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# Oregon Humanities Center

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## 2009 Summer Report

### Collaborations Abound at the OHC *A Note from the Associate Director*



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This past academic year was one of the busiest I have experienced so far in my eleven years at the OHC. In the four months between late January and late May, 2009, our small but dedicated staff hosted fifteen major public lectures and programs. (Those of our readers who have organized large public events can appreciate what an outlay of time, energy, and talent that represents!) Though it was a challenge to stay on top of all of the details, it was extremely satisfying to be able to offer so many wonderful programs to the campus and the community.

It was also a year in which collaborations—with other campus departments and with community-based groups both in Eugene and Portland—were the norm rather than the exception. We partnered with the Center for Ecology and Evolutionary Biology (CEEB) to organize and host the astonishingly popular Darwin Anniversary Lecture series, which drew between 2,600 and 3,000 people over the course of seven public lectures. We reached out to non-profit organizations in Eugene, Portland, and Ashland/Medford that work with returning veterans to make the most of our Tzedek Lectureship events with Dr.

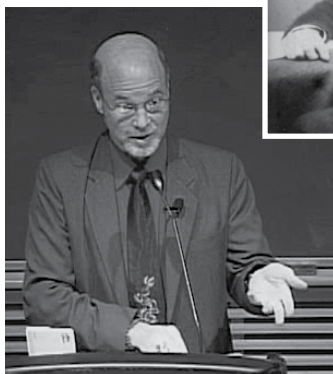
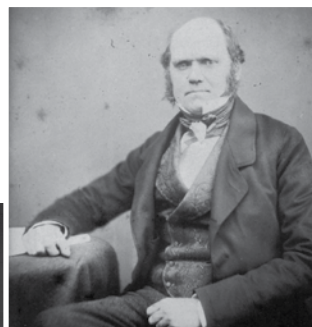
Edward Tick, who talked about how communities and individuals can help veterans with post-traumatic stress disorder. And we worked with the newly established Center for Intercultural Dialogue to co-host the visit of Yale University Professor

Mary Evelyn Tucker, who spoke about the role of religion in the environmental movement. Collaborations can be complicated, but they are also often richly rewarding. I can't help but believe that our record attendance numbers this past year were in large part due to our extensive partnering efforts.

Public outreach is certainly a central and very important part of the OHC's mission, but we are also here to support humanities faculty and graduate students in their research and teaching. I am happy to report that 2008-09 was an extraordinarily successful year for us in that regard as well.

With generous support from the UO Graduate School, former UO President Dave Frohnmayer, and some private donors, we were able to launch two important new fellowship programs. One is a Dissertation Fellowship for humanities PhD students in the final year of their dissertation writing. The Dissertation Fellowship, modeled after our faculty research fellowships and

*continued on page 2*



*Clockwise from left: Dr. Edward Tick, Charles Darwin, and Mary Evelyn Tucker*

## Collaborations *(continued from front page)*

offered in collaboration with the Graduate School, provides the doctoral student with a tuition waiver and a stipend for living expenses for one academic term, so that he or she may focus solely on writing the dissertation for ten weeks. This concentrated time for writing, free from the demands of teaching, is in many cases just the boost a doctoral student needs to finish his or her degree. We will host our first three Dissertation Fellowships during 2009-10, and with support from former President Frohnmayer, we will be able to offer the program for two additional years while we fundraise for future fellowships. If you are interested in this giving opportunity, please contact me and I can tell you more about the program (phone: 541-346-1001, or e-mail: jheydon@uoregon.edu).

In addition to the Dissertation Fellowship, we are also actively promoting a new team-teaching fellowship geared especially (though not exclusively) towards faculty from different departments who would like to team up to teach cross-disciplinary undergraduate humanities courses. We're excited about a course being offered this coming year, "The Philosophy of Biology—Knowledge of Nature and the Nature of Knowledge" by professors Brendan Bohannon (Biology) and Ted Toadvine (Philosophy and Environmental Studies), and hope that it will help to inspire other such collaborations. Stay tuned to learn more about this new initiative.

In short, the OHC has had a great first year under the leadership of our new director, Barbara Altmann. The OHC



Barbara Altmann interviewing Harvard physicist Peter Galison on "UO Today."

staff and our two volunteer boards have very much enjoyed working with Barbara. Her thoughtfulness and dedication, her enthusiasm for taking on new challenges, her active support of humani-

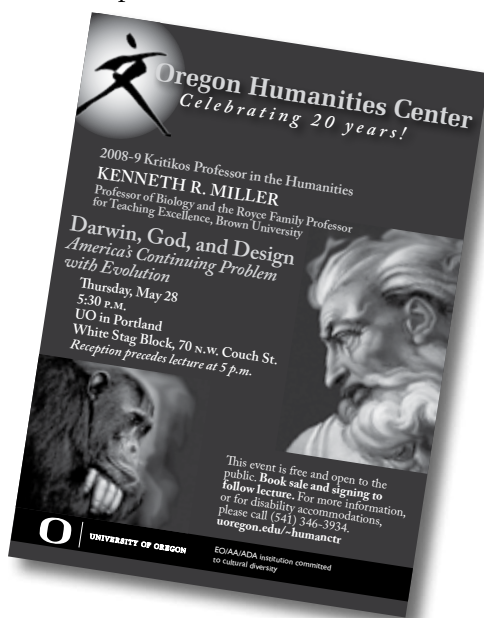
ties faculty and of the University as a whole, and her fresh perspective have been energizing and renewing for all. We look forward to working with her in the coming years! In the meantime, OHC Program Coordinator Melissa Gustafson has continued to masterfully organize and administer the Center's fellowship programs as well as do much of the groundwork for our many public programs. And Peg Gearhart has made her creative presence known in her new ca-

capacity as OHC Communications Coordinator and Producer of "UO Today" with a very successful array of TV programs and publicity materials. Besides coming up with guests and topics for more than 30 new episodes of "UO Today," Peg was responsible for designing the many beautiful and eye-catching posters, postcards, and newspaper ads for our public lectures and other events. We can't wait to see what she comes up with next.

