PROFILE

John Collins

Sharing his love affair with Russian literature

John Collins admits he’s having the time of his life teaching his courses on Russian literature to OLLI students. And OLLI students are getting the benefit of his love affair with such writers as Dostoevsky, Chekhov, and Tolstoy, which stretches back nearly a half-century.

Collins was a student at Notre Dame when he heard about famed English professor Frank O’Malley, who told his students that they should read Dostoevsky sometime in their lifetimes. “I was an English major, but so popular was his course I had to wait until my final semester before I could get into this class.”

Collins was beginning his 40-plus years as a high school English teacher — basically in Massachusetts and New Hampshire — when he happened to pick up a copy of Dostoevsky’s The Idiot. “I was teaching six classes with 35 students each and coaching freshman football. So I took the 15 minutes between the last class and the start of practice hoping to read the book before the season was over. And I did.”

He became immersed in Russian literature, particularly what he terms the “Golden Age” — the 19th century, when such writers as Pushkin, Turgenev, Tolstoy, Dostoevsky, and others were dominant. He says, “The more I learned, the more I wanted to learn.” He notes that the writers of that “Golden Age” felt the pressure of the state and the Russian Orthodox Church in their writing, although the state was more dominating in the Bolshevik and Soviet period of the 20th century.

continued on page 4

CALENDAR

OLLI EVENTS

Walking Club

“So You Want to Teach”
Fri., Apr 13. See page 3 for details.

OLLI Night Out
Tues., Apr. 17. See page 7 for details.

Bar Harbor Excursion
Mon., April 23 reservation deadline. See page 5 for details.

Cambridge Excursion
Tues., May 1 reservation deadline. See page 6 for details.

Art Exhibit
Sat., May 12. See page 7 for details.

SAGE
Tuesday 9:30–11:30 a.m.
Hannaford Hall

Apr. 3 “Everything I Learned about School Leadership I Learned in Prison!”

Apr. 10 “Ballet: Can You Plié?”

Apr. 17 “Learning to Speak Alzheimer’s”

Apr. 24 “Big Band Jazz”

May 1 “Courageous Individuals Who Have Sustained Democracy”
As most of you know, the OLLI Advisory Board has been conducting a membership survey for the past several weeks. Thanks to all of you who took the time to respond. The survey officially closed this week. More than 50 percent of our membership filled out the survey! That is a remarkable figure in the world of surveys.

It will take some time to collate the results, but some very interesting facts are obvious immediately. Almost 82 percent of respondents learn about OLLI by word of mouth. This means that not only do we attend OLLI, but we invite our friends to join us. Ninety-two percent of respondents are aware that OLLI is a volunteer-driven organization, and 98 percent find communications adequate.

Throughout the upcoming months, the Advisory Board will be reviewing and responding to the survey. It will help as we make decisions concerning the future direction and priority of programming.

—Susan Morrow, Assistant Director for Program

Wrinkle in Time: The White City

[Editor’s note: This is an edited excerpt from Joan Aldrich’s account of “Wrinkle in Time” that is to appear in the scheduled April issue of the Maine Senior College Network Newsletter. See the whole article at http://www.maineseniorcollege.org/newsletter.html ]

Ninety-six OLLI at USM members were treated to a unique and magical learning experience this past March 6–8. A three-day seminar, “Wrinkle in Time: The White City — Chicago World’s Fair of 1893,” took place in the large auditorium of USM’s Wishcamper Center.

Participants had read Devil in the White City, by Erik Larson, prior to the seminar. Over three days, they sat at round tables to foster discussion of the book, and to watch together a wide variety of lectures and presentations pertaining to the book and to Chicago in the 1890s.

The event, in planning stages over an 18-month period, was conceptualized by a team of seven OLLI volunteers. Their goal was to recreate the ambience and feeling of the culture and time in which the Chicago World’s Fair, also known as the Columbian Exposition, had taken place.

The Chicago World’s Fair has been described as the opening of the 20th century, as it marked changes in America from rural to urban society, from an agriculture-based to an industrial economy, from gaslight to electricity, and from a national to an international focus.

The planning team consisted of OLLI members Sherrie Chapman, Mary Collins, Terry Foster, Joy and Tan Larrabee, and John and Kathleen Sutherland. Each team member provided a lecture, with interesting slides, clips, or live presentations.

