



# PANOPLY

English and Technical Communication | Missouri S&T | Winter 2019

## EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING GOES INTERNATIONAL

page 4

## DAVIS BRINGS ONLINE RHETORIC EXPERTISE TO S&T

page 8

# Stepping from the classroom into the world

In English and technical communication, we prepare students to step from the classroom into the world as communicators with the power to write, speak, think, and lead. Professional development opportunities are a vital first step.

Your support helps to fund travel and other expenses along the learning curve to leadership and career development. Whether our students are exploring the Oxford stomping ground of J.R.R. Tolkien or presenting their research on the literary possibilities of digital gaming at a major conference, your support helps them step into the world of possibilities.

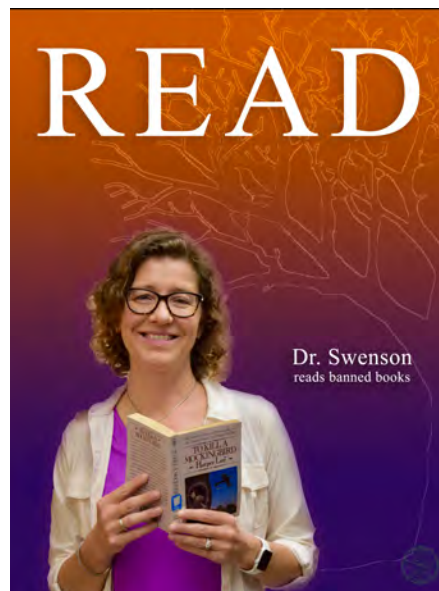
Please take time to connect with the student who calls you during our annual Phonathon. It's a great way to learn what's happening in our department and across campus. When your caller asks for your support, please consider taking the step that will help our students take theirs.

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## LETTER FROM THE CHAIR

Greetings from the Missouri S&T English and technical communication department. I write this as summer has turned to fall in Rolla, and we're enjoying cooler temperatures and the loveliness of autumn foliage in the Ozarks. I hope many of you were able to return to campus at Homecoming to see the many changes that are occurring here. One event that happens every September is Banned Book Week. This year, the campus library asked various faculty and staff on campus to pose for portraits reading banned books — you'll see mine here. English and tech com faculty are happy to support this important event, particularly if it inspires people to read books (banned or not)!

In English and technical communication, we have some exciting changes as well. We have a new faculty member, Dr. Carleigh Davis, who specializes in rhetoric and social media communication. Davis will be teaching a new course, Writing for Social Media, this spring. This is one instance of the department's development of courses that offer our students experience with new career pathways. We have recently added to



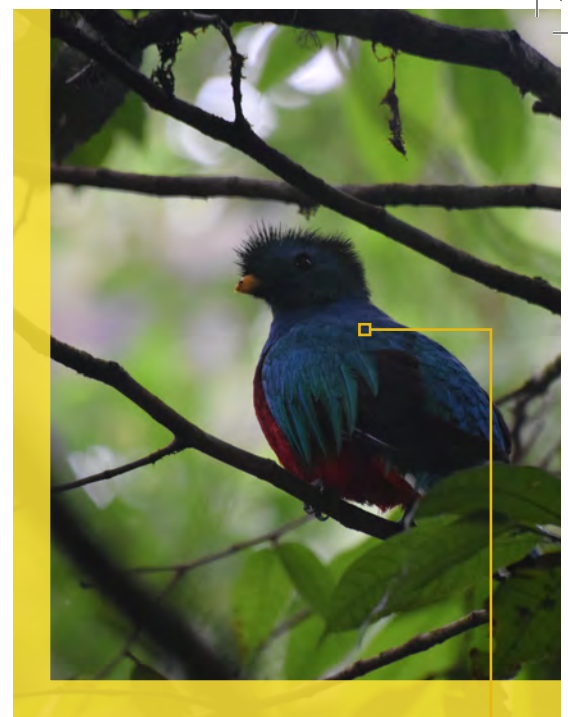
the curriculum minors in Linguistics, Game Studies, and Social Media in Industry, all of which are open to any major on campus, but which should have special appeal for our own majors.

We are also thrilled to welcome to the department for this academic year Dr. Simon Bronner, who will serve as S&T's Maxwell C. Weiner Distinguished Visiting Professor in the Humanities. Bronner comes to us from Penn State Harrisburg where he is the coordinator of the American studies doctoral program and distinguished professor of American studies and folklore. He is offering a course on folklore for our undergraduates this spring and has already been working with humanities faculty on campus to develop research projects and interesting new approaches to teaching.

