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Graduate Student Forum

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Recommended Citation

Sibelan E. S. Forrester. (2010). "Graduate Student Forum". *AATSEEL Newsletter*. Volume 53, Issue 3. 11-12.

<https://works.swarthmore.edu/fac-russian/72>

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Graduate Student Forum

The AATSEEL and the editors of the AATSEEL Newsletter would like to thank our colleagues who serve as advisors to the Graduate Student Forum. They include Marina Balina (Illinois Wesleyan University); Margaret Beissinger (Princeton University); Thomas Beyer (Middlebury College); Robert Channon (Purdue University); Halina Filipowicz (University of Wisconsin at Madison); and Sibelan Forrester (Swarthmore College). Look for their responses to new questions in future issues of the AATSEEL Newsletter.

The AATSEEL newsletter is pleased to announce a new editor for the graduate student column. The current editor, Nina Wieda, is stepping down this spring due to graduation.

The new editor starting with the October issue will be Ani Kokobobo. Please send your questions to Ani at ak2448@columbia.edu.

“I am increasingly concerned about the problem of plagiarism. For example, a recent issue of **TDR** (The Drama Review) includes a discussion of the scandal surrounding the publication of Philip Auslander’s book on performance theory. Auslander is a leading scholar with an impressive publication record, but his book on performance theory is mostly lifted, word for word, from an earlier book by two other authors.

Since the problem of plagiarism does not seem to go away, I am concerned about conference presentations. How should I respond when I am asked at conferences, either by another graduate student or by a faculty member, for copies of my paper? Should I share unpublished work? And if I do not feel comfortable sharing, how can I politely decline requests for copies of unpublished papers?”

Plagiarism is a concern in many areas of academia, and stories about plagiarism in the field have *always* made the rounds. Your concern is valid, and you should be duly conscious of protecting your intellectual property. But don’t allow that to deny you one of the great pleasures of our profession—sharing ideas and shaping the intellectual discourse of our field.

The best protection against plagiarism is to get your own work, in your own words, out into the field as much as

you can. Present at more conferences—delivering the same paper twice or thrice is fine, as long as you develop it each time, honing your arguments and incorporating the suggestions you receive. (A footnote in the eventual publication, thanking the people who made suggestions, tells the reader that you like to engage in discussion and welcome constructive criticism.) Regional conferences (the Western Association for Slavic Studies, AATSEEL of Wisconsin, the Southern Slavic Conference, etc.) are great for a trial run before you speak at a national conference. Conferences dedicated to particular topics, including some for graduate students only, let you inform people in a specialized area about your work, while interdisciplinary conferences give you a wider audience. Submit the paper to a journal—even if they don’t accept it, you’ll get useful suggestions from the readers (and the editor, at least, will know the ideas are *yours*). If you aren’t confident about submitting to **SEEJ**, try one of the print or online publications that feature work by graduate students—a quick web search pulls up several options (**Studies in Slavic Cultures** at the University of Pittsburgh, for example). Send work in progress to a faculty member you trust for comments, so they’ll know you’ve “claimed” the topic. (Trust is important here. Many plagiarism stories in academic lore feature faculty who poach from the graduate students they teach

*Editor: Ani Kokobobo
Columbia University*

and supervise.) Make connections with grad students at other institutions who are interested in the same topics that grab your attention. Even unpublished work can be cited, which is good for you.

I once heard a grad school colleague present my ideas at a conference. In fairness, I don’t think this person remembered hearing my paper *years* before, when we all reported on our projects at the end of a course; those ideas must have been sleeping in memory somewhere, and when some reading brought them up again later they felt original. In fact, it was my own fault. I don’t “work on” the nineteenth century, so I never tried to get the piece into publishable shape, or even to present it outside the confines of the course I wrote it for.

All this does not mean you have to share work if you don’t feel comfortable, or hand over ideas to a stranger. If someone asks but you’re reluctant, I suggest a strategic gesture of graduate studently modesty: “Oh, this is nowhere near ready to share yet, but when I publish it I’ll be happy to send you an offprint or a pdf. Do you have a card with your contact information?”

