

IN FOCUS

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UWM's glassblower supports
science research on campus
Pg. 6

High
class
glass



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A study in perseverance: Student returns to UWM

After Henry Wehrs graduates, he’d like to join the Peace Corps. Or work in a nonprofit focusing on financial literacy. Or join an organization that supports affordable housing access.

He’s been there. He gets it.

“That (used to be) one of my big fears, that we weren’t going to have enough money to pay the rent and that we would lose our place,” he recalled. “I think my lack of financial literacy and my young adulthood has made me passionate about helping young people save for retirement and helping people who are in debt.”

That’s why Wehrs is studying economics and urban studies – he wants to have the tools to help people in the same circumstances he once faced.

A hard road to walk

Henry Wehrs grew up the second of five kids in a family that lived in La Crosse, Wisconsin. For college, he said, he wanted a big school, and UW-Milwaukee fit the bill. For a semester, he lived in the dorms, went to class, and enjoyed party life – until a mental health crisis hit and knocked Wehrs’ life off track.

“I have a history of mental health issues in my family and it’s a real struggle. I ended up having to leave school to recover. It was a pretty significant barrier to picking myself up after college,” Wehrs recalled. “I left UW-Milwaukee feeling very defeated and about \$7,000 in school debt.”

That was in early 2013. Wehrs took several months to recover his health, and then he began to tackle the debt.

He spent the next three years working as a carpenter for a company in Madison. In 2016, he and his partner followed new opportunities to Whidbey Island, Washington, where Wehrs picked up another skill: “I was getting into home baking and baking my own bread,” he said. “I took a job at a company called Primal Island. I ended up baking there for a little under a year.”

But Wehrs didn’t want to be a baker or carpenter forever. He began thinking about college again, so he and his partner moved back to Milwaukee to be closer to UWM. But money was tight after two cross-country moves in less than two years.

“I picked up the first job I could find, which was in Riverwest at Tramont Manufacturing,” Wehrs said. “It was strange and interesting for me to be one of a very few white employees in a very working-class job dominated by African America and Hispanic workers. There were very clear racial divisions in the labor hierarchy. It got me really interested in labor relations and labor economics.”



Henry Wehrs worked for years to return to UWM after dropping out in 2012 to deal with a mental health crisis. He is now an economics and urban studies major. Photo courtesy of Henry Wehrs.

But Wehrs knew he couldn’t stay. After just four months on the job, he was offered a raise – to a wage higher than one of his Hispanic coworkers, who had been with the company for 12 years.

Instead, Wehrs took a job at Troubadour Bakery. He biked to work every day from his apartment on the east side down to the bakery in Bay View, a commute that he said worked off all the croissants he ate on the job.

Feeling the pinch

Wehrs considers himself lucky that he had a steady income as he fought his way back to UWM, but living paycheck to paycheck brought a special kind of anxiety.

“Living in poverty, debt, or both, is a curse. You’re tense all the time,” he once wrote in a scholarship application. “A day without a gut-wrenching realization is a good one. ... There was a feeling of desperation always lurking in the corner of my mind, ready to enter the foreground if my car broke down on the way home, or if I accidentally over drafted my checking.”

On top of his finances, Wehrs had to build up the courage to go back to school. His first semester had left quite a mark.

Student Resources

UWM offers several resources for students who may be struggling, including:

- [Mental Health and Safety Resources](#)
- [On Campus Housing Information](#)
- [Off Campus Housing Information](#)
- [Norris Health Center](#)
- [Financial Aid Office](#)
- [Scholarship Portal](#)
- [UWM Food Pantry](#)
- [LGBTQ+ Resource Center](#)

“I had a lot to prove to myself: That I can be a diligent student, that I was smart enough to go to college,” he said.

In 2019, Wehrs came back to UWM, and he’s thrived. It has been odd being much older than his classmates, he said, but he’s enjoyed his classes with history professor Amanda Seligman and economics professor John Heywood, and loves heading up the Economics Club with guidance from economics professor Rebecca Neumann. He’s even picked up a new language: Wehrs is taking Arabic and hopes to study abroad in Jordan next summer.

A word of advice

Because he’s been there, Wehrs feels for students who are facing their own hardships – be they financial or with mental health. His advice is to ask for help. It seems simple, but Wehrs knows it’s a challenge.

“I think that’s such an important skill that students need to learn. Don’t let your pride get in the way of seeking help. You deserve help. Take advantage of every resource available to you,” he said.

Wehrs plans to graduate in 2022.

By Sarah Vickery, College of Letters & Science

Leaving a (water)mark

Geography professors' grant supports art, water stewardship in Milwaukee

Art, learning, and water all intersect in Milwaukee, thanks to a new \$2.8 million grant from the National Science Foundation.

Ryan Holifield, an associate professor of geography at UWM, is the principal investigator on the four-year grant that aims to marry art and science to promote awareness among Milwaukee residents about the role of water in their city. The grant will cover four main areas:

1. Expand the reach of the WaterMarks Project.

In 2014, artist Mary Miss, who also helped create the Milwaukee RiverWalk in the 1990s, was asked to develop a community art project in Milwaukee highlighting the role of water in the city. The result was [WaterMarks](#), a series of markers in strategic [locations around Milwaukee](#) that are attached to programming highlighting a specific aspect of water – its role in industry, for example, or how Milwaukee manages stormwater runoff.

The markers are in the shape of letters and pulse with light whenever the city is expected to receive heavy rainfall. They serve as a reminder to residents to limit their water usage during those times.