I hope you enjoy this issue of Panoply. As you catch up on what we're doing, let us hear from you!

Best wishes for another wonderful year,

**Kristine Swenson, Ph.D.**  
Professor and Chair,  
English and Technical Communication



## IN THIS ISSUE

### 2 In pursuit of linguistic equality

Linguistic background doesn't accurately correlate to intelligence, says S&T linguistics expert.

### 3 Teaching the teachers

Around 100 students are enrolled in the teacher education program each semester, and 15–20 are English majors.

### 4 Experiential learning goes international

Students learned environmental rhetoric in Costa Rica and science fiction and fantasy literature in Great Britain.

### 6 Of wulf and hit man


Common use of pragmatic meaning ties *Beowulf* to *The Godfather*, says one technical communication senior.

### 7 Kathryn Northcut named S&T's 2018 Woman of the Year

Northcut was honored in April 2018 for her efforts to improve the campus climate for women and minorities.

### 8 Collins leads Discovery Center's marketing and advancement

This 2014 technical communication grad landed her dream job — inspiring people of all ages to learn.



# IN PURSUIT OF LINGUISTIC EQUALITY

Into her third year at S&T, assistant professor **Sarah Hercula's** teaching assignment encompasses a broad range of areas in English studies — from exposition and argumentation, to linguistics and grammatical structure, to writing for science and engineering. She also teaches and conducts research in the areas of speaking and writing English as a second language, and she enjoys working with international students, many of whom are in graduate degree programs.

But the unifying theme running through all of Hercula's work is a passion for linguistic equality.

"All dialects are not socially equal," says Hercula, an expert in applied linguistics.

"My work in applied linguistics investigates how people are treated differently and experience social advantages or disadvantages based on the way they

speak," says Hercula. "Perceived correlations between a person's linguistic background and level of intelligence are not factual."

Hercula offers solutions to counteract linguistic inequalities prevalent in educational spaces and in other facets of society, such as the workplace and the housing market. She's developed an original linguistics pedagogy centered on the study of stigmatized varieties of English, such as African American English and Chicano English. She also targets misconceptions surrounding women's communication styles. By using a systematic, analytical approach, her pedagogies address issues of identity, perception, prestige, and stigmatization surrounding the way people speak.

Linguistics research in K-12 education reveals that students who speak stigmatized dialects of English experience constant correction and a lack of respect for their cultural and linguistic backgrounds in school,

which contributes to the achievement gap and higher drop-out rates among these students. But Hercula doesn't advocate for individuals to discard or change their home language practices.

Instead, Hercula encourages all students to study other languages and dialects and to develop skills in style- or "code-switching," the practice of changing one's way of speaking based on the social situation.

"Linguistic variation is tied to many factors, including ethnicity, gender and class, but embracing cultural diversity makes us strong," says Hercula. "The more linguistic resources a person has at their disposal, the better equipped they will be to interact with, understand, and make connections with others whose linguistic and cultural backgrounds may or may not match their own."



## TEACHING THE TEACHERS

For almost 60 years, Missouri S&T has been preparing future teachers for K-12 classrooms, and the teacher education and certification department is well-known and respected by its employers — school districts.

“Missouri S&T students are by far some of the most prepared students that we recruit,” says Aaron Zalis, superintendent of Rolla Public Schools. “Their content area knowledge — because they take a few more classes than the typical education major — is great.” Zalis says he also teaches in the program to see student work firsthand and encourages them to apply to Rolla Public Schools as student teachers and for teaching positions upon graduation.

As advisor to the English teacher education program since 2012, **Dan Reardon**, an associate professor of English and technical communication, says the program is successful because the faculty engage students in active learning that develops their teaching skills.

“Our goal is to promote excellence in teaching,” says Reardon. “And the best way to do that is to help each student learn what their greatest strength is as a teacher.”

From English to chemistry to mathematics, Reardon says each S&T faculty advisor in the education program is a scholar in their field. Students benefit from faculty expertise in their teaching subjects.

Now a senior in secondary education, **Hadley Bjerke** from Chesterfield, Mo., says she wasn’t sure at first about teaching, but after her first education class, she found the connection she wanted through the education and English professors at S&T.

“Many of the experiences I have had in my education classes mimicked what I have experienced in student teaching,” says Bjerke. “I also came armed with an arsenal of teaching tools that have helped me connect with the multiple types of learners I interact with in school.”

