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Research

Laboratory celebrates anniversary of looking below the surface

BY PAUL MAYNE

For researchers at Surface Science Western, a surface-profiling dynamo, a dynamic on the industry’s cutting-edge, has been looking beneath for more than three decades.

The self-sustaining setup has helped $5.5 million in research capital and has also kept the staff employed and happy for over 20 years.

In the last decade, Surface Science Western researchers have authored hundreds of publications. Work from the facility has led to more than 300 patents worldwide.

The lab, which has been competitive over the last couple of years, has led to more than 500 publications and other peer reviews.

The lab has also won the award for the best submission at the University of Waterloo’s Research and Innovation awards.

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Alumni chapter offers benefits beyond comfortable network

BY REBECCA WAGNER

A new job, a change in a GTA-based start-up a few years ago saw me relocate to Toronto. Growing up in nearby Waterloo region, Toronto was a city I visited often, but never had the occasion to live in. I would be a big change, and I knew I wanted to begin this new journey by reaching out to something familiar.

That something familiar was the Western University Toronto Alumni Branch. Having completed my undergraduate degree at Western, I was closely connected to alumni members who did the same, but not in the same way. When I arrived, I contacted the alumni branch’s staff liaison to inquire about involvement before I even packed my belongings.

“I volunteered-led a branch facilitated my transition to a brand new community.”

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As my contract with my Toronto-based employer came to a close this September, I prepared to return to the Waterloo region. Accompanying me was the confidence that comes with successfully navigating a new landscape and way of life. The local chapter of the Toronto Alumni Branch, and was the first organization I reached out to when I returned to Waterloo a few short weeks ago. I am excited to once again begin life in another city, with a familiar network of Western alumni as my base.

Membership in an alumni branch gave me confidence to pursue other avenues of involvement within my new community.

Rebecca Wagner is a proud Western graduate and active community builder. She volunteers extensively and helps to ensure vulnerable populations have the resources they need to realize their full potential.
Her boots were made for talking

I sat down with Louise Pitre, BMus’79, DMus’06, in October – a week before she took the stage with Emm Gryner and Brendan Wall to perform in Joni Mitchell: River, a theatrical concert at the Grand Theatre in London. When we were introduced, my eyes immediately gravitated to her cowboy boots – these stunning, colourful peacocks were imprinted in the leather. I wish I took a picture of the boots. They looked like a painting, and indeed, they were. When I asked about them, she mentioned she bought them from an artist in San Miguel de Allende, Mexico. Paired with the fitted jeans and T-shirt she was wearing, I thought the outfit was perfect – classic with wonderful, characteristic flair – just like the singer herself. She was fantastic – recalling some of her career highlights, she cried and made me cry during the interview. I won’t forget her passion anytime soon.

(Touch) down go the Stangs

Everything seemed to be going the Mustangs’ way the afternoon of Nov. 12. The sun was shining, the fans were loud. Mustangs running back Alex Taylor had just scored his third rushing touchdown of the day, giving the team a 33-19 lead heading into the fourth quarter. But less than an hour after taking this photo, the mood at TD Stadium took a dramatic turn as the Laurier Golden Hawks stormed back with 24 unanswered points to win the 109th Yates Cup and bring Western’s season to a demoralizing end. It’s true what they say about “the thrill of victory and the agony of defeat.”
All the world’s a stage

As planning began for the special Shakespeare 400 issue in April, my mind started swarming with images of skulls, swords, Elizabethan Era attire and dramatic lighting. Knowing I was going to be shooting some of Western’s top scholars, I tried to replace this excitement with realistic expectations, in the likely case they weren’t open to indulging my wild ideas. They might not have been wrong. The passion and open-mindedness they brought to the shoot made it a favorite project of the year. Frankly, if you gave anyone a fake sword, they go right back to being a kid. By the end, it was me toning down some of the more extreme concepts – a bottle ofetchup to recreate Lady Macbeth’s murder scene, anyone?

