davenport. The Special Collections librarian is James D. Kellen. Either can be reached at 612-962-5467.

John Parker is a former member of the Forum's Board of Directors and currently president of the Minneapolis Athenaeum.
IMA: An Association of Independent Scholars

Continued from page 1

were his discovery of Zebulon Pike's 1804-05 wintering post when the level of the Mississippi River was lowered by repairs to a dam and his success in saving the remains of a French fur post. Both sites are near Little Falls.

In 1987 the IMA got a boost when retired University of Minnesota professor Elden Johnson, long recognized as the dean of Minnesota archaeologists, became its executive director. Johnson remained a guiding force in the organization until his death in 1992. These years saw a rapidly expanding educational program of field schools, tours, videotapes, teacher workshops, conferences, and mini-classes, all feeding and supported by an active corps of member-volunteers and a vigorous research effort. Staff and space expanded, and so did financial needs.

These were supplied for a while by consulting and contract work, including surveys in advance of a large pipeline extension across northern Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Michigan. This project also made possible new research and some re-examination of Woodland Indian sites in the region. But a slump in contracts during 1993 brought on a serious funding shortage. Recovery came with an intensive quest for grants and several new paid assignments. One of these was for work along the downtown Minneapolis riverfront in 1994, and a specialist in urban archaeology, John McCarthy, was added to the staff as a third senior research archaeologist.

Meanwhile, the dual nature of the organization, along with the need for restructuring, was being studied. In November 1994, the IMA board of directors voted to establish a for-profit subsidiary, IMA Consulting, Inc. (IMAC), to handle contract and consulting work. Archaeologists working through IMAC are now free to accept contracts that may be outside the stated mission of the parent organization, and IMA can receive support from the earnings of IMAC without impairing its own nonprofit status.

The IMA has been responsible already for important strides in discovering, studying, and preserving Minnesota's past. It fills a gap left by the University's anthropology department, the Science Museum of Minnesota and the Minnesota Historical Society. None of those institutions focuses on the study of Minnesota through archaeology as a primary goal. Although significant, their programs are always byproducts of other work.

Building on the interest and expertise of Clark Dobbs in the Oceota culture and the dense concentration of village remains around the mouth of the Cannon River, the IMA has developed strong ties with the community of Red Wing. By constant work there, it has aroused public interest and has halted industrial and housing development on several ancient sites that would otherwise have been entirely destroyed.

In August 1995, together with the Goodhue County Historical Society, IMA sponsored the first Historical Archaeology Conference of the Upper Midwest at the Anderson Center near Red Wing, and plans for the coming summer call for a community "dig" in the heart of the town. Under the supervision of John McCarthy, Red Wing citizens and young people will explore the foundations of a building once occupied by Hamline University on the town square.

At Little Falls the tireless work of Doug Birk has led to the creation of the 93-acre Little Elk Heritage Preserve on the west bank of the Mississippi at the mouth of the Little Elk River. The area has been a magnet for human activity for at least 5,000 years and in addition to ancient sites it includes the remains of a wintering post from the 1750s, which Birk feels was in all likelihood the "Fort Duquesne" mentioned in French records of the upper Mississippi fur trade. There is also the site of a Methodist-Episcopal Indian mission from the 1840s and traces of early white settlement, including a gristmill. Owned by the IMA, it is the largest privately held archaeological preserve in the Midwest.

In the meantime Birk himself has become a celebrity among Minnesota elementary teachers and school children who use the Northern Lights curriculum of Minnesota history. Its most popular classroom activity is woven around the story of the French post at Little Elk, and Birk appears regularly at teacher workshops to explain the ways in which archaeology can answer questions about the past.

Willingness to work with interested amateurs and commitment to education in its broadest sense has always distinguished the IMA. It reaffirmed this last year by hiring Phyllis Messenger for the position of Senior Education Archaeologist. From the organization's offices and laboratories at 3300 University Avenue SE in Minneapolis, she and the rest of the staff look forward to expanding even further the opportunities for public participation and to developing reader-friendly books and pamphlets that will open to more people the wealth of information being collected about Minnesota's unrecorded history.