Reardon says he often hears from students not only during their student teaching, but also when they’ve gotten their teaching positions.

“What I hear from them most of all is that our program really helped them to become teachers,” says Reardon.

Around 100 students are enrolled in the education program every semester with 15–20 of them studying English. Passing rates for S&T students on the Missouri teacher certification tests are outstanding, ranging from 90–100 percent.

Reardon says S&T students are tremendously dedicated to teaching.

“These are people that are passionate about teaching, and that’s what makes working with them so worthwhile,” he says. “Good teaching is what you are — not what you do for a living.”

## A HUB FOR CROSS-DISCIPLINARY COLLABORATION

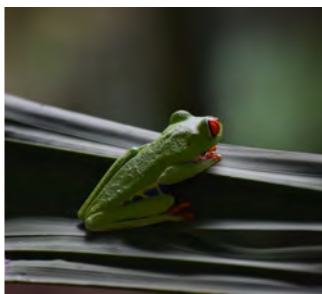
So much significant research now occurs at the intersection of multiple disciplines, and facilitating collaborations among researchers from disparate fields is an important goal for Missouri S&T. The recent launch of the Center for Science, Technology, and Society (CSTS), led by our own **Kate Drowne**, provides just such opportunities.

The CSTS was formed to give S&T humanists, scientists, and engineers a chance to collaborate on research that addresses how science and technology shape, and are shaped by, society, culture, politics, and the environment.

The CSTS has already begun hosting guest speakers and offering seed grants to researchers to embark on research projects that might evolve into larger, long-term activities supported by external funds.

Last spring, the CSTS and the Center for Biomedical Research co-presented the first Biomedical Humanities Symposium at S&T, where nearly 20 faculty from the College of Arts, Sciences, and Business and the College of Engineering and Computing joined faculty from Missouri State University and Saint Louis University to explore how STEM and humanities can work together in medical pursuits. In December, the CSTS hosted a visit from the Science, Technology, and Society (STS) program director from the National Science Foundation, and later this semester will invite leading researchers in STS to campus.

“The goal of the CSTS is to provide opportunities for S&T researchers to consider the great challenges of our time, using a collective approach that values the contributions of humanistic scholarship,” says Drowne, CSTS director, associate dean of academic affairs for the College of Arts, Sciences, and Business, and a professor of English.



# S&T

students in two English courses experienced active learning on location as part of study abroad courses held this past summer.

One group studied environmental rhetoric and current issues in Costa Rica, one of the world's most ecologically sustainable countries. Another group learned about science fiction and fantasy literature in Great Britain, the setting of many classic examples of the genre.

Associate teaching professor **Kathryn Dolan** and professor **Kathryn Northcut** led a 17-day-long Costa Rican trip that took students to the beach at Tamarindo, the cloudforests of Monteverde, the volcanic slopes of Arenal and the capital city of San Jose. Students examined first-hand how

environmental challenges were addressed in the country as compared to the United States.

In one example, Costa Rica's response to Tropical Storm Otto was contrasted with the U.S. response to Hurricane Katrina, paying special attention to crisis communications efforts. To study the personal experiences of the people involved, students interviewed

Costa Rican subject matter experts and local citizens, and then documented their observations and comments.

"The course focused entirely on Costa Rica, so it was imperative to hold it in the actual country where students had access to citizens who could speak from personal experience to the issues," says Northcut.

**"The students could reflect on the challenges and draw direct parallels to their home country."**



"By seeing how cultural factors determined governmental and corporate response to environmental concerns, the students could reflect on the challenges and draw direct parallels to their home country."

On the other side of the Atlantic, associate professor **Dan Reardon** taught a course on science fiction and fantasy literature in Great Britain. The class spent six days in London, three days in Salisbury, England, and three days in Edinburgh, Scotland — all sites of genre-defining science fiction and fantasy.

Stops included visits to Oxford's Eagle and Child Pub where J.R.R. Tolkien and C.S. Lewis used to relax and socialize, 221-B Baker Street — the home of Sherlock Holmes in Sir Arthur Conan Doyle's stories, London's Natural History Museum, a "Dr. Who" walking tour and several "Harry Potter" film set locations.

"The British were some of the main popular creators of science fiction, beginning with Frankenstein," says Reardon. "It was inspiring to be where these writers had been and see with our own eyes the same views. It helped to better understand how they created their worlds and the history of the country's writing — before you become a great writer, you need to be here in England."