2016 FRANK NEUFELD FAVOURITE
How my ink-stained frustrations turned into a better tomorrow

BY JON WELLS

I was in Centre Spot Scottsblood throwing morning light stacks of Copies. I felt a stiff, sporting students puffing off their copy on the way to class. For the first time, they were all going to see me—my first article ever. I grabbed a paper and flipped through my copy. It read, “Singing the blues.” Get it? Mea culpa!

Now in Centre Spot I had a byline – inside. They were all going to see me—my first byline – inside. I rubbed my face with the paper, then folded it and looked left high, my face was on the story, but it was not mine. Except I was grasping every line. I was living the dream.

Many, indeed, liked patient, methodical, and steady people so am I not why not to the edit? It was at that point I came up with the moniker “Mr. Mustache,” which was shorter than my original. And now in Centre Spot I had a byline – inside.

Meanwhile, at a friend at Western, he was gone from his article. And he was very happy. I found a touching gesture. I didn’t have the heart to tell that story again. Bye Jon Wells, the moment I left the job with my desk drawer, Still bitter, and embarrassed, I walked into the Gazette offices and there was Glisky, who I had seen but never actually met. I remember him. I vented to my faithful subscriber, “singing the blues” no longer existed. “It contained several more subheadlines, Jon Wells explained. My story had been cut. My story had been cut. I told him. He said no problem. He took a look at what level of protection needs to be in place for a story like this. He said it should be styled this way. And then.“singing the blues.” is more of a bit different. They would be in there.

It is a huge honour. We are looking forward and we want to help figure out how we can build resources, capacity, infrastructure and training in perioperative medicine. I even thought of the phrase ‘sowing seeds.’

The Schulich to lead WHO surgical efforts

The World Health Organization (WHO) recently designated the Department of Anesthesia and Perioperative Medicine, at the Schulich School of Medicine & Dentistry, as a WHO Collaborating Centre. This designation is for the first-of-its-kind designation at the university.

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“People have been having doubts about Trump since he was a primary candidate,” de Clercy said. “My point is, the question is not, ‘How did Trump win?’ The question is, ‘How did Clinton lose?’"
Project breathes life in stories of the dead

Alex Busch and Rose Ghaedi, first-year Arts & Humanities students, probed archives, city records, burial records and whatever else they could dig up, in order to find out everything they could about the life of John Labatt Scatcherd, as part of their Arts & Humanities 1020 course.

BY ADELA TALBOT

Asking first-year university students to delve into a gravestone project can seem to attract a death-oriented recreation of life before the dead, brought a poignant opportunity to examine the history of a local pioneer and his family. This was the inspiration for the final project proposed by students Alex Busch and Rose Ghaedi, who were assigned to John Labatt Scatcherd, whose life and work are part of our cultural history.

While the project was initially intended to be a way to engage students in the history of London, Ont., and its pioneer families, the students discovered much more about the life of John Labatt Scatcherd and the impact of the project.

“Of course, we had a great opportunity for them to study questions of loss and grief, and what motivates people to help others who are grieving,” said Alex Busch, one of the students.

Busch, who is an arts student in the Faculty of Arts and Humanities, said the project was an important opportunity for her to learn about the history of London and its pioneer families.

“John Labatt Scatcherd was born in Batavia, N.Y., in 1844,” she said. “He moved to London, Ont., in 1867, where he served as a member of the London city council from 1873 to 1879. He was also a prominent businessperson, serving as the president of the London and Toronto Railway Company and the London and Toronto Navigation Company.

The students worked on the project for several months, researching John Labatt Scatcherd’s life and his family’s history. They looked at city records, archives, and other sources to gather as much information as possible about the pioneer.

During the course of the project, the students discovered important insights about John Labatt Scatcherd’s life and the impact of his work. They learned about the challenges and obstacles he faced, and the perseverance and determination that helped him succeed.

One of the most important discoveries was about the impact of John Labatt Scatcherd’s work on the city of London. He was a key figure in the development of the city, and his contributions helped shape the city into the vibrant place it is today.

The students were thrilled to learn about John Labatt Scatcherd’s life and the impact of his work, and they were proud to have played a part in telling his story. They hope that their project will help others learn about the history of London and its pioneer families.