So far, there are markers in several locations around the city, including the letter “A” at the United Community Center Acosta Middle School. Accompanying the markers are works by local artists meant to spark curiosity in viewers.

“The funding for this grant period would cover about six new (WaterMarks) sites. The ultimate goal is to try and get this to about 30 across the whole city,” Holifield said. “The idea is to build partnerships with local artists, who will be generating the ideas (for art projects). For example, at Acosta Middle School ... there are some art projects that were conducted by the children and led by local artists around that site.”

2. Establish a community-university working group to develop a guide to sustain the program over time and expand it to other cities.

Milwaukee has striven to establish itself as a leader in water research. UWM boasts the nation's only School of Freshwater Sciences and community leaders have worked hard to revitalize the areas surrounding the Milwaukee River. In many ways, Holifield said, Milwaukee is the ideal city for a pilot program like this.

“Our hope is, not only can this be something that becomes an important part of Milwaukee, and ideally, something Milwaukee is known for, but something other cities can do similarly but dealing with their own issues,” Holifield said.

The art associated with such markers would also be specific to its location, he added. What might the art look like in a city like New Orleans or Phoenix? What water issues would those cities choose to highlight?

3. Evaluate the WaterMarks program.

The WaterMarks project is not just about water and art; it's about learning and stewardship as well.

“One of the central programming activities is neighborhood walks led by teams of artists and scientists,” Holifield said. “You'd learn about green infrastructure and various problems, like flooding, that the neighborhood (around the marker) is facing. The walking tour would also (highlight) some artistic projects residents have done.”

4. Research how people learn through this type of programming.

How well will these curated walk-and-talks work? Holifield's co-principal investigator, associate professor of geography Woonsup Choi, explained how the group plans to find out.

“We'll try to examine it by having people drawing some maps or doing some sketch or some other kind of hands-on activity,” Choi explained. “Then we'll examine how people do that activity differently depending on their background and on the location of the activity. We'll try to add to existing theories about informal science learning.”



Ryan Holifield (top) and Woonsup Choi.

“Informal science learning” refers to how people are exposed to STEM concepts outside of a classroom or structured teaching environment. Museums, aquariums, zoos – these are all prime places that focus on informal science learning, and educators want to know more about how to engage the community in STEM issues that affect them.

But museums and aquariums are out of reach for many city residents. The WaterMarks project wants to address that lack of access. Holifield and Choi hope the program will help them understand how people learn differently through engagement with visual art and artistic practices. And, the project is an important step towards environmental justice and equity, Choi said.

“It's happening in your neighborhood so you can easily participate and know who the other participants are, rather than going to a museum far away – or never going to a museum at all,” he said.

“The idea is to make it as inclusive and diverse and representative as possible, and to bring these learning experiences to the neighborhoods instead of bringing the neighborhoods to a central location,” Holifield noted.

Hopes for the future

Holifield and Choi hope that the grant will impact how Milwaukeeans think about the water around them. There are all sorts of problems facing the city's water infrastructure, from lead pipes contaminating drinking water to deteriorating sewer systems. The first step in fixing those problems is building community awareness.

“The idea is that these art-science collaborations can help people become active and involved in ways that just traditional, technical approaches might not be enough to do,” Holifield said.

The grant, awarded from the Advancing Informal STEM Learning program of the National Science Foundation, supports a UWM team including Holifield; Choi; Laurie Marks (Center for Community-Based Learning, Leadership, and Research); Jessica Meuninck-Ganger (Peck School of the Arts); and Deidre Peroff (UW-Sea Grant/School of Freshwater Sciences), in partnership with City as Living Laboratory (CALL) in New York; the Center for Research and Evaluation at the Center of Science and Industry (COSI) in Columbus, Ohio; and UW-Sea Grant.

By Sarah Vickery, College of Letters & Science



This painted pillar is one of the art installations at Acosta Middle School, one of the sites of the WaterMarks project. Photo by WaterMarks Project.

Raise a glass

UWM's glassblower repairs and creates to support research

In the basement of the Chemistry Building, Neal Korfhage wields a torch with careful precision. Before him, an Erlenmeyer flask fixed to a spinning lathe is getting an upgrade: Three indents around its base to increase the surface area inside.

Korfhage, protected by heavy gloves and glasses that block out the intense light of the orange flame shooting from the torch, gently presses a rod into glass so hot it's become malleable. It bends inward and he quickly treats the groove with flame to smooth out the mark.

When all three indents are made, he rushes the flask to an oven heated

to over 1,000 degrees Fahrenheit where it will be allowed to cool slowly over the next several hours. If it cools too quickly, the glass will crack under thermal strain. Once the piece is finished, it will head back up to the chemistry labs on the floors above.

Korfhage is UWM's staff glassblower. Working out of the Department of Chemistry, he not only repairs broken glassware from the labs above his workshop, but also creates custom equipment for the university's chemists, physicists, and biologists.

"The scientists know what they want ... and they come to us and just say, 'I need this thing.' And we say, okay!" he joked.

Glass is the ideal material for those scientific experiments, he added. It's mostly inert and barely reacts with anything, outside of hydrofluoric acid.

A rare glassblowing breed

Glassblowing is an art, but Korfhage mixes it with science. He is what's called a scientific glassblower, which differs from artistic glassblowers who might make decorative pieces like stemware or chandeliers. Scientific glassblowing is a niche field where craftsmen make creations specifically for use in science research. That means anything from flasks and beakers to the vacuum chamber that Korfhage custom-made for some of the university's physicists.