Jason Libby, curator of the Maine State Building Museum at Poland Springs, presenting at “Wrinkle in Time.”
OLLI Advisory Board

I hope you are enjoying your first spring term classes as you receive this OLLI Newsletter. Our enrollment for the spring term is very strong and a testament to the great selection of course offerings.

Thanks to all who took the time to complete the survey. The early results look quite interesting. After we have compiled all of them, we will share relevant information through the Newsletter.

I want to remind all members of the opportunity for savings at area merchants and services when showing their USM/OLLI student membership card. A few examples of discounts are computer and related purchases at the USM Logic Shop, Time Warner Road Runner service, USM School of Music and Theater events, Metro bus passes, Amtrak train tickets, Subway, Burger King, Casco Bay Frames, Sullivan Tire, and more. [Also free admission to the Museum of Fine Arts in Boston. It’s always a good idea to ask. Some events at Merrill Auditorium offer discounted tickets for USM students that are cheaper than the senior discount. — ed.]

A full list can be found at http://tinyurl.com/USM-Discounts

—Dick Sturgeon, Chair
rbsturgeon@juno.com
773-3174

“So You Want to Teach”

On Friday, April 13, Janet Gunn will lead a Brown Bag Lunch discussion entitled “So You Want to Teach at OLLI: Bringing It All Home.” Scheduled between 11:40 a.m. and 12:40 p.m. in Wishcamper 211, this informal, relaxed meeting will be open to all OLLI members. Members should bring their own lunch.

If the idea of teaching at OLLI has ever crossed your mind, this event will be the place to get some great ideas. Janet will talk about her earliest teaching experiences, answer your questions, and provide lots of encouragement. She has four decades of teaching experience and a conviction that it’s all about “finding your voice” and listening to the voices of others.

Contact Joan Aldrich, Education Committee chair, at aldrich1822@gmail.com for further information about this event.
Collins (Cont’d from page 1)

Collins later obtained his master’s degree in English at Rivier College. But his studies also included Russian literature at Brown University, St. Anselm College, and the University of New Hampshire.

The Collinses moved to the Portland area upon his retirement to be close to children and grandchildren, who live in Maine and New Hampshire.

His wife joined OLLI as a member of the Walking Club, and this is where John heard about OLLI classes. He first took Ruth Story’s class on Mark Twain and enjoyed it immensely — American literature is another of his passions. His knowledge of Russian literature came up at a Walking Club luncheon. A member mentioned that there were no Russian literature classes. So John submitted a proposal, and his first class, an introduction to Russian novels and short stories, was born.

There were 14 in the first class, and the idea was for discussions face to face with each other, not discussing “the back of someone’s head.” When he learned that 25 had signed up for his class on Tolstoy’s short stories, he exclaimed “Wow!” and was glad he had a large enough classroom so everyone could exchange comments.

Encouraged by the reception to the Tolstoy class, he plans to take on Dostoevsky’s The Brothers Karamazov next fall. He’ll be able to dip into his collection of 400 to 500 works in Russian literature and history.

“OLLI is the perfect situation for me. I have an eager class, and best of all, I don’t have any exams to give or papers to correct.”

—Don King

Thanks!

Many thanks to those of you who are reading the OLLI Newsletter on-line! You are saving your OLLI organization several thousand dollars a year in printing and mailing costs. And you get the benefit of seeing the pictures in color and being able to click on links to take you to other sites and e-mails. Also, since the Newsletter is in the same format as the paper edition, you can still print it out at home.

If you’re getting the paper version in the mail, check out the on-line edition at http://www.usm.maine.edu/olli/olli-news (where you’ll find back issues, too). If you like what you see, call the OLLI office to convert from paper to on-line!

CLYNK — keep those bottles and cans coming!

