

PLATO PERSIMMON

Volume XXVI, Number 2

January/February 2014

President's Corner

by Patricia Becker, PLATO President



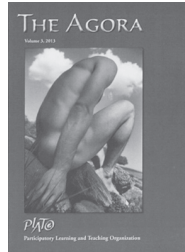
Reading the entries in this issue of the *Persimmon* will give you a very good overview of the rich tapestry of PLATO courses and events that are being or will be offered over this semester. Of special

note is the Dec 1 launch of our dedicated website, PLATomadison.org, developed by the Communication Committee's Web Task Force led by Scott Kolar. As our programs flourish, so does the need for effective and timely communication with members, and the purpose of the website is to directly address this need. Now, we know that not all of us in our demographic are exactly enthusiastic about going online for information, so be assured that PLATO is not abandoning print. It's just possible, however, that this dedicated website will function as a lure for the wary—as well as the practiced—to explore its possibilities.

PLATO's programs are growing in response to expanding membership. But as you know, with program growth come costs, and significant in this respect is the cost of paper mailing. Thus, it is the intent that as the website becomes familiar, communicating with members will not only become more effective and timely, but also more cost efficient. The board works diligently to ensure your membership dollars go towards supporting programs you value, and to that end we look forward to your evaluation of and suggestions for PLATomadison.org, as indeed we do for all the threads in the tapestry of PLATO programs.

The Agora

by Edna Canfield, Agora Committee



PLATO's literary magazine, *The Agora* will not be published in 2014. However, we encourage all members to continue their literary and artistic endeavors in the hopes of future issues. This is in keeping with PLATO's

mission of "developing and promoting intellectual and cultural enrichment opportunities for its members." The Agora Board and I wish to give a round of applause and a big thank you to all those who submitted for issues 1-3. These were issues for all of us to be proud of. Thank you.

Membership in PLATO

by Mary De Wolf, Membership Chair

How did you find us? We'd like to know.
Did you find us in a book,
where did you look?
Did a friend tell you so,
please let us know.
Did we visit your home, ask you to come
Join us for classes, with other lasses?
Did our trips sway your thought,
Or a lecture you caught?
A film, a book, a poem,
is that why you're here?
A memory written to someone who's dear.
You see, we think you're special,
That's why you care.
It's your love for learning,
That you want to share.
So we're looking for more
People like you.
We're the Membership Committee,
And that's what we do.
And if you'd like to join us,
Just give us a call.
We'll make PLATO bigger
And better for all.

Scan That Card

by Mary De Wolf, Membership Chair

The backbone of PLATO is the many classes covering a myriad of topics, and so many of us take full advantage. We are grateful to the facilities that give us the classroom space to use and here is one way to show our gratitude. The Madison Senior Center on Mifflin Street is one facility that hosts a large number of classes, on any given day two or three are held there. The management cheerfully prepares the rooms for our use, setting up the chairs and tables. They ask one thing in return:

The Madison Senior Center gets its funding from the City of Madison and having an accurate count of the people who use the center is one way to justify its operational costs. PLATO members are asked to sign up at the desk and get a membership card, and scan this card when we attend a class. When you scan your card you tell the city that this center is an important part of your day. The membership card is free and all you need to do is fill out a form, return it, and the next week a card will be waiting for pick up at the main desk. So please get a card and take a few seconds to scan it before heading off to your class. It's a great way to say thank you to the Madison Senior Center.

PLATO

With support from Continuing Studies at UW-Madison

21 N Park St, 7th Floor, Madison, WI 53715-1218 • 608-262-5823 • plato-slp@dcs.wisc.edu • www.PLATomadison.org

How I Became a Course Coordinator

by Maurice Better



I first joined PLATO as a participant, which is the way I suspect most people do. I became a course coordinator after making several observations. First, I was looking for an activity to pursue in January and February and discovered that PLATO, as well as many other organizations, offered very little programming in the five-to-six week period between the first of the year and the start of the Spring session. Second, I am also a reader of detective mystery fiction and thought that there might be other PLATO members with similar literary interests that would attend a five-week course focusing on five famous sleuths. I adopted a course format that has always appealed to me, that is, read a book beforehand, watch a video in class, and follow it with a discussion. Happily, this approach has been successful and the course *Fictional Detectives: Police and Private* will be offered for a third time beginning Jan 15, 2014.