"I like to think of it as a machining support industry, mostly to chemists," he says. "It branches out into other sciences as well. Biochemistry, for example, doesn't like oxygen very much because it reacts with everything. We want to prevent that, so we make vacuum systems with an ultra-low vacuum."

When he says 'we,' Korfhage is referring to a handful of artisans around the United States. Most are employed in scientific manufacturing; Vineland, New Jersey, is something of a hub for glassmaking companies. But the industry has been shrinking, Korfhage says, with companies consolidating or being bought out since glassblowing's heyday post-World War II.



UWM glassblower Neal Korfhage adds three indents to the base of an Erlenmeyer flask to add more surface area to the interior. Korfhage is a scientific glassblower who creates custom glassware for UWM scientists, in addition to repairing broken glassware. To view the video, visit <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=QgS9SEhKPp4>



UWM glassblower Neal Korfhage sits in front of a custom-made vacuum chamber commissioned by scientists in UWM's Physics Department for use in superconductivity experiments. Photo by Sarah Vickery.

Even rarer are glassblowers like Korfhage himself, who work and support research within a university.

"Wisconsin has two, including me," he says. "I think there's probably about, throughout the whole country, eight or 10 university glassblowers."

And that's a shame, he adds, because a good glassblower can end up saving their institution a lot of time and money. Korfhage holds up a broken condenser that needs repairs as an example.

"One of these, brand new, is over \$1,000," he says, pointing out the crack on a component inside the hollow glass tube. "This is made in Japan. That takes a lot of time for shipping (for a replacement), whereas I can fix this in a couple of business days."

Learning the trade

Korfhage learned glassblowing at his father's knee – or rather, his furnace. The elder Korfhage was also a glassblower who built his own workshop as an addition on their house.

"I would watch him as a kid – I would put on the safety glasses that filter out the bright orange light and I would just watch him, fascinated by him," Korfhage recalls. He smiles as he tells of his first glassblowing project: Learning to make old-fashioned perfume bottle tops through a process called 'tooling.'

When he was 15, Korfhage's father took his son on as an apprentice. Korfhage later attended Salem Community College in Carney's Point, New Jersey

– his father's alma mater – where he began working toward his two-year applied science degree. Salem Community College offers the nation's only scientific glassblowing program of study.

"Ironically, I did not graduate," Korfhage admits. Instead, representatives from Aldrich Chemical (now Millipore Sigma) in Milwaukee swung by the college during his third semester and interviewed the novice glassblowers to fill four positions in their 12-man shop. Korfhage got an offer.

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Glassblower

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“Do I finish the Salem program and miss the opportunity of a lifetime to have a really good job before I even graduate, or do I, for the sake of the education, graduate and miss out on the job?” he muses. “I chose the job. Education is supposed to lead to the job. All I did was take a one-semester shortcut.”

But soon after he arrived in Milwaukee, UWM popped up on his radar. Korfhage met the university’s previous glassblower at an industry conference and liked the idea of being a glassblower in higher education.

“Eleven years goes by and nothing. I’m working at Aldrich and it’s a great company for me. Then I heard from my dad who heard that the position was open. By the time I had found out about it, it had been open for a whole year,” Korfhage laughs. “I talked to my dad on the phone: ‘Neal, I want you to get your résumé *right now* and drive to UWM *right now* and submit your résumé *right now*.’ And that’s what I did.”

He’s been at UWM for 15 years.

The university’s glassblower

Korfhage’s lab is dominated by the lathe and torch set up at the front of the room. Beyond it are work tables and shelves upon shelves of boxes filled with glass tubing of various sizes. Rather than make his own glass, Korfhage uses the tubing for repairs and custom projects. In another room off the main workshop sits the oven where the Erlenmeyer flask is now cooling.

On one wall there’s an old Science Bag poster featuring Korfhage and his boss, associate professor of chemistry Joseph Aldstadt. The two are dressed in period clothing in their photo; the show covered the historic relationship between scientists and glassblowers, especially as it concerned the discovery of oxygen in the 1770s.

If it sounds like Korfhage is having fun, it’s because he is. UWM is fulfilling in a way that his commercial work at Aldrich Chemical wasn’t.

“Here, I work with the people that I’m helping,” he says. “I see the people that I’m helping, and if someone needs something special made, we can collaborate on it together.”

That’s definitely a reason to raise a glass.

By Sarah Vickery, College of Letters & Science

Regents honor Brenda Cullin

The University of Wisconsin System Board of Regents is honoring Brenda Cullin, academic department associate/office manager in the UWM Department of Economics, with a University Staff Excellence award. Cullin is one of two individual UW System employees and one program chosen for the inaugural awards.



Brenda Cullin

The University Staff Excellence awards recognize exceptional service to the university and are the UW System’s highest recognition bestowed on members of its university staff, according to the announcement from the regents. Award recipients are selected for superior performance resulting in significant contributions to the department and university; use of positive personal interaction to manage work changes; and a consistently innovative approach that improves productivity and work quality. The awards were given at the regents’ Oct. 7-8 meeting in Oshkosh.

Cullin, who has worked for UWM for 42 years, has served as business manager for the Institute for Survey and Policy Research and, since 2011, as office manager for the Department of Economics.

Her contributions have enhanced the sense of community and equity in the department and more broadly at UWM and in the community. She suggested department cost-saving measures that were adopted, with the savings supporting faculty and graduate-level research. She also helped create a graduate student lounge to provide space for economics students to study and get to know each other.