Rhoda Gilman is a Forum Board member and editor of the new book, Ringing in the Wilderness: Selections from the North Country Anvil.
Women in Print

By Glenda Martin and Mary Treacy

The words of Minnesota women—today and yesterday—warrant a hearing. In today's dynamic publishing environment, the words of women are thriving as never before. Indicators abound:

- At the Minnesota Women's Press Bookstore, some 2,030 women (and three men) have participated in book groups over the past eight years. The list of “great books”—all women's works—selected by book group participants has been requested from 43 states and eleven nations outside the U.S.

- New Moon, the lively publication for, by, and about girls, achieved international prominence when a delegation of its young editors and writers “covered” the International Women's Conference in Beijing last August. Based in Duluth, the magazine has a growing national and international readership.

- Amazon Bookstore, celebrating its 25th anniversary this year, is the nation's oldest and largest feminist bookstore. Amazon is one of three bookstores in Minnesota devoted to the works of women.

- Norcroft, a writers' settlement along the North Shore, offers women time and space to Minnesota publishers respect and reflect the ideas of scores of women writers who are making a difference. Of special note are Spinster's Ink in Duluth, North Star in St. Cloud and YES International in St. Paul.

- As part of its commitment to women's history, the Minnesota Historical Society in 1991 awarded special research and writing grants to 19 women for exploring different aspects of the role of women in the state's past. A number of books and articles have already resulted, includ-


Others are still to come. In 1993 the Society also produced a bibliography of published sources and dissertations in Minnesota women's history, and its ongoing research grants program is actively sympathetic to projects relating to women.

- Groups of women writers and women reading the works of women writers abound. They range from the hundreds of courses and public programs offered at The Loft to the Como Aristonian Club, a group of reading women in St. Paul's St. Anthony Park neighborhood who have been meeting and discussing literature for six decades.

- The Feminist Press, the nation's oldest and most prestigious feminist publishing house, chose the Twin Cities (along with Washington, DC, and New York City) as the site for its 25th anniversary celebration in September, 1995. The Press's national distributor is St. Paul-based Consortium.

- These and other indicators provoke some thoughts:

  - The stories of individuals in Minnesota women's lives offer a unique and increasingly important venue for exploring the region's history. The stories of library leader Gratia Countryman, lovingly crafted by Jane Pejsa; Reflections of a School Mistress by Nora Fry; and Eggs in the Coffee, Sheep in the Corr by Marjorie Myers Douglas, are splendid examples of the genre.

- Women's self-publishing is increasingly honored as a way to get women’s words into print. Janet Martin of Martin House Publications in Hastings; Peg Meier of Neighbors Publishing in Minneapolis; and Trish Keating of Shamrock Press of St. Paul are but a few.

- Several Minnesota publishers, such as Lerner Publications and Free Spirit of Minneapolis and New Moon and Pfeifer-Hamilton of Duluth, are expanding the range of reading material for children and young women. Their efforts are achieving national and international recognition.

- New publications, such as Andy Steiner's A Sporting Chance: Sports and Gender, suggest untapped possibilities for recording the success of girls and women in traditionally male fields and professions—sports, medicine, law, business, and politics.

- Undiscovered stories of women tucked in attics—women's diaries, lists, and literary efforts—await the inquisitive scholar. These are real opportunities to help bring a balance of women's words to readers.

Glenda Martin is publisher of the Minnesota Women’s Press. Mary Treacy is director of the Metronet library organization and a member of the Forum's Board of Directors.
Scholars’ Forum Study Groups

By Curt Hillstrom

Study Groups are to the Scholars’ Forum what classes are to a university. They are what a battle is to the soldier, what a meet is to the athlete, a deal to the business leader, an operation to the surgeon, a worship service to the religious, a salon to the sophisticated, a caress to the lover.

Well, maybe not quite all that.