Our CLYNK recycling program has been a great success so far. Just pick up a pre-stickered CLYNK bag from the OLLI office, toss in your recyclable cans and bottles, and drop it off at Hannaford’s. OLLI automatically gets money from this.
A Whale of a Tail in Bar Harbor
Tuesday, Sept. 11, through Thursday, Sept. 13

Mt. Desert Island (MDI), Bar Harbor, Acadia National Park, including Cadillac Mountain … where else would you rather be in early September? Forty lucky OLLI members will spend two nights and three days on the country’s sixth largest island right here off the rocky coast of Maine. Don’t wait. Reserve your space now! **Deadline is April 23, but this trip should fill quickly.**

Mt. Desert’s beauty was first discovered by the mid-19th century “rusticators” who came year after year and spent long summers in the fresh salty air, clear light, and rustic accommodations. Word of mouth as well as glorified paintings by artists of the Hudson River School spread the word. By the Gay Nineties, part of the great wealth of the Rockefellers, Morgans, Vanderbilts, Astors, et al. was spent on building summer “cottages,” and Mt. Desert became a true tourist destination.

Sept. 11: We arrive for lunch on our own at the famed Jordan Pond House and then tour the Loop Road of Acadia National Park. That will include driving to the top of Cadillac Mountain for spectacular views north, south, east, and west. Other sites along the Loop are Thunder Hole, Otter Cliff (one of the highest headlands north of Rio de Janeiro), and views of Rockefeller’s carriage roads. Check-in is at the Bar Harbor Villager Motel on the main street of the town. Late afternoon and evening will be on our own to explore Bar Harbor.

Sept. 12: After our continental breakfast at the motel, those who want to will board Oli’s Trolley for a one-hour narrated tour of Bar Harbor and its mansions. Other activities include visiting the Abbe Museum, featuring Native Maine history; walking the scenic Shore Path; or taking the free shuttle service to local sites. Lunch is on our own, after which we all join a whale watch. There will be free time to enjoy late afternoon and evening.

Sept. 13: After we have breakfast and check out, the bus will take us around MDI, with photo ops at Somes Sound (the only “fjord” in the eastern U.S.) and at the picturesque town of Southwest Harbor. Just before we leave MDI we will stop for lunch and a tour of a Maine brewery.

Cost of the trip is $300 per person, shared room, and includes breakfast and the whale watch. Not included are lunches or dinners or activities on our own. A very few single rooms are available at an additional $131. (**Note:** The OLLI office does not pair roommates.)

This excursion is limited to only 40 trippers. Because of hotel reservation requirements, **RESERVATION DEADLINE IS APRIL 23.** Refunds can be made after May 1 only if there is a waiting list by that time.

So **reserve your space(s) now** because we know that this trip will fill up quickly. Call the OLLI office at 780-4406 to pay with a credit card, or mail your reservations and checks to OLLI, USM, PO Box 9300, Portland, ME 04104. **Be sure to include the name of your roommate.**

For further information call Peg Dinan at 781-5432 or Gael McKibben at 774-7177.
Not April in Paris, but Cambridge in May

Date: May 23, 2012          Cost: $43

Join us for a day trip to Cambridge, Massachusetts, on Wednesday, May 23. We will visit the Harvard Museum of Natural History, where the famous Glass Flowers are on display. The flowers were crafted by father and son glassmakers Leopold and Rudolf Blaschka in Dresden, Germany, between 1887 and 1938. They signed an exclusive contract with Harvard and over the 50-year period made 3,000 glass models. This is a “must see!”

In addition to many minerals, gems, and fossils is a new, exciting exhibit on mollusks. Additionally, a permanent exhibit on New England Forests is like walking through an enchanted wood. This museum is connected to the Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology. Our admission admits us to both museums. Between the two, there is much to see.

After lunch at nearby venues (a list will be given to you), we’ll board our bus for a short drive down Brattle Street to visit the Henry Wadsworth Longfellow House and its gardens. Henry and his bride, Fanny, purchased their home, a stately Georgian House overlooking the Charles River, in 1843. Here they lived and raised their five children while Henry taught at Harvard and pursued his writing. In our guided tour we will learn of the illustrious history of this house. A quick example: from July of 1775 to April of 1776, General George Washington used this house as his headquarters while in command of the Continental Army.

The cost for the trip, including driver’s tip, admissions, and tours, is $43. This does NOT include lunch. The bus will leave the Wishcamper Center at 8:00 a.m. and depart from Cambridge at 4:00 p.m., arriving in Portland at approximately 6:00 p.m.