As co-chair of the African Diaspora Council, which she helped revitalize, Cullin established a scholarship program to support African American students. Through the African Diaspora Council, she has also helped lead efforts for the past five years to raise funds and gather back-to-school supplies for two Milwaukee Public Schools, whose students faced special economic challenges, especially during the pandemic.

She was the first chair of the University Staff Grievance Committee, and served on the Chancellor’s Best Place to Work Coordinating Team.

For the full story on Cullin’s honor, visit <https://bit.ly/2ZKePzw>.

UWM’s best honored at Fall Awards Ceremony



More than two dozen UWM faculty and staff members were recognized for their outstanding service to UWM during the annual Fall Awards presentation on Oct. 13. Many of the honorees are from the College of Letters & Science, and they are listed below. For a full description of awards and awardees, view the [UWM Report](#).

The ceremony was held in the UWM Student Union Ballroom and was livestreamed. The event can be [viewed online](#).

UWM Distinguished Undergraduate Teaching Awards

Aki Roberts, associate professor of sociology

UWM Distinguished Public Service Award

Leslie Harris, associate professor of communication; Portia Cobb, associate professor of film, video, animation and new genres; and Erin Sahlstein Parcell, professor and chair of communication, on the “Voices of Gun Violence” project.

UWM Distinguished University Service Award

Shevaun Watson, associate professor of English

Clark Evans, professor of atmospheric science

Hanjoo Lee, professor of psychology and director of the Anxiety Disorders Laboratory

Office of Research and UWM Foundation Research in the Humanities Awards

Elana Levine, professor of English

Mark Netzloff, professor, literature and cultural theory coordinator

University Staff Outstanding Service Awards

Lauren J. Wiczorek, academic department specialist/department manager, Department of Geosciences

Office of Research and UWM Foundation Research Awards

Ira Driscoll, associate professor of psychology

Carolyn Eichner, associate professor of history & women’s and gender studies

Clark Evans, professor of atmospheric science

Nicholas Silvaggi, associate professor of chemistry

Office of Research/UWM Foundation/Senior Research Awards

Anne Basting, professor of English

Bonnie Klein-Tasman, professor of psychology

Chia Youyee Vang, professor of history, interim chief diversity, equity and inclusion officer

Academic Staff Outstanding Teaching Awards

Kimberly Hernandez, lecturer, comparative ethnic studies

Matthew Knachel, senior lecturer, philosophy

Ali Gattoni, assistant faculty associate, communication

History alum forges cultural connections at Luxembourg museum

The only thing that Serena Stuetngen knew about Luxembourg was that it was a small country in Europe. Even so, she applied as a curator at the [Luxembourg American Cultural Society \(LACS\) Museum](#) in 2019, hoping to land her first full-time museum job.

Today, she helps museum patrons track their Luxembourg lineage, helps tell the story of Luxembourg immigration, and works to keep the cultural connections between Luxembourg and the United States strong and vibrant – especially important now that Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett has been nominated to serve as the next ambassador to the small country.

Stuetngen, a UWM alumna who majored in history and later graduated with a Master’s in public history and museum studies, sat down to talk about her work and the fascinating connection between Luxembourg and Wisconsin.

First things first – what drew you to UWM for your studies?

I chose UWM specifically because of the history program. I knew that I was going to get into museums and I really liked the graduate program with the Museum Studies certificate.

If you always knew you were going into museums, did you want to be a curator since you were young?

Yes, but I didn’t know what it was called! Going to museums, I was always like, “I want to go behind the scenes. I want to go past the ropes. Well, I guess I’ll get my Master’s, then, so I can go touch all the objects!”

Do you have a particular field of history you’re most interested in?

I feel like every public historian chooses history because it offers the broadest range and you can delve into whatever you want. I eventually focused more on the Holocaust and some of the intersections of Jewish and German history, and German religious history

The red circle on the globe shows the location of Luxembourg.



and how that was part of the lead up to the Holocaust and World War II. I did my internship at the U.S. Holocaust Museum in Washington D.C. It was one of the best experiences I ever had.

That experience must have helped you land your current job. It’s not exactly Germany, but Luxembourg is in that region and shares a lot of that history.

It helped that I had an understanding in general of European history. That’s one of the good things about my job: It’s a broad enough topic talking about Luxembourg that I’m able to focus on my areas of study as well as Luxembourg history. I wrote an article for our next magazine coming out where I interviewed a gentleman whose Jewish family escaped Luxembourg after the Nazis took over. So, I’m bringing those two topics together.

How did you end up at LACS?

There was about a year between graduating with my Master’s and getting this job. I was working at the Pabst Mansion ... as a museum assistant, and working as an art handler at Guardian Fine Art Services. Those were my two part-time jobs and I was looking for a full-time job.

I had a Google alert for museum jobs. (I saw the listing) and thought, that looks interesting, and it’s a full-time job in the museum world. So, I was going for it!

They told me afterwards that, interestingly enough, what set me apart was that I had Integrated Pest Management experience. In museums, you have to make sure that the collection is taken care of and kept safe from any bugs or mice, small rodents, or things like that that would damage it.

You began working at LACS in 2019. What have you learned about Luxembourg since?

A lot. I know so much more than I ever thought I would about Luxembourg. It’s a small country – a little bit smaller than the state of Rhode Island. There’s some debate as to whether it’s the richest or second-richest country in the world.