PLATO, as everyone knows, is an acronym that includes "participatory learning" and "teaching." Class coordinators typically start out, as in my case, as participants, but then discover that not all of their interests are being met through existing courses or the ones they want to attend are full. If this describes your own situation, you can start your own class even though it may be similar to one that is already



being offered. The coordinator chooses the subject matter and then decides on the course format: lecture, discussion, film, writing, audio, visual, or some combination thereof. Some coordinators lecture, others bring in guest lecturers, others show films or have audio presentations, but many involve class members reading or writing on assigned topics in advance or during the class period. Most courses include time for discussion and getting PLATO members to join in will not be a problem. Interested in becoming a coordinator but would like some guidance? Contact a member of the curriculum committee for assistance.

Marvin Beatty's Exemplary Service to PLATO

by Fred Ross



Marvin Beatty has been an active member of PLATO for 24 of our organization's 27 years. While undoubtedly not a record, this is, as the old joke goes, a darn good average. But it is not just Marv's longevity that deserves remarking. Nor is it his enduring dedication to learning-in-retirement. Most remarkable is his extraordinary administrative activity over the years, activity that has measurably contributed to PLATO's vibrancy.

Upon retirement in 1991 as Professor of Soils Science and Associate Dean at UW Extension, Marv joined a fledgling PLATO organization which totaled barely 100 members. Then, as now, an active participant in a variety of PLATO courses, he soon became a fixture in the Reminiscence Writing group. Indeed his keen interest in genealogy and writing prompted him to write and, in 2009, publish a book on the Beatty family's history in the United States.

In 2004, responding to a call for help with PLATO's administrative tasks, Marv became co-chair (with Judy Sadowsky) of the Curriculum Committee. For six years these two dedicated members nurtured and expanded PLATO's schedule of course offerings, and somehow found donated or low-rent space to accommodate the learning-in-retirement needs of some 900 members.

In 2009, a time of considerable strain as PLATO and the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) sought to forge a mutually agreeable partnership, Marv became the organization's 22nd president. Eventually the two parties decided to go separate ways, and Marv's patient and low-key leadership was critical for guiding PLATO through the many negotiations that lead to the amiable separation. Then, with OLLI behind us, it was essential that PLATO have a clear path for the future. Marv initiated a long-range planning effort that resulted in the Strategic Plan that guides us to this day.

Upon completing his term as president, Marv immediately became involved in several start-up projects with PLATO. He served on the *Agora* Board at its dawning in 2010-11, and in the next year he became co-chair (with Fred Ross) of the PLATO Fund, which provides scholarships to financially disadvantaged adult students at UW-Madison. Thanks in no small measure to Marv's careful nurturing, in just two years the fund has grown to more than \$100,000.

Now, after more than 20 years of yeoman service to PLATO, Marv is taking a bit of a break. He remains an active learner by regularly attending and participating in several PLATO classes, but he has turned over his leadership responsibilities to "fresher" members. But those of us—who have been the beneficiaries of Marv's untiring effort join together in expressing heartfelt thanks for work not just well done, but done in exemplary fashion.

Serving PLATO

This column lists those who have recently completed serving on a committee or volunteer position. Thank you for your valuable time serving our PLATO membership. We can't do it without you!

Helen Aarli, Curriculum Committee
Harold Green, Curriculum Committee
Co-Chair

Fund Development Committee News

by Tim Otis, PLATO Fund Chair

The Fund Development Committee has been active this fall, developing a new brochure and other donation materials and mailing them to PLATO membership in November.

We anticipate that this year we will build on the success of last year's fund raising efforts (PLATO members donated more than \$18,000 last year.) This year's goal is to significantly increase our scholarship support for returning adult students with financial needs.