## UNDERGRADUATE VIDEO GAMING RESEARCH SPOTLIGHTED AT MMLA

Four English majors at Missouri S&T recently conducted scholarly research of an aspect of a \$39 billion U.S. industry that employs nearly 66,000 persons — video gaming.

"Storytelling is no longer passive," says **Dan Reardon** associate professor of English. "In digital game scholarship, we're still negotiating theories on how we evaluate the games through research and analysis."

The students, encouraged by Reardon, gave a panel presentation on their research on digital games as interactive narrative devices at the 2018 Midwest Modern Language Association's (MMLA) annual conference in Kansas City, Mo. Their research proposal was so well received by the MMLA that the students were asked to present their work at a session for experienced scholars instead of during the customary undergraduate forum.

The students conducted research on their own time and not as part of a class assignment. The finished piece, "Engaging, Consuming and Co-Creating: The Stakes of Traditional Narrative Relationships in Digital Games," included their findings on the interactive narratives of specific digital games.

Sophomore **Brandon Broughton** found the interactive nature of "Doki-Doki Literature Club" facilitated literary conventions impossible to

convey in traditional narratives.

**Hannah Ramsey-Standage**, Engl'18, found the lore of "League of Legends" to be a set of living documents that continuously adjusted the histories and stories of its champions throughout gameplay.

**William Reardon**, a sophomore, says the players of "The Elder Scrolls: Skyrim," forged their own narratives and modified the game along the way, demonstrating their desire for co-authorship.

**Neal Kisor**, a junior, found Ernest Hemingway's Theory of Omission writing technique present in "Dark Souls." The game skillfully omitted the story, allowing players to build the game themselves.

"The interactive storytelling in digital games is clearly running alongside traditional narratives and likely outpacing them," says Reardon.

In fall 2019, Reardon will teach a course called Game Studies, an introduction to the study of games that emphasizes their pedagogical and communicative uses.

"In gamification studies, educators are also discovering principles of award and achievement to codify the ways they teach with e-learning," he says. "I'm glad to integrate S&T's expansion into this essential field that's showing enormous literary and economic growth."



# OF WULF AND HIT MAN

One student's honors thesis is bringing together *Beowulf* and, believe it or not, *The Godfather*. **Rebecca Marcolina**, a senior in technical communication, and **Eric Bryan**, associate professor of English, are working together to understand how different societies communicate using pragmatic meaning.

"Rebecca's thesis has tremendous promise," Bryan says. "She has the chance to show that honor-driven cultures — even those that have no historical connection to one another — use pragmatic meaning in similar ways. That would be a discovery that could speak to a broad linguistic phenomenon."

The linguistic study of pragmatics tries to understand how social and situational contexts influence the meaning communicated by a speaker. Sarcasm is one example of how pragmatic meaning can be used in a verbal conflict. Phrases like "great shot!" or "nice game!" mean something quite

different depending upon context — the words could be either congratulatory or scornful, depending on whether the player made the winning shot or missed.

Bryan is working on a book-length project on the uses of pragmatic meaning and verbal aggression in medieval Scandinavian texts. Marcolina is working on her honors thesis, comparing the uses of pragmatic meaning in medieval texts like *Beowulf*, *Sir Gawain and*

*the Green Knight*, and other heroic, honor-driven narratives from the medieval world with honor-driven narratives from the 20th and 21st centuries, such as the Cosa Nostra culture featured in *The Godfather* movies (based on Mario Puzo's novel).

While the research is not complete, it seems the dragon-slaying hero Beowulf and ruthless mafia hit men have something in common after all.

"That would be a discovery that could speak to a broad linguistic phenomenon."





## A LEADER IN THE MAKING

When **James Bahm**, TComm'18, Hist'18, graduated in December, he left campus with bachelor of science degrees in both technical communication and history. But this spring, he returned for graduate studies, working as a teaching assistant in technical communication.

During his undergraduate years, Bahm, who served as communications coordinator for the College of Arts, Science, and Business' Undergraduate Student Leadership Council, held many leadership and advocacy positions on campus, including elected positions in the residential life student leadership program; membership in the regional board of directors for the Midwest Affiliate of College and University Residence Halls; and working as a peer writing consultant for S&T's Writing Center. These experiences helped Bahm understand the irreplaceable value of lifelong learning and involvement with the campus community.

In the 2018 spring semester, Bahm was given the opportunity to deliver a presentation on the value of experiential learning to the University of Missouri Board of Curators during a meeting on the S&T campus. He drew from his experiences as a student leader and mentor to highlight the positive ways in which experiential learning impacts the students who participate, as well as the campus as a whole.



