

BSC pollen monitor first of its kind in Birmingham

BY BRANDON GRESHAM



Dr. Wayne Shew takes a reading from the pollen monitor mounted atop the Berte Humanities Center.

For years, the city of Birmingham has relied on pollen readings from nearby cities such as Atlanta and Huntsville. But thanks to a joint effort between Ada Rittenhouse Snavely Professor of Biology and Acting Provost Dr. Wayne Shew, the Alabama Allergy and Asthma Center, The Community Foundation of Greater Birmingham, and the Riser Family Fund, the college and the city of Birmingham now have a way of monitoring local pollen counts.

The instruments for measuring pollen counts were installed atop the Neal and Anne Berte Humanities Center last year, and Shew credits the efforts of BSC alumnus Dr. Weily Soong of the Alabama Allergy and Asthma Center for helping bring the technology to BSC's campus.

"Weily contacted me to talk about the fact that Birmingham had no pollen monitor," Shew says. "He was interested in having one in Birmingham for a number of reasons."

Shew said the pollen monitor serves purposes for both local doctors and students at BSC alike.

"It helps to be able to monitor pollen counts in the area both environmentally and clinically," he says. "Doctors and allergists can use that information in working with patients who are suffering from allergies or other pollen-related health issues. Meanwhile, we have a number of students here on campus who are involved in research projects that could utilize the monitor."

The total cost of the pollen counting equipment was approximately \$10,000, and actually consists of two separate machines that count pollen and mold spores in different ways. The first machine, known as a Burkard monitor, pivots with the wind and collects air samples through a small opening. The air samples pass over a slide that collects the floating mold and pollen spores. The other machine, called a Rotorod Sampler, has plastic rods coated in silicone that spin in the wind, collecting samples as they move through the air.

For the past year, Shew has been solely responsible for getting counts from the machine and submitting them to the National Weather Service. He recently had to cut back drastically on the days that he took pollen counts, however, after stepping back into the role of BSC's acting provost. Shew noted that submitting pollen and mold spore counts to the Weather Service requires earning a certification and passing a test.

"You really need a couple of people to get effective pollen counts on a regular basis," he says. "The collection is relatively easy to do, but the actual counting of pollen and mold spores requires lots of time and practice."

Shew said he hopes to eventually have enough people to do readings three to five times a week in order to provide more accurate samples.



Pennington

Birmingham-Southern library director retires after 21 years

BY PAT COLE

When Associate Professor of Library Science Billy Pennington joined the Birmingham-Southern faculty in December 1986 as head of the Charles Andrew Rush Learning Center/N.E. Miles Library, the technology taken for granted today was not there.

But Pennington had a vision, and by 1990, he was helping to spur dynamic changes in the college's library services and practices.

Pennington retired from his career at the college this past July leaving the tech-savvy librarian and his forward-looking vision to be missed. He was honored at a retirement reception in May.

Before Pennington came to BSC, he was employed as access services director for Sterne Library at UAB. He grew up in Jasper, Fla., and attended Florida State University where he received his bachelor's and master's degrees.

"I remember in my first month at BSC as a library administrator, I brought in a 60-day trial CD-ROM-based educational resource called InfoTrac, which the students loved," notes Pennington. "They didn't want to see it go and persuaded the SGA to fund the resource for an additional six months until the next budget cycle for the library. That was the first database we had. The next year, we purchased several more."

A short time later, more computers were brought into the library and connected to the Internet for the first time. The library also began automated acquisition, cataloging, and circulation, and replaced the card catalog with an online catalog. In succeeding years, the library added 120 databases which provided access to some 31,000 e-books and over 18,000 e-journals.

An electronic classroom was

created on the ground floor to allow for computer-based auditorium-style presentations. Upgrades and newer technology have been added to the library system over the years in support of a quality BSC learning experience, and the library's collections—including music recordings—have grown significantly.

Pennington also oversaw during his tenure physical changes to the library building such as a remodeling that included a finished ground floor, new furnishings, and new group and individual study areas.

Working alongside a staff that eventually grew to 14, including professional librarians and support staff, Pennington says what he loved most about his job was deciding what books to add to the library and which databases to acquire. "As much as I appreciate technology, I love books!"

His colleague, Dr. Guy Hubbs, BSC associate professor and reference librarian/archivist, provides a critique of Pennington's legacy: "Yes, during his 22 years as library director he more than doubled the number of books, now approaching a quarter million. Yes, during his 22 years he increased the number of recordings by eight times. And yes, during his 22 years he brought this library into the electronic age. But Billy himself believes, and I agree, that his most important contribution came in hiring people who, like himself, are dedicated to serving Birmingham-Southern."

Dr. Charlotte Ford, a former BSC associate professor of library science, has replaced Pennington as the new director.

Ott receives faculty development award



Dr. Victoria Ott (center) received this year's Bob Whetstone Faculty Development Award from BSC Acting Provost and Biology Professor Dr. Wayne Shew (far left) and Dr. Bob Whetstone.

Dr. Victoria Ott, assistant professor of history, has received the 2008 Bob Whetstone Faculty Development Award.

Named for the professor emeritus and former chair of the Education Division at BSC, the award is presented annually to a non-tenured faculty member who has demonstrated excellence in teaching during the previous year. The cash award is set aside for the faculty development and travel budget of the recipient.

Ott, who joined the BSC faculty in 2004, earned her doctorate in American history from the University of Tennessee.

BSC professor and political analyst receives outstanding educator award



Davis

Dr. Natalie Davis, professor of political science and pre-law advisor at Birmingham-Southern, was presented with the annual Outstanding Educator Award during the college's 2008 graduation ceremony on May 18.