But the Forum’s Study Groups do provide independent scholars and others an opportunity to read and discuss, debate, and inquire of each other about topics of interest and relevance. After all, being an independent scholar does not mean being exclusively independent. There is a need for us social beings to verbally bounce our ideas around. This is an important way to deepen our own understandings and develop our own theories. This is the only real way for an overly independent scholar to avoid the slippery slope to consumerism and unbounded solipsism. Really.

There are presently three active Study Groups within the Minnesota Independent Scholars’ Forum: Science and Humanities; Philosophy; and Religion and Culture. There have been others. The Eighteenth Century, Women and Spirituality, Chaos Theory, and more have come and gone as the members perceive their changing needs.

Each study group did or still does meet generally every three or four weeks. Anywhere from two or three to a dozen people can show up for a meeting. Usually a book or other reading is discussed (including critical papers by members) or, as is often the case, this can merely become a point of departure. Meetings take place in people’s homes, apartments, in coffee shops or libraries, wherever it is deemed convenient. Membership in the Forum is not required to participate in the Study Groups. It is required, however, for the Study Group contact.

Philosophy Study Group

The Philosophy Study Group is one of our oldest and has been, at times, one of the largest Study Groups. In spite of this, it lapsed but was resurrected about a year ago. The group is currently reading Practical Ethics by the Australian philosopher Peter Singer. While no one in the group has completely embraced Singer’s utilitarian approach, his discussions of animal rights, abortion, and distribution of wealth have generated some excellent exchanges. Since we’re reaching the end of Singer’s book, this is a good time for anyone considering joining to give us a try. Some other books covered since the resurrection have been Robert Nozick’s The Nature of Rationality and The Structure of Scientific Revolutions by Thomas Kuhn. The group has been meeting on sunday Thursday evenings at Penny University, 50th and Penn, in Minneapolis. For more information contact Curt Hillstrom (612-823-5132) or Bob Thimmes (612-542-9748).

Religion and Culture Study Group

The Religion and Culture Study Group is still fairly new, starting a little over a year ago. We are presently studying An Intimate History of Humanity by Theodore Zeldin. This book is classified as philosophical anthropology and purports to be about new ways of viewing society and relationships. There has been sharp criticism of Zeldin by members, however. We felt that, while his historical references are informative and interesting, he is very weak in making clear the points he is driving at, leaving the reader somewhat mystified. It is not certain how long we will stay with this book. Other readings the group has taken on include The Kingdom of Matthias by Paul E. Johnson and Sean Wilentz, a story of a cult in early 19th century America, and The Varieties of Religious Experience, William James’s classic study in the psychology of religion. We were impressed with how relevant and insightful James’ book still is. The Religion and Culture Study Group has been meeting at Ross Corson’s apartment in Minneapolis every few Mondays. The people to contact for more information are Curt Hillstrom or Susan Smith (612-871-1125).

Science & Humanities Study Group

The Science & Humanities Study Group is now in its 13th year and has read more than 40 books. Three of its founders (Roger Jones, Bob Thimmes, and Rhoda Gilman) are still with it, but they and other long-term mem-
Study Group Contact Responsibilities

- Select an area you are interested in, broad enough to draw in other participants but narrow enough to keep you happy.
- Submit your proposed Study Group to the Forum Board of Directors for approval by contacting one of the Board members. This is a formality designed to keep the Board informed.
- Select a time and place to meet. If you could identify one or two or more people who are also very interested in your topic, this would be a good way to establish a core. If you want the Forum to handle your mailings (see below), you must get this information to the member coordinator, Curt Hillstrom.

MISF Responsibilities

- The Forum Board of Directors will approve your Study Group, making it indeed official.
- We will publicize your Study Group in the newsletter or by a separate mailing. It will go on our list of Study Groups in our promotional literature and in our member information packet.
- Optional: We can send you a list of members who have indicated an interest in topics related to your Study Group.
- Optional: We can send postcards notifying and/or reminding Study Group members of meetings. If you want to send them a letter, we can provide you with mailing labels, stamps, and stationary.