## NORTHCUT NAMED S&T'S 2018 WOMAN OF THE YEAR

**Kathryn Northcut**, professor of English and technical communication, was named Missouri S&T's 2018 Woman of the Year during a ceremony held on campus last April. The award was presented by interim Chancellor **Christopher G. Maples**.

The Woman of the Year award is an annual honor given to a female full-time tenure-track faculty member in recognition of her efforts to improve the campus climate for women and minorities. Northcut has been praised by students and colleagues alike for her commitment to diversity on campus and her support for people with disabilities.

Among her accomplishments, Northcut was one of four S&T faculty members to receive the university's 2017 Faculty Excellence Award in recognition of sustained excellence in teaching, research, and service.

Northcut co-edited *Scientific Communication: Practices, Theories, and Pedagogies* with Han Yu, professor of technical communication at Kansas State University. Published in 2018 by Routledge, the book is a compilation of chapters by contributing experts who address the roles and challenges of people who communicate science, who work with scientists and who teach STEM majors how to write.

Northcut joined the S&T faculty in 2004. She is co-director of the technical communication program and was instrumental in building the bachelor's and master's degree programs in technical communication. She currently serves as the chair of the Missouri S&T Institutional Review Board.

## SOUTHWINDS: THE OFFICIAL LITERARY AND CREATIVE ARTS MAGAZINE OF MISSOURI S&T

***A creative heart beats in all of us — are you interested in sharing your own creative works?***

Each fall semester, *Southwinds* literary magazine invites submissions from S&T students, faculty, staff, and alumni. Poetry,

short stories, photographs, and original artwork are all welcome and may be submitted at [southwinds.mst.edu](http://southwinds.mst.edu).

If you are an S&T undergraduate or graduate student with an interest in creative writing, the visual arts, or layout and design, or if you'd like to help produce or promote the next issue of *Southwinds*, please contact the group's faculty advisor, **Anne Cotterill**, associate professor of

English, at [cotterill@mst.edu](mailto:cotterill@mst.edu) or in her office in Room 219 of the Humanities and Social Sciences Building.

*Southwinds* is a recognized student organization open to all students. The magazine is published annually in the spring semester and distributed free of charge to the S&T community. Copies of the latest issue are available the English and technical communication department office.

## NEW MINORS FOR MINERS

Because gaming and social media have become such important parts of business, entertainment, and education, our department introduced two new minors in the 2018 fall semester — Game Studies and Social Media in Industry — to help prepare graduates for careers in these fields.

The minors are open to all undergraduates, regardless of major.

“We’re expecting these minors to benefit students and to be in high demand once word gets out,” says **Kristine Swenson**, professor and chair of English and technical communication.

In industry, businesses harness games as effective marketing tools. Those same companies are now reliant on social media platforms like Twitter, Facebook and Instagram to promote products and maintain customer relationships.

Students pursuing a Game Studies minor will learn about game theory and design, gamification or classroom or workplace activities, game genres, writing game narratives, and usability studies. They will take existing classes plus one new course named Game Studies.

Students choosing a minor in Social Media in Industry will learn how to write for social media, brand and market products using social media, use social media to conduct user research, and create and manage sites. They will take a mix of existing classes and two new courses: Writing for Social Media and Business Communication.

For more information on these minors, visit [english.mst.edu](http://english.mst.edu).



## COLLINS LEADS DISCOVERY CENTER'S MARKETING AND ADVANCEMENT

Earlier this year, **Jennifer Collins**, TCom'14, got her dream job. As marketing and advancement director for the nonprofit Discovery Center in Springfield, Mo., she leads marketing and fundraising efforts for the hands-on science museum that is committed to inspiring people of all ages to learn.

“Our goal is to provide inspiring hands-on STEM education to students who wouldn’t otherwise have the opportunity,” says Collins. “We served over 36 counties in Missouri and provided over \$17,000 in field trip scholarships for students last fiscal year. I feel incredibly fortunate to have had educational opportunities that inspired me to pursue a life of learning and inquiry — I know that our role in these students’ lives gives them the chance to feel that same passion for learning.”

Collins started her career at the Discovery Center as an intern. She was then hired full time as the education and marketing coordinator. After serving as interim marketing director, she was named as the permanent director.

“After having worked up from intern to director, I know how to best coordinate all the projects for my team because I’ve sat where they sit and I know where the pitfalls lie,” says Collins. “At the same time, my team is always finding better ways to do the same tasks I did while serving in those positions; it’s a great reminder that everyone breaks down problems differently, and the strongest teams are ones who are inspired to do great work.”