“I think the project was successful because we were able to engage students in the history of London and its pioneer families,” said Busch. “We were able to learn about the challenges and obstacles that John Labatt Scatcherd faced, and the perseverance and determination that helped him succeed.

“We hope that others will be interested in learning more about John Labatt Scatcherd’s life and the impact of his work,” she added. “We hope that our project will help to inspire others to learn more about the history of London and its pioneer families.”
Gold Medal inspires future discoveries

BY KRISTA HABERMEHL

Some of the world’s biggest problems can be solved by the smallest of solutions. At least that’s what first-year Integrated Sciences student Devanshi Shukla proved when she bioengineered a simple bacterium to detect and alert to the presence of invisible fungal contamination in our homes and food.

The 18-year-old’s bio innovation – which has the potential to help Canadians avoid serious health risks associated with food poisoning or environmental contamination from mold – received a Gold Medal at this year’s Canada-Wide Science Fair. She also received a Young Canadian Manning Innovation Award, which celebrates innovations that show ingenuity, originality, development and potential social and economic benefits.

“To be recognized in this way served to increase my inspiration,” Shukla said. “It was redeeming too, since I experienced some tough moments when I thought, ‘Oh, this isn’t going to work.’

But, it did work.

In the course of her research, Shukla discovered many forms of fungal strains release a unique chemical compound called p-cymene – a chemical that a particular strain of bacteria uses as a source of energy. Rather than using p-cymene as an energy source, Shukla instructed the bacteria to emit a bioluminescent glow in the presence of the chemical instead.

“If there is mold in an orange or a strawberry, for example, and I put my bacteria next to it, within one or two hours it will start glowing if there’s contamination there.”

The bacteria become a biosensor, able to detect and highlight contamination that can’t be seen with the naked eye. As a bonus, Shukla’s innovation is cost-effective, since bacteria are resilient and grow exponentially, and are easy to replicate.

Her inspiration for the project came from hours volunteering at hospitals – in Canada and India – where she came to recognize the impact food poisoning and residential contamination had on the health of our population. Her goal was to tackle this global problem through early detection of possible contaminants.

“I love research. I love tackling a problem without really knowing the end solution – or what path to take to get there,” Shukla said.

Shukla’s drive to discover inspired her to begin participating in regional science fairs in Grade 8 and, as her research skills progressed, she was accepted into the Canada-Wide Science Fair, where she won a Gold Medal in Grade 10, a Bronze Medal in Grade 11 and her latest Gold Medal in Grade 12.

She comes by her interest in the sciences honestly, with a plant biologist father and mother with a background in physics. “If I ever felt discouraged, I had a really good support system at home. My dad is used to asking questions and writing research papers, so I got a lot of mentoring from him.”

At Western, Shukla is soaking up the experience of a program that incorporates a research-based focus into course work.

“You cannot really separate chemistry, biology and physics; they’re really meant to be together and this program really embraces that. For me, I find experiential learning is the other half of school other people don’t always get. The hands-on is important.”

Upon graduation, Shukla hopes to continue lab-based biological research and pursue a masters and PhD in the field.

Integrated Sciences student Devanshi Shukla’s innovation – which has the potential to help Canadians avoid serious health risks associated with food poisoning or environmental contamination from mold – received a Gold Medal at this year’s Canada-Wide Science Fair. She also received a Young Canadian Manning Innovation Award.

Western’s RRIF/LIF Program has changed. Faculty and staff within 5 years of retirement should attend to learn more.

Topics covered will include:

> Key differences between the new plan and my 3D Wealth Management Program.
> RRIF/LIF basics and planning strategies.
> Key pitfalls to avoid.
> Current client portfolio illustration.
> Critical questions that must be addressed as part of your wealth management plans.
> My philosophy on risk management.

“Tired of worrying about your retirement? I retired from Western in 1997 and Mitch Orr and his team have managed my funds very well indeed since then. He has made consistently good recommendations, kept me very well informed and I am completely satisfied with his performance over the last 15 years.”

—Dr. Richard Belcher, Professor Emeritus, Western