

# PLATO PERSIMMON

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Volume XXVIII Number 1

January/February 2015

## Notes from the President:

By Mary Boyd



As I reflect on my six months as PLATO's president it is evident that PLATO is an organization in transition. Changes have been made because of the continuing growth of our membership and the

increased workload associated with that growth. A summary of the changes that have occurred follows:

1. Our management support structure and office space have changed. Our new office manager is Louise Fowler and we now have enhanced office space allowing for more privacy.
2. We have assumed more responsibility for managing our financial activities.
3. We have improved our database capabilities for tracking membership, for registering members for events and for financial recordkeeping.
4. In addition, we are continuing to increase our use of electronic communication while continuing to communicate with those who do not use email.
5. Since last spring, we have expanded our website. More additions and changes to better communicate with PLATO members will take place in 2015. The website is becoming ever more

important for communication with our members and potential members.

6. Our status as a tax-exempt organization has enabled us to increase our charitable activities through the Fund Development Committee. They are continuing to develop procedures for such opportunities.
7. We are continuing to add new courses during each semester and for the winter and summer interim periods. This reflects positively, on the willingness of members to become course coordinators.
8. We are offering more trips, lectures and special events that supplement our course offerings and provide increased opportunities for member participation. This is also taxing our management systems. Improving communication among our volunteers and establishing improved procedures will be a goal for the coming months.
9. New leadership has volunteered to coordinate publication of a Fourth Edition of our literary Journal, the *Agora*.
10. We have assisted our members in taking advantage of UW's Senior Guest Auditing Program. These members will be contacted about joining with other auditors for support and camaraderie in the coming semester.

What's coming in 2015? Well, . . .

1. The Board has recently reviewed PLATO's Vision, Mission and Core

Values. We will meet in the New Year with these documents in mind to recommit to our long-term goals and set new goals for the organization.

2. The Board will be reviewing our management processes to make certain that-- as we grow-- we maintain sound financial practices and effective use of our staff and volunteers.
3. The Board will continue to seek new volunteers. This will be essential as we continue to offer and manage quality learning opportunities.
4. PLATO will continue to collaborate with the Division of Continuing Studies and other campus departments to make new learning opportunities available to our members.
5. In the coming months, the PLATO Board will negotiate with DCS the renewal of the two-year Memorandum of Agreement that defines our relationship with the University. 2015 will mark the 28<sup>th</sup> year of this collaboration.

Yes, we are actively involved with new and on-going initiatives. CHANGE will continue to challenge PLATO in the coming months. I hope that in 2015 even more PLATO members will bring their unique experiences and skills to become volunteers— participating on our committees, coordinating our courses, and serving as members on the PLATO Board.

### **Spring Course Preview**

Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>,  
2015 at the Madison Senior  
Center, 330 West Mifflin  
Street, Madison from 1:30—  
3:15 p.m.

### **FORMAT CHANGE Planned For February 2015 Preview**



The Spring Course Preview is scheduled for Wednesday, February 18<sup>th</sup>, 2015 at the Madison Senior Center, 330 West Mifflin Street, Madison from 1:30—3:15 p.m.

Martin Jenich Photography

We are experimenting with a new format to give members more flexibility. Instead of the large group presentation, the new format will involve a Fair-like structure. Tables will be set up in rows on the first floor of the Senior Center in such a way as to allow aisles for members to stroll from table to table and meet and talk with any of the coordinators present. New Coordinators will be identified so you can identify and meet them easily. Committee Chairs will also be available to answer questions about upcoming events and opportunities to volunteer or become a Course Coordinator.

You can come and go anytime between 1:30 p.m. and 3:15p.m. Refreshments will be served.

Twice during the afternoon we will schedule brief sessions on the second floor of the Senior Center with PLATO Officers and Board members. This will give you a chance to ask questions and learn more about the structure of PLATO—its committees, its charitable arm, The PLATO Fund, The Agora, PLATO's literary journal, and The Arts Café which showcases members' artistic endeavors. We will also talk briefly about additions to our website and management software. Everyone is welcome to attend these sessions. We especially hope that new members will join us to learn more about everything PLATO has to offer.

We hope this new format will ease some parking issues we have experienced in the past year and

give members more flexibility with how they use their time to learn about new and recurring courses. See you on February 18<sup>th</sup>.

By Mary Boyd, PLATO Chair

## PLATO Social Opportunities



Martin Jenich Photography

As a PLATO member, you are well aware of the high-quality learning and teaching opportunities available in this organization. But did you realize that the PLATO vision statement also identifies social opportunities as one of the core components of this fine organization? PLATO President-Elect Frank Power has made a commitment to fostering more chances for members to meet and get to know each other. As a newer member of PLATO and a recent addition to the Curriculum Committee, I have appreciated opportunities to get to know other members. Here are several examples of social opportunities provided in the courses I took this Fall.

In the Whither the State course facilitated by Dennis Dresang, announcements were periodically made toward the end of the sessions welcoming participants to meet in a nearby coffee shop for fellowship following the class. Sometimes a dozen or more people enjoyed this time for socialization and after-class discussions. In the Women's Journeys Toward Self-Discovery/A Writing Workshop course facilitated by Grethe Brix-J. Leer, an end-of-semester social was planned where food and

fellowship were an added bonus to the day's class activities. Each of these courses provided welcome opportunities to learn and socialize in the comfort of the PLATO classes.

