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ARTICLE

Notes from the Editors

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Here are the editor notes from Volume 26, 2 Fall/Winter 2019. We are thrilled that Prof. Char Hawks has agreed to edit this first issue along with two other issues in the future. This first issue contains LIASE-funded program articles focusing on pedagogy.

Keywords: ASIANETwork; Asian Studies; Environment; LIASE funding; Pedagogy

Marsha Smith and Hong Zhang are thrilled to introduce the Fall/Winter issue (Vol. 26, 2) of the *ASIANetwork Exchange (ANE)*. This is the first of three issues that will highlight programs across liberal arts colleges in the United States (most of whom are members of ASIANetwork) that received grants from the Henry Luce Foundation to support the Luce Initiative on Asian Studies and the Environment (LIASE). We are extremely thankful for the excellent work Professor Char Miller of Pomona College has contributed as guest editor for all three issues. Below is his introduction to the first issue on LIASE-funded programs, focusing on the pedagogical impact and new course development as a result of participation in the LIASE program.¹

From Professor Char Miller, Pomona College

“How best to integrate Asian and Environmental Studies on liberal arts campuses across the United States, and to do so across disciplines and cultures?” This was one of the inter-related questions in 2010 that led the Henry Luce Foundation to underwrite the Luce Initiative on Asian Studies and the Environment. Now (a decade later) seems to be the perfect time to begin to assess the varied impacts of this program.

There is no one better situated to assess LIASE than the participating faculty who developed new courses or revised old ones, devised public events on and off campus, and, in close collaboration with host institutions in Asia, conducted life-changing field trips with their students. Happily, when I approached editors Marsha Smith and Hong Zhang with the idea of a special issue of *ANE* devoted to LIASE-funded programming, they jumped at the opportunity. Little did we realize how many colleagues were ready to take up the challenge! In all, we received more than two dozen responses to the initial call for papers. In the end, 14 articles were reviewed and accepted, a large enough number that Professors Smith and Zhang took the unusual step of committing to publish *three* special issues of *ANE* to accommodate this embarrassment of riches. Although the special issues are

¹ Char Miller is the W.M. Keck Professor of Environmental Analysis and History at Pomona College, and was a Co-PI for the LIASE planning grant for EnviroLab Asia at the Claremont Colleges. He is grateful to the EnviroLab Asia Program for its generous support of his editorial work on these special issues of *ANE*.

structured around three specific rubrics—pedagogy, research, and practice—these necessarily overlap with each other, a marker of the deep interdisciplinarity of these LIASE projects.

Consider, then, the five pedagogically framed articles that constitute this first special issue.

Alex Bates, a specialist in Japanese literature and film at Dickinson College, together with geologist colleagues, created a pair of new summer classes that included innovative field trips to Japan. The first, “Seismic Japan: The Science and Culture of Earthquakes,” explored the science behind earthquakes as well as the impact of seismicity on Japanese culture. The second, “Meltdowns and Waves,” compared Three-Mile Island and the Fukushima Daiichi nuclear disasters with Hurricane Sandy and the 2011 Tsunami. A critical component of these courses was the course-based experiential trips to Japan that challenged participants to engage directly, emotionally, and intellectually with on-the-ground realities, which would have been impossible without venturing overseas. This prompted Bates to conclude how vital it was to stand “face to face” with these disasters’ effects “and with the people affected” rather than to simply read about them “through the abstraction of news reports and history books.”

Willamette University colleagues Joe Bowersox and Cecily McCaffrey found that they, too, were transformed by their new pedagogical commitments. For Bowersox, the process globalized his understanding of the array of scientific and ethical issues confronting other people and places—a more integrative approach that has influenced his course content and academic scholarship. For McCaffrey, adopting tools and insights from environmental studies gave her new insights about the dynamics of a more “holistic” appreciation for Asian history. These individual ramifications, they write, came with a shared recognition of the intense value of interdisciplinary negotiation and collaboration.

This dovetailing of the personal and the professional threads its way through Jason Brozek’s reflection on his experience with Lawrence University’s Sustainable China program. Designed to open students and faculty to the interplay among environmental, economic, political and cultural questions in the classroom, the

program reinforces the concept that sustainability, as both an idea and a practice, must be equally integrative. There is an additional heuristic dimension to this “traveling classroom” model, Brozek observes. Best practices for short-term international study abroad, PERC, includes **P**reparing students for the experience, **E**ngaging with partners on the ground, **R**eflecting on personal development, and **C**ontinuing that development by using the program as a springboard for further opportunities. It offers an immersive approach that is place-based in orientation and international in reach.

There can be an exciting physical dimension—an embodiment—to these many forms of learning. So suggests Anne Harley of Scripps College, a teacher of voice and a long-time collaborator with Asian activist-musicians. In 2015, she kicked off a series of environmentally themed performing-arts projects with students and faculty within the Envirolab Asia program at the Claremont Colleges and several host universities in Asia. These events, at home in the cozy confines of a campus theater or in a Thai mangrove forest, proved pedagogically complex, intellectually absorbing, and emotionally cathartic. They were so because the applied arts demand that their practitioners “focus body, mind, and emotion in a unifying gesture of performance, without recourse to score or script.” That absence may be an unsettling prospect in our highly programmed and hyper-digital age, but it can also generate an intensity of experience, energize cross-disciplinary and cross-cultural dialogue, and expand social networks committed to combating environmental ills.

A healing discourse also lies at the heart of Anne Sherif’s recounting of Oberlin College’s collaboration with Green Legacy Hiroshima, a Japanese NGO whose mission is to “safeguard and spread worldwide the seeds and saplings of Hiroshima’s A-bomb survivor trees.” Its “focus on the trees that survived the violence of the end of World War II,” Sherif notes, “can be an innovative means of interrogating militarized landscapes, the environmental legacies of war, and bringing attention to the environmental processes and experiences that transcend national borders.” To that end, Oberlin faculty revised relevant classes, developed community programming and resource materials, and planted a copse of ginkgo saplings raised from seeds from Hiroshima survivor trees. Although they are rooted in northeastern Ohio, these

arboreal imports are expected to spark conversations about sustaining planetary health in the Anthropocene.

Sparking this particular conversation how to sustain an imperiled Earth similar to ones embedded throughout this special issue, is an example of the complex, fertile, and generous reimagining that the LIASE initiative has generated and nurtured over the past ten years. There could have been no better outcome.

Competing Interests

The authors have no competing interests to declare.

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