Collins has helped increase fundraising revenue at the Discovery Center through end-of-calendar-year campaigns, Give Ozarks Day, and the center’s annual Night at the Museum. She has also assisted in growing the center’s internship program to provide hands-on learning to marketing, graphic design, and photojournalism students.



## DAVIS BRINGS ONLINE RHETORIC EXPERTISE TO S&T

When **Carleigh Davis** began work on her Ph.D. in rhetoric, writing, and professional communication at East Carolina University in 2014, “fake news” wasn’t part of the common vernacular.

Today, it’s a term nearly everyone knows. A type of propaganda once known as “yellow journalism,” it involves the spread of skewed facts and other disinformation through a variety of sources — from traditional print and broadcast media to online social media sources.

Fake news is also right up Davis’ alley.

Davis studies issues of feminist and community rhetoric and how they manifest in, or are created and disrupted by, technology. She uses Memetic Rhetorical Theory (MRT) to connect those issues. The term “memetic” refers to the study of cultural information transfer, so MRT is a model for understanding the rhetoric that occurs online.

Using MRT, Davis argues that human intention and activities, digital interfaces, community ideologies, and different representations of rhetoric evolve together to create environments that determine the degree of success that rhetoric achieves.

“My research focuses on the viral spread of information through social media,” Davis says. “Most recently, my projects have focused on the spread and evolution of fad diets as well as ‘fake news’ stories online. I’m particularly interested in how social media helps to construct contained communities that make the viral spread of information possible, and the ways these communities establish social and rhetorical parameters that determine what kinds of information will spread successfully within them.”

Davis is putting her research to work at S&T with the development of a new minor in the department — Social Media in Industry. She’s also teaching Theory of Written Communication and introductory technical communication courses.

Davis says she loves teaching scientific writing, so coming to S&T is a great move.

“I love working with science students and applying problem-solving skills to writing scenarios,” she says. “My goal is always to have students come out of a course with as much practical knowledge in applying their writing skills as possible.”

Davis earned her Ph.D. in rhetoric, writing, and professional communication from East Carolina University in 2018. She earned a master of arts degree in English literature and writing: rhetoric and composition, and a bachelor of arts degree in English, both from Kent State University.

## NEW AND NOTEWORTHY

**Kathryn Dolan**, associate professor of English and technical communication, was named president of the Midwest Modern Language Association (MMLA) for 2017–18. Dolan designed the theme for the 2018 MMLA annual conference, “Consuming Cultures,” held in November in Kansas City and arranged the keynote talk by Karen Piper, professor of English at University of Missouri-Columbia. Dolan is also co-editor of the *Journal of the Midwest Modern Language Association* (JMMLA) for 2018–22.

The MMLA is a non-profit organization of teachers and scholars of literature, language, and culture that provides a forum for disseminating scholarship and improving teaching in the fields of literary and cultural criticism. It is based in Chicago.

**Jossalyn Larson’s** book chapter, “Motorcycles Monasticism: Masculine Religiosity in MC Culture,” was included in *The Bonds of Brotherhood: Gender and Masculinity in Sons of Anarchy*, edited by Susan Fenetti and published by McFarland and Co. Inc. in 2018. The book includes essays by 12 different authors.

From her own experience as a member of a motorcycle club, Larson, an assistant teaching professor of English and technical communication, discovered sources of religious traditions in motorcycle culture. She says men have been leaving the church and religious practice at an increasing rate since the 1970s.

“So I was curious why men are leaving organized religion, but they are being attracted to motorcycle clubs, which are organized just like a religious sect,” she says. Larson explores the connection and draws several conclusions in her book chapter.

**Mary Helen Stoltz**, Engl’95, was named a 2018 Honorary Knight of St. Patrick. Stoltz is editorial director for S&T’s marketing and communications department, as well as news and features editor of the university’s award-winning alumni magazine, *Missouri S&T Magazine*. A member of the S&T staff since 1995, Stoltz is a recipient of the Missouri S&T Staff Excellence Award and completed the University of Missouri System’s 2016 Administrative Leadership Development Program.



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# Graduation doesn't mean goodbye

We'd love to hear about new appointments, degrees earned, job promotions, and other family or professional news.

Tell us what you're doing with a degree in english or technical communication so we can feature your accomplishments among our alumni achievement stories.

→ [english@mst.edu](mailto:english@mst.edu)