If you have not already done so, we hope you will consider supporting this very important PLATO initiative. For more information visit our NEW website: PLATomadison.org.



Scholarship Awards Reception 2012

This year's members of the Fund Development Committee are: Tim Otis—Chair, Fred Ross, Tom Martinelli, Arden Trine, Mike Lovejoy, Bruce Dewey, Mike Briggs, Patricia Becker, and Barry Orton. Please contact any one of us if you have questions about donating to the PLATO Fund. You can also find donation information at PLATomadison.org/donations.

Spring 2014 Preview

by Frank Powers, Curriculum Committee

Join your fellow members in celebrating the beginning of the 2014 PLATO course year at PLATO's Spring Preview on Wednesday, Feb 19, 2014. You'll hear lively one or two minute personal pitches by the course coordinators designed to pique your interest. There will be time to meet and greet the coordinators upstairs; and you can sign up if you haven't already done so online, by cellphone, or even by the old reliable telephone. There will be ample time for socializing. Nutritious refreshments will be available. Somethings old and somethings new await you as we strive to make this upcoming Spring Preview the best ever!

PLATO 2014 Winter Interim Courses

by Lauren Blough, Curriculum Committee Co-Chair

By the time you read this you may already be attending one or more of the six PLATO courses brought to you by the thoughtful coordinators who have put together educational and entertaining presentations to keep you busy during

this "slow" PLATO season. You probably still have time to make it to the first session of Debby Thomas' Movement Communication and Meaning, the dance therapy course that starts on Feb 3 at Capitol Lakes. For more information you can contact Debby at dbytom@tds.net. Many are investigating sleuthing with Maurice Better in Fictional Detectives, and exploring the musical expression of culture in Norm Leer's Explorations in Roots Music. Don Snyder continues the fascinating venture through England's history with England from the High Middle Ages to the Present. Jane Grogan, a gifted weaver par excellence, is teaching a group how to use pin-looms and is offering project ideas that will inspire you.

Creativity can be explored in many ways and you might be interested in the Spirit of Silence sessions coordinated by M J Wiseman. A participant in Jim Christensen's classes, M J found a book of the same title that seems to be a perfect bridge between Jim's fall and spring courses. We're very happy to have a PLATO member make the leap from attendee to coordinator and welcome others who have ideas to share and develop. Contact Curriculum Committee Co-chair Lauren Blough at laurenblough@att.net or 608-249-0258 to request information and obtain a proposal form.

New PLATO Website Launched Dec 1

by T. Greg Bell, Communications Chair

PLATO is proud to announce that PLATomadison.org launched successfully on Dec 1. A dedicated committee—led by Scott Kolar—established the specifications and design needs for the website with the help of Makin Hey! a local website development company.

The PLATO Board of Directors authorized the website development last summer, and the website is now ready to serve our growing membership. With our own domain name we will be recognized as a "learning in retirement" website by Google, Yahoo, and other search engines. These search engines will display PLATomadison.org when people search the Internet for senior learning or learning in retirement. So we expect to hear more people say, "Oh! I found PLATO on the Internet," instead of "What's PLATO?"

It took two development committees to achieve our goal of a website for PLATO. The first committee specified the needs and interviewed the company we wanted to work with on developing the site. The second committee is composed of members who are implementing and creating the content for the various parts of the website, as well as members who have volunteered to keep the website current and up-to-date as authorized content editors.

We'd like to thank the members of each of these committees.

Website Development Committee:
Scott Kolar, T. Greg Bell, Tim Otis, Michael Dilorio, Don Reeder, Patricia Becker

Website Implementation Committee:
Scott Kolar, T. Greg Bell, Mike Dilorio, Tim Otis, Lauren Blough, Linn Roth, Patricia Herrling, Gail Gordon.

Congratulations to all members of these committees and to Scott Kolar for his leadership and guidance in bringing the website to reality for PLATO.