The award is given to an outstanding member of the BSC faculty based upon recommendations by his or her colleagues. It recognizes a faculty member who is characterized by excellence in all aspects of teaching, including classroom performance and student advising. The award includes a cash stipend and an invitation to speak at next year's Commencement.

A native of New York and Florida, Davis has taught comparative politics—specializing in Europe, Southern politics, and research methodology—to Birmingham-Southern students for more than 35 years, since 1972. She also serves as chair of the college's Department of Political Science, Economics, and Sociology.

Davis was a candidate for U.S. Senate in 1996. In 2002, she was honored as Alabama Professor of the Year by the Council for Advancement and Support of Education and the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching.

A public opinion expert who conducts political polls in Alabama and throughout the South, Davis is quoted regularly in national publications such as *The New York Times* and *Washington Post* and over the years has appeared on all of the national networks. She holds a Ph.D. from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and undergraduate and honorary doctorate degrees from Stetson University.

Religion professor pens theological reflections on the Psalms

Dr. Amy Cottrill, assistant professor of religion at Birmingham-Southern, has published her first book entitled *Language, Power, and Identity in the Lament Psalms of the Individual*. The book explores how the Psalms expresses the pain and anguish of an individual person as opposed to a community or group of worshippers.

Since these "laments of the individual" are prayers to be sung to God, Cottrill was interested in exploring the precise way the psalmist addresses God, the deep pain he experiences, and what he assumes God should do on his behalf to end the situation of suffering.

As she describes, "Basically, it is a literary study of the laments. I wanted to know how the ancient psalmists perceived God. What did they think was God's role in the

experience of human suffering? These are questions of major theological interest to me."

One central issue the book confronts is the psalmist's perception of the enemy, the figure the psalmist often considers to be the cause of his suffering.

"The enemy is a very important figure in the laments and the psalmist is not shy about asking that God do something about the enemy," says Cottrill. "Often, the psalmist asks that God destroy the enemy, and this language, I believe, affects the way people think about what God should do about human pain today, especially for people who pray these prayers as their own words to God."

For Cottrill, these psalms are important to study and discuss because they help us

in the modern world to ask crucial questions about our own experiences of anguish and despair and examine our assumptions about suffering, enemies, and divine responsibility.

Having joined the BSC faculty in the fall of 2007, Cottrill teaches classes on the Hebrew Bible, Christian scriptures, and world religions. She holds a bachelor's degree in English from Earlham College, a master of divinity from The Methodist Theological School in Ohio, and a doctorate in Hebrew Bible from Emory University. Her book was published in April 2008 by T&T Clark International.



Cottrill

New faculty bring a wealth of expertise to campus

Birmingham-Southern has added nine new faculty members since the spring term, including two college alumni, who will contribute to BSC's classrooms. In addition, six members of the existing faculty have received promotions.

New faculty are:

- **Dr. Edwin Brands**, associate professor of geography. Brands holds a bachelor's degree in both biology and German from Grinnell College, and master's and doctoral degrees from the University of Iowa.
- **Dr. Stephen Curry**, lecturer in mathematics. Curry earned bachelor's and master's degrees in mathematics from the University of Alabama and an M.Ed. from the University of Montevallo. He earned a Ph.D. in mathematics from Auburn University.
- **Dr. Lucerne DeSa**, assistant professor of piano. DeSa earned a bachelor's degree in music-piano from the University of California Irvine, a master's of music from the University of Southern California, and a DMA in piano performance from the Stony Brook University.
- **Dr. Charlotte Ford**, associate professor and director of the BSC Rush Learning Center/N.E. Miles Library. Ford earned a bachelor's in international studies from Earlham College, and master's and doctoral degrees in library and information science from Indiana University.
- **Dr. Louanne Jacobs**, associate professor of education. Jacobs earned a bachelor's degree in education from UAB, a master's degree in education from Alabama A&M University, and the Ed.D. in educational leadership from the University of Alabama and UAB.
- **Robin Lee Mozer '01**, instructor of English. Mozer completed a double major in English and music (voice) from BSC and an MFA in creative nonfiction writing from Pennsylvania State University.
- **Dr. Kelly Russell**, assistant professor of education. Russell has bachelor's, master's and doctoral degrees in early childhood education from UAB. She taught at BSC last year as an adjunct professor.
- **Dr. Amelia Spencer '85**, assistant professor of education. Spencer received an interdisciplinary degree in biology/psychology from BSC, two master's degrees



The college's new faculty members for 2008-09 (from left) are Dr. Louanne Jacobs, associate professor of education; Robin Lee Mozer '01, instructor of English; Dr. Edwin Brands, assistant professor of geography; Dr. Amelia Spencer '85, assistant professor of education; Dr. Lucerne DeSa, assistant professor of piano; and standing with them, Dr. Wayne Shew, acting provost and professor of biology. (Not pictured: Dr. Steven Curry, lecturer in mathematics; Dr. Charlotte Ford, associate professor and director of the BSC Rush Learning Center/N.E. Miles Library; Dr. Kelly Russell, assistant professor of education; and Dr. Kent Zirlott, visiting assistant professor of economics.)

from the University of Alabama in early childhood special education and rehabilitation counseling, and a Ph.D. in early childhood education from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

- **Dr. Kent Zirlott**, visiting assistant professor of economics. Zirlott holds a bachelor's degree in political science from Spring Hill College, and a master's and Ph.D. in economics from the University of Alabama. He will serve a one-year appointment.

The Provost's Office has announced the following awards for promotion and tenure this fall for existing faculty:

Promoted to the highest rank of full professor were **Dr. Dominique Linchet**, French, and **David Schedler**, chemistry. Promoted from assistant professor to associate professor were **Dr. Scot Duncan**, biology; **Dr. Dorothy Hindman**, music; **Dr. Randall Law**, history; and **Jim Neel**, art.