It’s such a unique, kind of weird place. We have such a good relationship with the government of Luxembourg. For example, the monarch of Luxembourg – they’re a Grand Duchy, so [Grand Duke Henri](#)

visited here at LACS for their grand opening in 2009. You think, oh! The monarch of a foreign country came here. That’s interesting! Many of our board members are still or have been part of the Luxembourg government.

What is the mission of LACS?

It’s to preserve the roots of our heritage – preserving the Luxembourg connection to the United States and the Luxembourg-Americans here – as well as continuing the connection between Luxembourg and the U.S.

Why is this museum in Wisconsin, of all places?

Currently, Luxembourg has a population of just under 600,000 people. In the 1800s, they hovered at around 200,000-300,000. During the 1800s, 70,000 Luxembourgers immigrated to the United States – so a big chunk of the population came, mostly to Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, and Illinois. That’s why we’re here. Even though we’re located in the town of Belgium, Wisconsin, it’s all Luxembourgers who settled the town and are still here today.

Tell me about the museum. What types of things are on display?

We focus, of course, mainly on Luxembourg, since not many people know about the country. Half of our permanent exhibit is about what Luxembourg is like and where it is. The other half is about the immigration story of Luxembourgers to the United States and the Luxembourg Americans who are here today.

Mostly artifacts center around Luxembourg-American history. We have about 23,000 artifacts in our archives. We also have a research center here that focuses on



UWM history alumna Serena Stuetngen holds up an artifact from the archives at the Luxembourg American Cultural Society museum where she is a curator. Photo courtesy of Serena Stuetngen.

Luxembourg genealogy. ... We have cemetery records, church records, and family trees that people have put together as part of their family history. Mostly we focus on collecting Luxembourg-American artifacts.

As a curator, what is your job?

As a curator, you put on many different hats. Mostly, I manage the museum and exhibits as well as the research center and library. I do enjoy reading the personal histories, especially the family histories people have put together. It’s a view into the past, and it’s not one of the ‘great’ moments in history; it’s just normal people trying to make a go of it after immigrating here.

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Luxembourg

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Now Milwaukee has another Luxembourg connection: President Biden [has nominated](#) Milwaukee Mayor Tom Barrett to be the next ambassador to Luxembourg. How did LACS take the news?

We have an annual festival in August and this year, we saw Mayor Barrett there! Then two weeks later, we heard the news (that he had been nominated), so we think it was a research trip. We were all excited about the festival because this year we had the new (Luxembourgish) ambassador to the United States visiting us. So, we sort of had two ambassadors at the festival.

Do you think Mayor Barrett’s nomination might spark some new interest in the museum?

It has already. A few people have come in and said that they saw on the news that Mayor Barrett was going to Luxembourg. So, it’s inspired a few new visitors.

How did UWM help you get started in your career?

Luxembourg was definitely not on my radar when I was a child. But that’s one of the things that I enjoyed about the UWM public history program and the museum studies program. You’re learning these skills that can translate into so many different museums or areas working with the public. You learn the skill of doing your own research and being able to understand other cultures.

By Sarah Vickery, College of Letters & Science

Luxembourg at a Glance:

- Area:** 999 sq. miles
- Government:** Constitutional Monarchy (Grand Duchy)
- Languages:** German, French, and Luxembourgish
- Known for:** Satellite technology, banking, steel manufacturing
- Fun Fact:** Some of the steel used in construction of American Family Insurance baseball stadium comes from Luxembourg.

Left: An American soldier dressed as St. Nicholas and drove through the Luxembourg town of Wiltz to celebrate St. Nicholas Day after liberating the country from the Nazis in World War II. Photo from the U.S. Army National Archives.

A Christmas connection

Serena Stuetzgen enjoys her job as a curator at the Luxembourg American Cultural Society. She’s uncovered some fascinating history, and even has a favorite historical story:

Luxembourg primarily celebrates [St. Nicholas’ Day](#) on Dec. 6, more so than Christmas.

During Nazi occupation in World War II, Luxembourgers were prohibited from celebrating the holiday. When the country was liberated by American forces, soldiers heard from citizens in the town of Wiltz that Luxembourg hadn’t had a St. Nick’s Day in years.

“So, the soldiers got together and decided they would throw a big party for the kids. They got their Hershey chocolate bars together to hand out. They grabbed a soldier and dressed him up as St. Nick. They put him in a G.I. Jeep and drove him through town and had a little celebration,” Stuetzgen said.

The war ended and the Americans left, but one of the children of Wiltz was so struck by the unconventional St. Nick’s Day that he decided to continue the celebration each year by dressing someone up as St. Nicholas and driving him through town in an Army Jeep. Not only that, but the child began searching for the American G.I. who had first impersonated the benevolent saint.

“Through years of searching, he finally found him Rochester, New York, and asked him to come back to reprise his original role as St. Nick,” Stuetzgen said.

The soldier agreed. He wrote a speech, had it translated to Luxembourgish, and then memorized it so he could speak to the town of Wiltz after he drove through it one more time, a jolly saint in a Jeep. The tradition of the American St. Nick continues in Wiltz to this day.



Milky Way mystery radio wave signal found

An international team of astronomers that includes one from UWM has discovered unusual radio signals coming from the direction of the center of the Milky Way galaxy, but they don’t have any idea what the source is.

The pattern of the radio waves fits no currently understood variable radio source and could suggest a new class of stellar object.