Remember, though, that sharing your work can ignite wonderful professional relationships. Someone who rereads your paper at leisure might be more likely to invite you to give a talk at his or her institution, contribute a chapter to an anthology, participate in an invitation-only conference, collaborate on a research project, attend a special summer seminar, co-author a book, or might just list you among the scholars working on the topic in the introduction to his or her own book. A copy of your impressive conference paper might help bump you up to the short list when you’re applying for a job and only one of the hiring professors happened to hear you speak. The scholars I most admire are deeply interested in what the new generation of Slavists is doing, and

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Czech Corner

Editor: Mila Saskova-Pierce
(University of Nebraska)

Editor's Note: This corner is for teachers of the Czech language, and I would like to invite them to share their news, views, and experience related to the teaching of various kinds of courses dealing with Czech culture, language, and literature. Contributions do not have to be limited to the United States; they can and should include issues of Czech language and culture instruction throughout the whole world. Contributions to the Czech Corner may be sent to the column editor at msaskovapiercel@unl.edu.

Dvořák's Double Anniversary

The years 2011 and 2012 will be the anniversaries of Dvořák's birth (170 years), and of his arrival to the US and his subsequent work in New York. (120 years).

The Czech Republic Embassy under the leadership of Dr. Karpetová, the Cultural Counselor, is making plans for a country-wide celebration of Dvořák's work, and invites other institutions to join in the celebratory activities. The

Embassy has issued a call to the Czech university programs as well as ethnic clubs and groups to join in the celebration. The embassy and consulates of the Czech republic want to be informed about the cultural programs and will publicize them on their Internet site.

Dvořák was born September 8, 1841 and died on May 1, 1904. He is considered a major Czech, European, and world composer. His work encompasses many genres, but he is known mainly for his operas, symphonic and chamber music. The most widely known on the American continent is the *American Quartet*, and the *New World Symphony*. From 1892 to 1895, Dvořák was the director of the New York National Conservatory of Music that had been founded by a wealthy American Jeanette Thurber. As director he influenced the development of American tradition in symphonic music.

Under Communism, Dvořák was considered too cosmopolitan by the leadership of the Czechoslovak Communist party.

The celebration planned in Washington will include performance of Dvořák's works in the John F. Kennedy Center for Performing Arts. The Library of Congress will exhibit the original of the *New World Symphony* score and make the short exhibit open to specialists and experts. A concert and a lecture will take place in the space of

the exhibit. The Washington National Cathedral will perform Dvořák's *Te Deum* as the concluding concert of the nationwide festival on October 28, 2011, the Czech National Holiday.

In Nebraska, at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, a series of concerts are planned. The Faculty in the Department of Music will perform the Biblical Songs. Students will perform Dvořák's *American Quartet*. Students will research and write essays about Dvořák's American work including his performance in Omaha in 1893. There are plans underway to include the Nebraska Public Radio, as well as high school students. The student Czech Komensky Club will show a film about Dvořák's life and sponsor lectures about his Midwest stay. Katarina Čermaková, lecturer of Czech, will introduce the Dvořák theme into the classroom instruction, essays, and papers. Also, as a part of the instruction, students will be encouraged to work on other projects dealing with Dvořák.

The Nebraska Czech Language Program makes an appeal to the Slavic community to join in the celebration of this important anniversary. Share your plans with the Slavic Studies colleagues. Your activities might become a blueprint for the celebration of other culturally important dates in the Slavic field.

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they consider it part of their professional obligations to follow new work.

Besides the one conference surprise described above, I've never regretted sharing my work before publication. (Though who knows what the share-ees have thought in private.) Add the line "Work in progress – please do not cite without permission" under a paper's title before you make it available, to remind the lucky recipient to behave properly if your ideas or data look good enough to steal. If someone asks

for a copy of your paper to cite you in a specific context they describe, you can probably be confident about their intentions.

AATSEEL publishes conference paper abstracts in the annual program book and on line, and this protects your work: there's a time stamp on the presentation, staking your claim to the topic. If you don't want to share your paper someone can still cite your abstract. Think of a conference presentation as an important step on the way to publication, and keep working on the piece once you're back home.

If modern technologies make it easier to find attractive material in elec-

tronic format, then copy and paste huge blocks of text, they also make it easier to discover plagiarism. Auslander didn't get away with it—and if your work is out there, no one who plagiarizes you should get away with it either.

[Thanks to David Birnbaum, Rob Romanchuk, and Lisa Wakamiya, who were kind enough to read this as a work in progress and offer useful suggestions.]