The excursion is limited to 45 trippers. Reserve your space by calling the OLLI office at 780-4406 to pay with a credit card, or mail your reservation and check to OLLI, USM, PO Box 9300, Portland, ME 04104.

RESERVATION DEADLINE IS MAY 1. There will be no refunds for cancellations made after May 7.

For questions or further information contact Ruth Cohen at 774-3217 or Sally McGonagle at 878-3553. Hope to see you on the 23rd of May!

---

Save those books for the fall book sale

The big success of the OLLI Book Sale last November tells the Resource Development Committee that we should do it again later this year.

Keep saving those books you finished last summer and those you were reading by the winter fire because there wasn’t enough snow to ski. And plan on passing on your summer beach reading!

We can’t provide storage for books until later in the year, so find a shelf in the closet, begin your donation library, and then wait for our gathering call. We have big plans, and they start with you!
Announcements / Calendar / Special Events

Thornton’s in South Portland next for OLLI Night Out

Join your OLLI friends for dinner at Thornton’s in South Portland at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, April 17.

Thornton’s is a classy restaurant with really good food. It is located in the plaza where the OLD Newick’s used to be. The address is 740 Broadway, South Portland.

To make a reservation, leave a message for Terry Foster at 780-4895 or e-mail him at tfoster@maine.edu

Walking Club sets plans for new Yarmouth trail

Wednesday, April 11. Weather permitting, the Walking Club will try a new walk on the recently completed West Side Trail at the Fels-Groves Farm Preserve in Yarmouth. Because this trail may be muddy in wet weather, we may switch the location with the walk on April 24.

Tuesday, April 24. Robinson Woods in Cape Elizabeth.

Both trips meet at Back Cove at 10 a.m. to carpool. Wear footwear appropriate for spring trails. This is also a good time to use walking sticks. Bring water and your lunch. If you have questions, call Rae Garcelon at 846-3304.

Art exhibit — Saturday, May 12

Now is the time to think about the upcoming one-day show, Ninth Week, May 12, when OLLI members exhibit and share.

Paintings, photography, crafts, fiber arts, published writing…all are welcome.

Contact information and entry forms are in the OLLI office.

Deadline for entry forms: May 1!

Do come and exhibit your work.

Questions? Contact one of the members of the OLLI Creative Arts Committee.

Sidney Lincoln, Chair—781-7309
linck7s@myfairpoint.net
John Sutherland—442-9694
jfern2003@yahoo.com
Edith Yonan—878-3950
edithyonan@gmail.com
Nancy Payne—781-3868
npayne@maine.rr.com
Betty Smith—799-3567
elisabeth.smith@maine.edu

OLLI skiers plan ahead

Cross-country and downhill skiers found a few opportunities to ski together this winter, and mid-March’s heat wave brought an early end to most of our plans.

Thoughts have now turned to reserving 2012–13 ski passes and picking up late-season equipment bargains. Look for next season’s club news in autumn 2012 here in the OLLI Newsletter. To be added to our member directory/e-mail list, send an e-mail to stevedonahoe1@gmail.com

See you on the slopes and trails next winter; it will be here before you know it!
Want to be challenged? SAGE lectures are for you

The Spring series of SAGE lectures began with an excellent presentation by Dr. Robert Russell on the history of choral music. Russell is Professor of Music at USM and the Music Director of the Choral Art Society in Portland. He traced the development of choral music from chanting in the early Church to the rich polyphonic works of the Baroque era and beyond. In the second hour, he illustrated some techniques in preparing an ensemble, with the help of several members of the USM Chamber Chorus.

The SAGE series continues its offerings on Tuesday mornings from 9:30 to 11:30 a.m. in Hannaford Hall in the Abromson Center at $7 per session.

The presenters will discuss such subjects as school leadership, ballet, Alzheimer’s, Big Band jazz, courageous Americans, the weather, and energy.

Parking is available in the USM parking garage, which is connected to Hannaford Hall. Handicapped parking space is available, but arrive early to be sure of a space.

You can pick up a copy of the SAGE program at the OLLI office in 210 Wishcamper Center, second floor, or call the OLLI office at 780-4406, or read about it on the OLLI website at http://tinyurl.com/SAGE-USM