“We’ve never seen anything like it,” said [Ziteng Wang](#), lead author of the new study and a PhD student at the University of Sydney. David Kaplan, UWM professor of physics, is Wang’s doctoral co-supervisor.

“The strangest property of this new signal is that it is has a very high polarization,” Wang said. “This means its light oscillates in only one direction, but that direction rotates with time.”

The discovery of the object has been published in *The Astrophysical Journal*.

Many types of stars emit variable light at frequencies in the radio wave range of the electromagnetic spectrum.

Wang and an international team, including scientists from Australia’s national science agency CSIRO, Germany, the United States, Canada, South Africa, Spain and France, discovered the object using the [CSIRO’s ASKAP radio telescope](#) in western Australia. Follow-up observations were with the South African Radio Astronomy Observatory’s [MeerKAT](#) telescope.

This object was unique in that it started out invisible, became bright, faded away and then reappeared, said Tara Murphy, professor in the School of Physics at the University of Sydney and Wang’s doctoral supervisor.

After detecting six radio signals from the source over nine months in 2020, the astronomers tried to find the object in visual light but found nothing. Then they tried the more sensitive MeerKAT radio telescope and observed the signal for 15 minutes every few weeks intermittently before it vanished.

“The information we do have has some parallels with another emerging class of mysterious objects known as galactic center radio transients (GCRTs), including one dubbed the ‘cosmic burper,’” Kaplan said. The first cosmic burper was observed in 2002.

“While our new object, ASKAP J173608.2-321635, does share some properties with GCRTs, there are also differences. And we don’t really understand those sources anyway, so this adds to the mystery.”

By Laura Otto, University Relations



David Kaplan



Laurels and Accolades

Margaret Noodin (English), Patricia Najera, and Maurina Paradise of UWM's Electa Quinney Institute received \$1.4M in Department of Education grants to increase the number of licensed American Indian teachers and administrators in Wisconsin schools. The two separate grants support a five-year partnership between the Indian Community School and Milwaukee Public Schools to recruit and prepare undergraduate, post-baccalaureate, or graduate-level students to build capacity in public and charter schools in Milwaukee and tribal schools in the Great Lakes region.

Jonathan Wipplinger (Foreign Languages and Literature) has been awarded the Checkpoint Charlie Foundation Teacher Award from the American Association of Teachers of German (AATG). The award is given annually to two outstanding instructors of German who strengthen intercultural understanding.

David Petering (Distinguished Professor Emeritus, Chemistry and Biochemistry) and Craig Berg (Teaching and Learning) were recently awarded a five-year Science Education Partnership grant from the National Institute of General Medical Sciences entitled, "Learning and Discovery in Experimental Environmental Health Science: On the Path from Data to Knowledge," extending the program to years 25-30.



Jeffrey Sommers (African and African Diaspora Studies and Global Studies) co-authored a commissioned [report](#) on an economic development plan for Latvia. He and his coauthor presented it at Latvia's National Library at an [event](#) attended by members of the Latvian parliament and other notable figures as part of a national rollout of the report.

His work garnered national media attention and received a 2-minute feature on Latvia's [national nightly television news](#), along with a full-page spread in the country's [paper of record](#). Moreover, it was the subject of several ensuing [Op-Eds](#) and another [television story](#). Additionally, Sommers was invited to Warsaw to participate in a Friedrich Ebert Stiftung (FES) panel of Central and East European economists to discuss a new FES report on escaping the middle-income trap.



Lindsay McHenry (Geosciences) was awarded a \$750,000+ grant, for which she is the principal investigator, from NASA's Solar System Workings program for a three-year project entitled, "An East African Rift Fluvio-Lacustrine Analog for Jezero Crater, Mars." Her team will conduct two field expeditions to

northern Tanzania, where they will investigate similarities between the Lake Natron basin and the Perseverance Rover's landing spot on Mars.

In addition, McHenry was inducted as a fellow of the Geological Society of America. Society Fellowship is an honor bestowed on the best of the geosciences profession. GSA members are nominated and selected in recognition of a sustained record of distinguished contributions to the geosciences and the Geological Society of America.

Chia Youyee Vang (History)

was honored as a "[Woman of Excellence](#)" by the 2021 Wisconsin Leadership Community Choice Awards. She is also being honored by the Women's Fund of Greater Milwaukee at their annual event on Nov. 18. This year's event, themed "Disruptors, Changing the Power Dynamics," shines light on the need to shift attitudes, behavior, and culture so that we can advance equity for women. Vang will be recognized as one of the "Disruptors," who are creating social change for women, breaking new ground and innovating for success.



Chia Youyee Vang

Graduate student **Christopher Olson's (English)** book, co-edited with **Malynnda Johnson ('09, PhD Communication)**, earned Honorable Mention in the category of Best Edited Collection at the Midwest Popular Culture Association book awards ceremony on Oct. 8. The [book](#), "Normalizing Mental Illness and Neurodiversity in Entertainment Media," was published by Routledge earlier this year, and **Ali Gattoni (Communication)** was also a contributor to the book.



Alumni Accomplishments

Elsa Youngsteadt ('03, MS Biological Sciences) was among those honored with Outstanding Alumni and Outstanding Young Alumni [awards](#), which recognize excellence and the achievements of former students in their careers and communities. The awards are presented by the College of Agriculture and Life Sciences Alumni and Friends Society at North Carolina State University. Youngsteadt is an assistant professor in the Department of Applied Ecology at NC State.



