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# Apples and Glaciers: Students Spark Interdisciplinary Research Collaborations

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# Apples and Glaciers: Students Spark Interdisciplinary Research Collaborations

## **Abstract**

It is an honor to be here. I want to begin by thanking the library for supporting so many of us in our creative and scholarly work. Quite frankly, it would be impossible for me to do my work without these amazing librarians. They deserve the real applause at this event!

Robin invited my colleague, Dr. Sarah Principato and me to give these opening remarks. Sarah, however, had to give a research talk at Franklin & Marshall, so she was unsure if she would be back in time. I am happy to see that she has been able to make it back, and is here, lending her support from the audience. Robin wanted us to be this year's faculty representatives because of two things that mark our research experiences as distinctly tied to being active scholars at Gettysburg College. These two things are:

1. Our research collaborations with students, which includes publishing with them.
2. Our regular use of the library's Cupola open access repository that allows open access to our publications. [*Excerpt*]

## **Keywords**

Musselman Library, Gettysburg College, College Author Reception, Student Research

## **Disciplines**

Arts and Humanities | Scholarly Communication | Scholarly Publishing

## **Comments**

These remarks were given at Musselman Library's by Professor Salma Monani at the 2018 College Authors Reception held on March 22, 2019.

## **Apples and Glaciers Students Spark Interdisciplinary Research Collaborations**

Salma Monani  
Associate Professor and Chair  
Environmental Studies

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2. Our regular use of the library's Cupola open access repository that allows open access to our publications.

Robin mentioned that Janet will be saying more about open access, so I would like to spend my few minutes on student research, as this really is a distinctive aspect of being a scholar at Gettysburg College.

This past year, I had the fantastic opportunity of publishing three articles with our students. These students are Dori Gorczyca, class of 2015, Lizzy Cooper, class of 2017, and Micaela Edelson, also from the class of 2017. Sarah Principato is co-author with Dori, Lizzy, and me on a [paper](#) that is based on Dori's senior thesis work. Dr. Rud Platt is co-author with Micaela and me on a [paper](#) based on her senior thesis project. Dori's project is about climate communication in Glacier National Park, and Micaela's about pesticide risk to migrant workers employed in our many apple orchards here in our local Adams County. Both these very different—one is about melting glaciers and the other about harvesting fruit, primarily Adams County's widely marketed apples. In terms of research content, they can't really be compared, but they do have commonalities. They are both interdisciplinary and they are initiated by student interest.

Student initiation is key to mention because it is what makes these research projects distinctive. I want to emphasize that these areas of research are not my primary area of expertise, which involves film analysis and sits more traditional humanities arena. I am knowledgeable about climate communication and food justice because of my teaching interests in food studies and my PhD in communication, but without student initiative I probably would not have pursued these particular projects, precisely because they are not in my primary area of ecocinema expertise.

To demonstrate how students have inspired these research projects, I'd like to share the example of working with Dori. Dori was an ES and history double major, and, in that sense, she is a true student of the liberal arts and sciences. (She also worked in the

special collections of the library). As a major, she took Dr. Principato's Earth Systems class, and in wanting to bring her interests in history and ES together, she then applied for a GeoCorps internship at the end of her junior year. The internship took her out to Glacier National Park that summer as a park ranger.

How many of you have been to Glacier National Park? As we know, it is way up there in northern Montana, close to the border of Canada, and that summer Dori learned that the jewel of the park, the reason for the park—the glaciers—thanks to climate change will most likely be gone by 2030. The science and field evidence suggested that in her life time these glaciers would melt completely resulting in a cascade of related environmental changes such as local ecological changes and water shortages.

Dori came back from her summer with this urgency to get people to understand the implications of climate change to Glacier National park, and to the world in general. So, she, Sarah and I put our expertise together to craft her senior honors thesis based on a few key factors:

1. We know that the science clearly demonstrates that climate change is happening, but we also know that climate change is a partisan political issue.
2. We also know that national parks aren't quite as partisan an issue—instead as important iconic national symbols, Americans, often irrespective of party or political ties, appreciate these places.
3. Thus, we wanted to see if we could use the idea of place attachment to national parks to overcome partisan rhetoric and raise climate change awareness. We wanted to see if we could do this not by taking people physically to Glacier National Park (it is, after all quite remote) but taking them there, virtually, i.e., online!

I don't want to give away our findings (as you can browse and read the paper), but I do want to share that it was a lot of fun, and it is also cutting edge research—it is adding to a [growing scholarship](#) that attempts to empirically measure media's impact on environmental awareness and behavior. And, while Dori has graduated and is enjoying her current career on the frontlines of National Park Service; (her internship and this project paved the way for her being hired by Glacier National Park), Sarah and I continue to work on this line of climate change communication research with our students. Lizzy Cooper '17 added additional analysis to Dori's work, and now Brittany Bondi '19 is doing a related though different senior honors thesis looking at a climate change documentary film. With Brittany's project we also drew our colleague Dr. Chris Barlett into the conversation, and he's brought his statistical and psychology expertise to our work.

For me, the ES department and the broad liberal arts & sciences context have enabled this collaborative and creative research. My work with Micaela Edelson in food justice studies is similarly interdisciplinary and collaborative, though with a totally different topic as I mentioned earlier—food justice as it relates to farmworker safety in our local apple orchards. This time Dr. Rud Platt was a co-author, and Dr. Amy Dailey from Health Sciences, and our Center for Public Service were amazing resources.

I want to wrap up by saying that I can guarantee that without the enthusiasm of our students, the liberal arts spirit of my colleagues here, especially in Environmental Studies and the support of the institution (things like RPD and the summer Kolbe

scholarships for faculty-student project), I personally would probably not have challenged myself to do these different types of interdisciplinary research!

And, while I can say much more about the many pleasures of what doing research with our students means, I'd like to stop at this point, and invite President Janet Morgan Riggs to the podium. Janet hasn't missed a single author reception in her entire time as Provost or President. I am delighted to welcome her back for this reception.

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