We regret to report that Dylan Bragg,



An appreciative audience at the 2009 Kritikos Professor lecture given by Kenneth Miller on May 27



Advertisement for Kenneth Miller's May 28th Portland Kritikos lecture—designed by Peg Gearhart

the Office Specialist who joined our staff in December 2008, has moved on to investigate new opportunities. We wish Dylan all the best as he pursues his many interests and talents. We hope that by the time you read the fall newsletter we will have a new OHC staff member to introduce to you.

I hope your year has been as rich and rewarding as ours has been, and that you enjoy the remaining days of summer. We look forward to seeing you in 2009-10, which is going to be the OHC's "Year of the Book." Don't miss it!

Julia Heydon  
Associate Director

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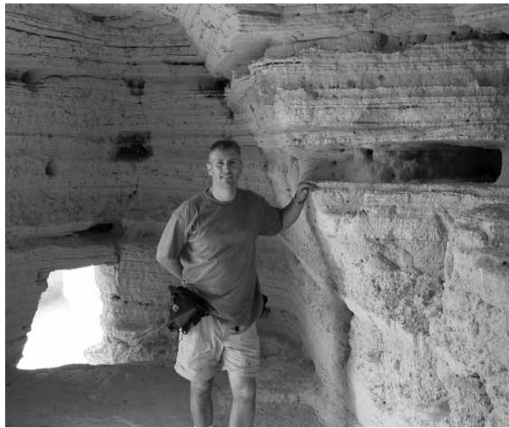
# OHC Fellowships Provide an Oasis for Research

*Daniel K. Falk, Associate Professor, Religious Studies*

"I'd like to do what you do." This is a line I occasionally hear from book-loving students gazing around my office, which is crammed with books floor to ceiling on every wall, the overflow piling up on the floor. "And what do you assume that is?" "Well, to be able to spend every day just reading all these books." I wish. The reality is that the various demands of university life break up an academic's time into segments, and a lot of research is done in rushed snatches, ransacking books for the information relevant to one's current project. It is a rare luxury to be able to properly digest whole books, and to thoroughly learn new fields of study. This is why the fellowships provided by the Oregon Humanities Center are so vital. The Center provides an oasis for sustained concentration and research—a slice of the kind of life I think the students mentioned above have in mind.

I had my second OHC fellowship in spring 2008 to work on a large article for the *Oxford Handbook of Dead Sea Scrolls* entitled "Contribution of the Qumran Scrolls to the Study of Jewish Liturgy." The Dead Sea Scrolls, discovered in caves by the Dead Sea in the middle of the last century, give the best glimpse of a Jewish group around the turn of the era. They also provide us with by far the best evidence for the early development of Jewish prayer, but the texts are extremely fragmentary. I have been a specialist of this material for over 15 years, but most of my research—and that of the very small number of other specialists—has focused on preliminary textual matters: reconstruction and deciphering of the scrolls, date and provenance, genre and structure, motifs and literary parallels. For my *Oxford Handbook* article, I wanted to help move the discussion on to the next steps of research. A text, in the end, is not a prayer. It is only a partial relic of a religious practice with many facets of personal and social behavior and meaning. To help go beyond the text to a more holistic study of prayer in the context of

this particular society, it is necessary to draw on analogies to other religious groups. The fellowship term at the Humanities Center allowed me the opportunity to expand my reading in such fields as ritual studies and sociological



*Clockwise from left: Daniel Falk inside Qumran cave 4, a man-made cave where thousands of fragmentary scrolls were found on the floor and in niches; ruins of defensive tower at Qumran; exterior of Qumran cave 4. (Photos taken during 2005-06 NEH research fellowship with support from the W. F. Albright Institute of Archeological Research.)*



theories of religion and group formation, as well as prayer in the context of the ancient Mediterranean world more generally.

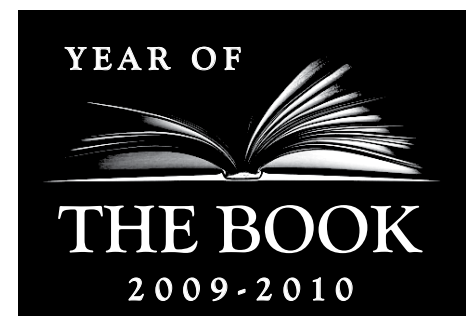
For my Work in Progress talk, I discussed one topic in the project: the ideology of the practice of communal prayer in the context of the group at Qumran. One of the most intriguing puzzles is how to reconcile petitionary prayer with a theology that everything is predetermined by God. I explored this question

in greater detail, drawing on the practice of groups with analogous belief patterns, in a scholarly paper presented at the Canadian Society of Biblical Studies and the West Coast Qumran Study Group.

The term at the Humanities Center afforded me the time and space to make significant progress on background research, testing ideas, and writing drafts. I am deeply grateful for the support of the Oregon Humanities Center, and the warm encouragement of the staff.

## 2009-10 Will Be Year of the Book

*The Oregon Humanities Center will partner with units across campus to present a year-long series of interdisciplinary events featuring the history and future of the book. Join us for lectures by visiting scholars, art exhibits, workshops, theatre, and more. Find event updates on our website: [ohc.uoregon.edu](http://ohc.uoregon.edu).*





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We would like to thank the following individuals, foundations, and corporations for their support during the 2008-09 fiscal year (July 1, 2008 through June 30, 2009):

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