Elsa Youngsteadt

Ken Kilman ('93, BA Economics) joined [Peoples State Bank](#) as vice president, mortgage lender and will primarily serve customers in the bank's Waukesha and West Allis branches.

Mark Bockenhauer, ('96, PhD Geography) was a driving force behind the development of *National Geographic's* Geography Education Program, an outreach effort to K-12 teachers around the country. Now a professor at St. Norbert College, Bockenhauer was featured on [WBAY News](#) for his extensive career with NatGeo.



The UWM Field Station is located in Cedarburg Bog, a stretch of natural wetland home to fascinating flora and fauna. Learn more about this inspiring place where so many UWM students have enjoyed learning and researching! <https://youtu.be/Ebm8LQP05Fo>

NOVEMBER 2021

Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
14	15	16	17	18	19	20
21	22	23	24	25	26	27
28	29	30				



Upcoming Events

November 1-30

C21 Exhibit: Talking Walls. Open during normal Curtin Hall business hours. Curtin Hall 9th Floor. Help the Center for 21st Century Studies imagine what Curtin's 9th floor could be by examining the space already here. Learn our history ~ share your thoughts. <https://bit.ly/2ZHtBqX>

November 5

Planetarium Show – Artemis: Return to the Moon. 7-8 p.m. YouTube Livestream. Learn about NASA's Artemis program. Tickets available at <https://bit.ly/3Est8aN>.

November 11

WGS Lunch and Learn: History of Women at UWM, 1885 – 2021. Noon-1 p.m. Microsoft Teams. Presented by UWM Professor Emerita Merry Wiesner-Hanks and Gwynne Kennedy. <https://bit.ly/3CWJcRs>

Creative Writing Student-Faculty Reading: United We Read. 7-8:30 p.m. Sugar Maple (441 E. Lincoln Ave.). Must be 21+ to attend in person. YouTube Livestream available at <https://bit.ly/3EuMRXc>. Readers include Brandon Henry, Danielle Harms, Ty Newcomb, and Mauricio Kilwein-Guevara.

November 17

Planetarium Webinar: Milwaukee Shapes the Universe. 7-8 p.m. YouTube. A virtual panel discussion focused on space research and technologies being innovated in Milwaukee. This week's panelist is Dr. Prasenjit Guptasarma (Physics). Register at <https://bit.ly/3ExhICR>.



People in Print

Cathy Rex and **Shevaun Watson (English)** (eds). 2021. *Public Memory, Race, and Heritage Tourism of Early America*. London: Routledge. <https://bit.ly/2WHLWCD>

Leonora S. Bittleston, Zachary B. Freedman, Jessica R. Bernardin, **Jacob J. Grothjanc, Erica B. Young (both Biological Sciences)**, Sydne Record, Benjamin Baiser, and Sarah M. Gray. 2021. Exploring microbiome functional dynamics through space and time with trait-based theory. *mSystems*, 6(4): e00530-21. <https://bit.ly/2XT53u2>

Miren F. Boehm (Philosophy). 2021. Review of “Hsueh M. Qu. Hume’s Epistemological Evolution” (Oxford University Press). *Journal of the History of Philosophy*.

Liam R. Callanan (English). 2021. Gravity of the Invisible: Absent Characters and the Physics of Fiction. *The Writer’s Chronicle*, 54(1).

Craig R. Guilbault, Brendan Burns Healy, and Brian Pietsch (‘18, PhD) (all Mathematical Sciences). 2021. Group boundaries for semidirect products with Z.. <https://arxiv.org/pdf/2109.12208.pdf>

Uk Heo (Political Science) and Seongyi Yun. 2021. US Military Deployment and Its Effects on South Korea’s Politics and Economy. *Journal of Asian and African Studies*, 56(4). <https://bit.ly/2ZyJXl3>

Uk Heo (Political Science). 2021. Asia in 2020 The COVID-19 Pandemic and the US-China Trade War. *Asian Survey*, 61(1), 1–10.

John S. Heywood (Economics), C. Green, and K. Bender. 2021. Performance Pay and Assortative Matching. *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, 68(4), 485 - 493.

Josepha Lanthers (English). 2021. Marina Carr’s Woman and Scarecrow (2006) and the Ars Moriendi. In *The Golden Thread: Irish Women Playwrights, 1716-2016, Vol. 2* (eds. David Clare, Fiona McDonagh, and Justine Nakase). Liverpool University Press: 109-119. <https://bit.ly/3jilTDN>

Erik Kersting, Janelle Malagon, and **Stuart Moulthrop (English)**. 2021. Before You Step Into the Stream. *Popular Culture Studies Journal*, 9(2). <https://bit.ly/3nDGt9B>

Timothy O’Brien (Sociology) and Shiri Noy. 2021. Threatening Morality: Religious and Political Opposition to Science in the United States. *Journal for the Scientific Study of Religion*, 60(3): 628-644. <https://bit.ly/3pVVVQS>

Terra Sztain, Surl-Hee Ahn, Anthony T. Bogetti, Lorenzo Casalino, Jory A. Goldsmith, Evan Seitz, Ryan S. McCool, Fiona L. Kearns, Francisco Acosta-Reyes, Suvrajit Maji, Ghoncheh Mashayekhi, J. Andrew McCammon, **Abbas Ourmazd (Physics)**, Joachim Frank, Jason S. McLellan, Lillian T. Chong and Rommie E. Amaro. 2021. A glycan gate controls opening of the SARS-CoV-2 spike protein. *Nature Chemistry*, 13: 963–968. <https://go.nature.com/3vUgGO1>