Submitted by Kathy Brown, Curriculum Committee



**Best of  
Seasons  
Greetings!**

May the magic of the season that now sustains us, in turn, refresh and renew us in the New Year.

Let's all make 2015, Special, a real Special Event.

Consider sharing your ideas, experiences in helping us create new bus trips and lectures for everyone to enjoy. Special Events is a can-do group. Join us and show what you can do. Make 2015, the year you step up and make a difference.

Your Special Events Team, Bob Blitzke, Chair

## PLATO 2015 Winter Interim Courses

Winter courses begin right after the holidays at Capitol Lakes when Debby Thomas' "Movement, Communication and Meaning II" meets on January 6<sup>th</sup> for the first of 6 Tuesday sessions. Its objective of "leading to a richer experience of our human existence" could serve as the theme for the whole PLATO curriculum that includes musical enrichment with Norm Leer's "Explorations in Roots Music" starting on Wednesday, January 7<sup>th</sup> and extending for 3 meetings at the Madison Senior Center, and Norman Risjord's "News and Music of the Swing Era 1935-1942" beginning on Thursday, January 8<sup>th</sup> and ending on January 29<sup>th</sup> at

Oakwood – University Woods. Maurice Better’s “Fictional Detectives, Police and Private” will get your literary and investigative instincts stirring with 5 sessions at the Madison Senior Center on Wednesdays at 9:30 a.m. starting on January 14<sup>th</sup>. And with all of this inspiration, you’ll be ready to engage in Yvonne Nagel’s course “Warm up Winter by Starting Your Memoir or Family History” that will meet at Oakwood – University Woods on 4 Tuesdays from January 4<sup>th</sup> through February 11<sup>th</sup>.

### Spring 2015 Courses

The Spring Semester begins the week of February 23<sup>rd</sup> but the schedules vary so be sure to check for complete details in the Spring 2015 Course Schedule. Also note that a few courses have changed locations: Jim Christensen’s “Spirituality” class will meet at Capitol lakes in the spring and Bruce Gregg’s “What in the World Happened” has moved to the Verona Public Library. Encouraging the advance of warmer weather and growth, Walt Goodman returns with “Bugs, Beetles and Bipeds” to offer an up-close and personal experience with the natural world. Also in contemplative mode a new course from the Venerable Bhikshuni Lhundup Chodon called “Make a Difference: Cultivating Peace in Chaotic Times” will explore practical and inspiring methods to develop a more peaceful mind. Marti Phillips invites you to consider objects that are invested with meaning and importance in your lives and to share those visual memoirs in “Memory, Object and Meaning” that will meet at the Lakeview Library. John Knapp just joined PLATO and he’s already coordinating a course. Join him at Oakwood West for “Interactive Shakespeare, for Fun and (Mental) Profit” where participants will read Shakespeare aloud and do a bit of “putting a scene on its feet” by acting out small parts. The *Moby Dick* readers will take on Thoreau’s *Walden* this spring and the poetry readers at Coventry will read the work of Rabbi

Abraham Heschel with Ken Hindman. There are 39 courses covering art, science, history, travel, philosophy, literature and writing, current events, films, spirituality and the meaning of life. Have fun choosing from this marvelous array. Please call or email the Course Coordinator to register for those classes that request pre-registration and keep warm while you share ideas with fellow PLATO members.

### Course Proposals for Summer and Fall 2015

The Curriculum Committee invites proposals for new courses for the Summer Interim and the Fall 2015 semester. In addition to the regular weekday 10-week semester schedule, PLATO has offered and is open to a variety of other options, such as evenings, weekends and the shorter sessions. As long as the proposal suits the coordinator, participants and the host site it will be considered. Although the completed forms are due March 15<sup>th</sup> for the Summer Interim and by June 1<sup>st</sup> for the Fall offerings, we will accept proposals at any time. The Committee will work with the Coordinator to select a location and to schedule the course for the next semester. For more details contact the Curriculum Committee Co-chair Lauren Blough at [laurenblough@att.net](mailto:laurenblough@att.net) 249-0258 to request more information or to get the proposal form.

Lauren Blough  
Curriculum Committee Co-chair

#### Course Proposal Due Dates:

Summer proposals due March 15<sup>th</sup>, 2015

Fall proposals due June 1<sup>st</sup>, 2015

## Agora News

### Dead Winter

*A grey spiritless day,  
Sullen, dull, deep in snow,  
The icy wind gnaws at my heart.  
All hope lies dead.  
But with the sudden sun,  
Innumerable diamonds glitter:  
My heart leaps at the piercing beauty.*

by Daryl Sherman

This lovely and timely poem is one of the entries in *The Agora*, Volume 2, PLATO's literary journal. *The Agora's* mission is to publish original literary and artistic works of poetry, short fiction, nonfiction, and pictorial and photographic art, in keeping with PLATO's broader mission of promoting intellectual and cultural enrichment for its members. In the first three volumes, 98 written and pictorial works, including *Dead Winter*, were featured. Now the AGORA Editorial Board is working to assemble Volume 4. We are organizing the call for submissions and assembling the jury panels that will review them. For this volume, the Agora Board must also raise funds to cover much of the costs that for the first three volumes were largely met with now-expired grant funds.

