

Annual Report 2004-5

Overview

The Alexandro Malaspina Research Centre at Malaspina University College was formed in 1998 following the establishment of a collaborative relationship with the Centro di Studi Malaspiniani in Mulazzo, Italy. While its development was slow for the first six years, the last year has seen a significant amount of growth in a number of key areas, including overall mandate, personnel, institutional standing, research and other project activity, integration of research with teaching, international collaboration, physical space, and funding. This report covers the period from April 1, 2004 to March 31, 2005.

A Revised Mandate

The Centre's original mandate was formulated as "research into the life and works of Alexandro Malaspina, and related topics." The scope was deliberately left open with the purpose of seeing what extensions of the central focus developed organically as work proceeded. The last year has witnessed a partial yet considerable filling-in of the blanks, as expressed in the following revised mandate:

The purposes of the Alexandro Malaspina Research Centre include:

- ** Interdisciplinary research into the life and works of Alexandro Malaspina.*
- ** Translation into English of the works of Malaspina, and associated documentary and scholarly material.*
- ** Interdisciplinary research into the theory and practice of intercultural and transcultural communication, including areas such as translation, aboriginal-explorer contact, and the relations between indigenous, settler and later immigrant populations, with particular reference to the Canadian West.*
- ** Topics related to any of the above (for example the history of the broader Malaspina family, indigenous oral history and language preservation,) at the discretion of the Director.*
- ** Support for researchers outside Malaspina University College who wish to pursue any of the above, including the development of a special collection of relevant secondary scholarship.*
- ** Dissemination of the results of research in the form of teaching and public events.*

Personnel

Director: John Black, Liberal Studies and Philosophy

Assistant Director: Russell McNeil, Liberal Studies and Physics

Researchers: Oscar Clemotte, Philosophy

Melody Martin, First Nations

Laurie Meijer-Drees, First Nations Studies and History

Bill Weller, Physics

Associates:

Ana-María Donat, Modern Languages

Richard Lane, English

Mary Lindsay, Education

Student Assistants:

John Cloke

Tonja Henigman
Moriah Kemila

Institutional Standing

So far the Centre has operated independently of other research groupings at Malaspina University College, with the exception of collaboration on website development with the Centre for Digital Humanities Innovation. As part of an initiative to streamline the support and grant-funding aspects of research, it has been proposed that the Centre be subsumed under the newly-formed Institute for Coastal Research. This status will involve no limitation of the Centre's independence as to research direction and activity, but will greatly enhance its access to appropriate resources. Although the arrangement has not been officially finalized, all parties are in general agreement that it will proceed.

Research Projects

Biography

In November 2004 the final corrected version of the English translation of Dario Manfredi's biography of Alexandro Malaspina was posted on the Centre's website. Copyright has been transferred to Dario Manfredi, who is attempting to secure publication in book form. On a sad note, we mark the passing of one of the translators, Don Kirschner of Simon Fraser University.

Essay on Beauty

Oscar Clemotte and John Black are close to finishing the translation of the main body of Malaspina's *Essay on Beauty in Nature*. The material remaining for translation, a series of extended notes on matters related to its main themes, will be tackled during the summer, leaving the remainder of 2005 for completion of the editorial notes and a philosophical analysis. A publishing contract has been signed with Edwin Mellen Press: submission target date August 2006.

General Theses on Physics

Photocopies have been received from the Centro di Studio Malaspiniani of the only work published by Malaspina in his lifetime, an axiomatization of basic physics. Russell McNeil and Bill Weller are beginning the project of translating this from Latin into English.

Oral Histories

In the year to come, the Centre will be supporting ongoing research led by new members Melody Martin and Laurie Meijer-Drees related to the oral histories of the indigenous peoples of northern British Columbia and Alaska. The methodology of this research will place great emphasis on the involvement of students, under the auspices of the Tribal Trails Institute at Malaspina University College, and in collaboration with the University of Alaska.

Other Projects

Website Development

This year has seen the completion of two projects related to the Centre's website. The first, implemented by Russell McNeil and Chuck MacQuarrie, was the creation and launching of the Malaspina Global Portal. This site will handle items of general interest to members of the Malaspina family and other enthusiasts; while it is linked to the Centre's homepage, its content is not primarily scholarly.

The second project, implemented by Moriah Kemila and John Cloke, has involved the graphic redesign of many of the website's content pages. The redesigned pages have been completed, and will be uploaded for public display as time allows.

Collaboration with the Maritime Museum of British Columbia

The Centre has agreed to participate in a consulting capacity in a website development project with the Maritime Museum of British Columbia in Victoria. The project, which will deal with early European exploration of the Pacific Northwest, is in its beginning stages, and the precise nature of the Centre's contribution has yet to be determined.

Integration of Research with Teaching

The Life and Times of Alexandro Malaspina

John Black and Russell McNeil taught this course for the Centre for Continuing Studies in Fall 2004, to a small but enthusiastic group of students, feedback from whom was instrumental in the final revision of the Manfredi biography.

Liberal Studies 411

John Black has developed a course-theme for one of the fourth-year Liberal Studies companion courses (*Special Topics in Western Culture: the Eighteenth and Nineteenth Centuries*) focusing on the life and works of Malaspina, and using the biographies by Dario Manfredi and Jack Kendrick. The course will be offered again in Fall 2005.

Public Events and Other Activity

Guest Lecture

This year's guest lecture was given by Dr. Barry Gough, emeritus professor of history at Wilfrid Laurier University, on the topic : " By Sea, By Land: Captain George Vancouver and Sir Alexander Mackenzie, British Imperial Ascendancy on the North West Coast as of 1793." As usual the annual lecture was well-attended, and a vigorous question-period followed the talk itself.

Outreach Activity

John Black and Russell McNeil visited the Nanaimo Power Squadron to give a biographical presentation on Alexandro Malaspina, and John Black appeared on the local VI-12 television station to discuss the activities of the Centre.

International Collaboration

In September 2004 John Black and Russell McNeil attended the 250 th anniversary of Malaspina's birth at Mulazzo. They met there for the first time a number of Malaspina scholars, including Francesca Goldoni, Keith Hill, Robert King, Carlos Novi, Jorge Ortíz, Rossana Piccioli and Blanca Saíz, and caught up with old friends including Dario

Manfredi and Mercedes Palau . Several members of the Malaspina family, including Alex and Doris Malaspina and Alexandre Giuntini-Malaspina were also present.

Newsletter

The Centre now produces a short electronic newsletter, usually once per month during the academic year. Its archive is at: web.mala.bc.ca/black/amrc/Newsletter/newsarchive.htm.

Physical Location

After many years in preparation, the Centre will soon occupy dedicated space on the fifth floor of the extended Library at Malaspina University College. The research suite will provided offices, workrooms and meeting rooms for the Centre's personnel and will be shared with other researchers in the humanities and social sciences. The research suite will be opened by Alex and Doris Malaspina on June 23, 2005.

Funding

2004-5 was a mixed year in terms of funding. It began with an important private donation of US\$50,000, which has allowed the Centre to contemplate and implement significant increases in its level of activity, including the hiring of three student assistants over the course of the year. It ended with the news that a matching-funds application to the Canadian Foundation for Innovation had been unsuccessful, as a result of which the Centre's purchasing of computer equipment will be on a slightly more modest scale than had been anticipated. The reduction in infrastructural ambitions, however, will have little impact on the Centre's ability to support its mandated activity.