Ora John Reuter (Political Science) and David Szakonyi. 2021. Electoral Manipulation and Regime Support: Survey Evidence from Russia. *World Politics*, 73(2). <https://bit.ly/2ZA5pXA>

Noah Buckley, **Ora John Reuter (Political Science)**, Michael Rochlitz, and Anton Aisin. 2021. Staying Out of Trouble: Criminal Cases Against Russian mayors. *Comparative Political Studies*. Online. <https://bit.ly/3Bog4Bl>

Andrea Cellini, Weixiao Yuan Wahlgren, Léocadie Henry, **Suraj Pandey (Physics)**, Swagatha Ghosh, Leticia Castillon, Elin Claesson, Heikki Takala, Joachim Kübel, Amke Nimrich, Valentyna Kuznetsova, Eriko Nango, So Iwata, Shigeki Owada, Emina A Stojkovic, **Marius Schmidt (Physics)**, Janne A Ihalaenen, and Sebastian Westenhoff. 2021. The three-dimensional structure of Drosophila melanogaster (6-4) photolyase at room temperature. *Acta Crystallographica Section D Structural Biology*, 77, 1001-1009.

Lisa Silverman (History and Jewish Studies). 2021. Rethinking Jews, Antisemitism, and Jewish Difference in Postwar Germany. In *The Future of the German Jewish Past: Memory and the Question of Antisemitism* (eds. Gideon Reuveni and Diana Franklin). West Lafayette, Indiana: Purdue University Press: 135-146. <https://bit.ly/2ZvO8yn>

Morgan E. Stevenson, Amanda S. Nazario, Alicja M. Czyz, Heather A. Owen (Biological Sciences), and Rodney A. Swain (all Psychology except where noted). 2021. Motor learning rapidly increases synaptogenesis and astrocytic structural plasticity in the rat cerebellum. *Neurobiology of Learning and Memory*, 177. <https://bit.ly/3EsPuck>



In the Media and Around the Community

Door County Daily News reported that, despite retiring from UWM, **Robert Jeske (emeritus Anthropology)** has continued the archaeological work that he loves by working on a dig at Crossroads at Big Creek and The Cove Preserve in Door County, Wisconsin, that yielded interesting discoveries. Jeske also gave a talk on “The Science of Archaeology” as part of the **Wisconsin Science Festival** in October.



One day, scientists may create a space vehicle capable of diverting comets on a collision course with Earth, **Jean Creighton (Planetarium)** said in an article published by **TheWorldNews.net**. She also appeared on **Wisconsin Public Radio** to discuss the Draconid and Orionid meteor showers, and discussed the capabilities of the soon-to-be-launched James Webb Space Telescope, which promises to be more powerful than the Hubble Telescope, on **BollyInside.com**.

Watertown Daily News ran a Q&A with **Tim Halbach (‘03, MS Atmospheric Science)**, who now works for the National Weather Service.

Cynthia Vernon (‘80, MS Biological Sciences) was featured on DePauw University’s **website** as a distinguished alum. Vernon is the chief operating officer of Monterey Bay Aquarium.

Graduate student **Adil Amin (Physics)** is assisting newly-founded coffee company Discourse with research and development into fermentation and waste reduction, **Daily Coffee News** reported.

A team of scientists, including **David Kaplan (Physics)** have detected a series of mysterious radio waves emanating from the center of the Milky Way Galaxy. In several news outlets, including **Yahoo News** and **CBS News**, Kaplan reported that the source of the waves remains a mystery.

WUWM Radio highlighted the ways in which **Raul Galvan (History)** is working to highlight the history of Cubans in Milwaukee through the Wisconsin Latinx History Collective.

Frogs are most often heard in ponds, but they croaked over the airwaves when **WUWM Radio** produced a story on **Gerlinde Höbel’s (Biological Sciences)** research on frog mating behaviors.

The Los Angeles Zoo’s plan to expand its grounds into nearby woodlands is in line with the history of zoos, which have focused on visitors rather than the animals they house, **Nigel Rothfels (History)** said in a **Los Angeles Magazine** article. He also commented on the proposed expansion in the **LA Times**.

Jeffrey Sommers (African and African Diaspora Studies and Global Studies) gave an invited lecture at the Warsaw School of Economics (World Economy Program), organized by the U.S. Embassy in Poland. His talk was entitled, “From Hemigway’s The Sun Also Rises ‘How did you go bankrupt? Two ways: Gradually, then suddenly.’ The US economy: past and present.”

Nathan Timmel (‘97, BA English) discussed his debut novel, titled “We Are 100,” in a Q&A with **On Milwaukee**.

Before they were the Atlanta Braves, the baseball team made its home in Milwaukee. **Patrick Steele (‘90, BA; ‘96, MA History)** went on **WORT Radio** to talk about his book, *Home of the Braves: The Battle for Baseball in Milwaukee*, ahead of the Brewers’ playoff battle against the Atlanta team.

Applying for college and choosing a major can be an exciting time. Incoming students can learn more about many of the majors in the College of Letters & Science by attending our upcoming Open House events. All Open Houses are virtual except where noted.

Students should register for Open House events via <https://uwm.edu/letters-science/open-houses/>. Email let-sci@uwm.edu with questions or visit for more information.

Nov. 3: History; 5 p.m.

Nov. 9: Economics; 5 p.m.

Nov. 10: Global and international Studies

Nov. 13: Psychology; 12 p.m. (*In-person)



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