**Volume 4 will be published in September of 2015, with a submission deadline of February 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2015.** Submission guidelines are on the PLATO website, [platomadison.org](http://platomadison.org), or can be obtained by contacting Louise Fowler at [lfowler@dcs.wisc.edu](mailto:lfowler@dcs.wisc.edu), 262-5823. Donations towards Volume 4 are tax deductible and may be sent by check to Louise Fowler, 21 N. Park St., Madison 53715-1218, with "The Agora" on the subject line. For questions, contact Patricia Becker, [ptbecker@wisc.edu](mailto:ptbecker@wisc.edu) or 833-5799. Submitted by Patricia Becker, Agora Editor

### **Communication Committee Update**

PLATO's web presence originally began as a page on the UW website managed by university staff. As the site became more popular, the board realized PLATO needed the ability to manage its own website, to update content more frequently and keep members better informed.

The transition to an independent website has been done in stages. Last fall "[PlatoMadison.org](http://PlatoMadison.org)" was launched to give members more timely information on courses and events. In June PLATO assumed the online payment processing previously managed by UW. The final step in the website transition will be completed by the end of this year, when all PLATO content will be on a single website.

During this staged website transition some members got error messages about "browser" compatibility issues that frustrated their attempts to use PLATO's website. When the last step in the transition is completed, all browser compatibility issues should be resolved.

Future goals for the website are to include a member directory and to offer more current news, more trip photos and member created content, possibly forums for various interest groups. When those aspects of the website are ready to implement, we will invite your participation.

### **Safe and Secure Online Payments**

PLATO's new membership and event registration system allows you to make your payments online and avoid the cost of sending a check. When you make an online payment, you are actually using Wells Fargo Bank software. The bank matches the information you enter with that of your credit card issuer and then processes the payment. PLATO does not see or have access to any of your credit card information. The bank and credit card company handle everything. Your credit card information remains secure and confidential. Thus we encourage you to use the online payment option. If you ever have any concerns about using your credit card online, please contact our treasurer, Tim Otis, [tierneyotis@gmail.com](mailto:tierneyotis@gmail.com). He will be happy to answer all your questions.

Gail Gordon, Communications Chair

## **Fund Development Committee Report**

The Fund Development Committee has been very active in implementing PLATO fund raising efforts to support persons who need financial support to pursue their higher education goals. This fall the PLATO Board of Directors approved adding the Odyssey Project to our fund raising efforts, in addition to our ongoing support for returning adults students. (Go to: [www.odyssey.wisc.edu](http://www.odyssey.wisc.edu), to learn more about the Odyssey Project.) The Committee is also considering in the future the option of offering legacy giving, memorial giving, and support for special PLATO projects.

We are pleased to report that one of our current PLATO Scholarship recipients, Rory Erler, was recently awarded the prestigious 2015 Chazen Prize for his work with glass. It is gratifying to learn that PLATO donations are important in providing support so that these persons can realize their potential in their chosen fields.

During this past year (Dec. 2013-Nov. 2014) 52 PLATO members contributed \$9775 to the PLATO Fund. These contributions and the continued support from the PLATO membership are crucial to maintaining our charitable initiatives. If you would like more information about how you can support PLATO and its charitable efforts, please contact any one of the Fund Development Committee members.

The Fund Development Committee members are: Tim Otis, Fred Ross, Patricia Becker, Arden Trine, Tom Martinelli, Bruce Dewey, Mike Briggs, Mary Berg, Barry Orton, and Mary Boyd.

Tim Otis, Fund Development Committee

## **Who is the Membership Committee?**

Just who is the membership committee? Well there is a dedicated group of volunteers who go out and talk to church groups, 55 plus communities, and any organization that requests a speaker from PLATO. We man the tables at many conferences throughout the year. We are front and center at the Spring and Fall Previews. But for all our work, the most important member of the Membership Committee is you. When you applied for membership to PLATO one of the questions you were asked was; "How did you hear about PLATO?" By far and away, the most popular answer to that question is from a friend or member of PLATO. And once you became a member you realized just how much PLATO meant to you. For a small investment you get to enjoy the classes and the special events and most of all social opportunities. And soon you find yourself telling others about this great organization called PLATO. And so it goes, each and every one of you is a part of the membership committee, and we thank you. If you would like to formally join the Membership Committee please contact me, Mary De Wolf ([leeandme@arkansas.net](mailto:leeandme@arkansas.net)) and I will put you to work spreading the word about just how great PLATO is.

Submitted by Mary De Wolf, Membership Chair

## **Serving PLATO**

This column recognizes and appreciates the members who are ending their terms or ending their service to PLATO. As these people end their service we hope others will step forward and volunteer. Won't you consider serving PLATO in the future?

Thanks you for your valuable time serving the PLATO Membership!

## **Curriculum Committee-2014**

David Utley