Members like Ginny Hansen and Susan Smith welcome newcomers and new points of view. Discussions start afresh with each book. Authors read over the years have ranged from Owen Barfield and Gregory Bateson to Alfred North Whitehead and Benjamin Whorf. Occasional detours have been made into fiction, like Robert Pirssig's Lila and Ursula Le Guin's The Dispossessed. In general, the focus remains on the tension between the world views of science and the humanities (arts, literature, language, philosophy) in the 20th century. The book now being wrestled with is The Self-Aware Universe by Amit Goswami (G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1993). Study Group contact is Ginny Hansen (612-377-5960).

New Study Group

Interested in sociology, economics, and current problems such as welfare reform and income distribution? A new study group is being proposed to focus on these topics. Some classics in the field (for example, the work of C. Wright Mills) might be included in the discussion. Anyone interested should contact Justine Smith (612-645-0106).

Starting Your Own Study Group

You must be a member of the Minnesota Independent Scholars' Forum if you want to start a Study Group. While Forum membership is not required for participation, each Study Group must have at least one person who is a member. One (or more) of these members will be considered the Study Group contact(s). The box above describes the process for setting up a Study Group and the respective responsibilities of the Forum and the Study Group.

Curt Hillstrom is a member of the Forum's Board of Directors.

Humanities Commission Offers Scholar Grants

The Minnesota Humanities Commission again invites independent scholars to apply for "Works in Progress" grants. These annual grants provide individual scholars up to $2,000 in support of research and writing that will reach a public audience.

Eligible projects must involve one or more of the humanities disciplines: history, literature, philosophy, archaeology, modern and classical languages, ethics, jurisprudence, comparative religion, linguistics, cultural anthropology, history and criticism of the arts, and historical or philosophical approaches to social and natural sciences.

"Works in Progress" grants are suitable for support of research expenses, research travel, publication subvention, or other expenses connected with humanities research and its publication.

Grant applicants must submit two writing samples, one intended for a scholarly audience, the other for a general audience. Applicants must apply through a fiscal agent (a nonprofit or educational institution). The "Works in Progress" grants are competitive; applications are evaluated according to the same criteria as other Minnesota Humanities Commission grants.

There is one "Works in Progress" grant round each year. March 29 is the deadline for draft applications; final applications are due April 26. Grant decisions will be made in early June.

For more information and a grant application, contact Jane Cunningham or Mark Gleason at the Minnesota Humanities Commission (612-224-5739 until March 1, then 612-774-0105 afterwards).

Funds for the grant program come from the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH). At the time this newsletter went to the printer, Congress had not yet approved an appropriation for the NEH. Contact the Minnesota Humanities Commission for an update on the grant program.
An Opportunity to Learn about Current Research by Independent Scholars

Upcoming “Works in Progress” Programs

The Vinland Map: Reality or Fantasy?
Ardell Abrahamson
10:30 a.m., Saturday, March 9
A recent symposium in New Haven, CT, brought to light discussion and research concerning the Vinland Map, said to be the earliest European cartographic representation of the Americas. Ardell Abrahamson, a prominent symposium participant, will share his research on the map’s origins and authenticity. He will be joined by John Parker, who participated in a similar symposium at the Smithsonian Institution in 1966.

Bridges and Borders: Interpreters and Translators as Cross-Cultural Mediators
Morgan Grayce Willow
10:30 a.m., Saturday, April 13
Morgan Grayce Willow, a Loeb McKnight recipient and published poet, has spent the past four years studying American Sign Language (ASL) and working as a sign language interpreter. She will discuss the potential for all poets and scholars of ASL translation/interpretation.

Meeting Room, Walker Community Library—2880 Hennepin Avenue South, Minneapolis (Uptown)
Free and open to the public—bring along a friend or colleague
“Works in Progress” programs are sponsored by the Minnesota Independent Scholars’ Forum.
For information, call 612-870-1859.