Spring 2014 Courses

The Spring Semester begins the week of Feb 24, but the schedules vary so be sure to check for complete details in the Spring 2014 Course Schedule. Note that Don Reeder's Physics and Society has moved from Friday mornings to 10am on Thursdays, and Lewis Bosworth's Seniors as Poets has relocated to the Madison Senior Center downtown. From Managing Your Money to learning satisfying ways of spending it in Travel and from exercising your potential in Seniors as Poets to "You Can Draw 2," PLATO coordinators provide many opportunities for enjoyment and growth. If you love poetry, join Ken Hindman in the study of The Poetry of Billy Collins the 2001-2003 U. S. Poet Laureate. Get first-hand experience with growth by joining Walt Goodman when he returns this spring with Bugs, Beetles, and Bipeds at Oakwood University Ridge. Debby Thomas has prepared a new course of nine sessions called Exploration of Nine of Carl Jung's Concepts in Analytical Psychology. Whether you're familiar with or new to Jung's concepts, this lecture and discussion series will provide a useful overview of his work. Please call or email the course coordinator to register for those classes that request pre-registration and have a stimulating adventure in learning.

Enjoying PLATO Bus Trips Testimonial

by Kathy Michaelis

Great art, entertaining theater and "no muss, no fuss" visits to Milwaukee or Chicago—what could be better!

- **Someone else does the planning.**
I love having someone else find out what is available, check schedules and create a full day of activities for me and the "packages" have been terrific.
- **Each event has offered a mix of art, theater and free time.**
Perhaps we have a short attention span but my husband and I particularly like the mix of art in the morning and theater in the afternoon. Standing/walking and then sitting works well at our age.
- **Someone else does the driving.**
Having our morning coffee and reading the paper is far more fun than fighting rush hour traffic!

- **It's an opportunity to explore the rich variety of local theater groups/venues.**
Each venue has included a bit of background on the organization and location that we have found most interesting.
- **We get door-to-door service between activities.**
Weather is never a problem as the bus drops us off right at the door and is there waiting for us when we are finished.
- **There is time to try out new restaurants in the area.**
We generally have plenty of time in the schedule to explore local restaurants. Google walking map printouts are provided.

I stumbled across PLATO during my quest for mental stimulation after retirement. The range of classes was impressive and seemed to be just what I needed. And I have participated in several over the last two years. But, as all retirees know, our schedules are crazy, making regular weekly attendance difficult. The bus trips have turned out to be, for me, the best component of PLATO.

2013 Special Events Program Report

By Bob Blitzke, Special Events Chair

This has been a breakout year for the Special Events Program. Bus trip participation and lecture attendance have increased significantly in response to the wide-ranging interests of our growing membership. We have offered more bus trip opportunities than ever before. There were 16 bus trips with 884 participants traveling to museums, gardens, and theater presentations. Our lecture offerings have expanded substantially and beginning this fall are offering the popular Global Hot Spots Lecture Series. In 2013 PLATO offered eight lectures with 719 attendees covering topics as diverse as Early Stage Investing in Wisconsin, The Affordable Care Act, A Farm Winter with Jerry Apps, The Medi-Gap Helpline, Overview of the Wisconsin Institutes of Discovery, Can Congress Govern?, Ways We Study the Brain and Our Senses, and America's Macroeconomic Policies & the Global Economy.

Bus trips and lectures provide cultural and educational opportunities, as well as memorable experiences. They fit readily into one's active lifestyle. In addition, Bus

trips offer travel and adventure. So join the fun! Add at least one PLATO bus trip and lecture to your list of New Year's resolutions. It will be the one most easily kept. Who knows, you may want to make it one of those good habits that will sustain and carry you into the future.

2014 Preliminary Bus Trips Schedule

- Jan 29 *End of the Rainbow*, Milwaukee Rep
 Mar 19 *An Iliad*, Milwaukee Rep
 Apr 30 *The History of Invulnerability*, Milwaukee Rep
 Jun 5 Chicago Museum Route/*The White Snake*, Goodman Theatre, Chicago
 July 24 Chicago Museum Route/*Brigadoon*, Goodman Theatre, Chicago

2014 Preliminary Lectures Schedule

- Feb 5 Wisconsin Elections: Past, Present & Future, Luke Fuszard
 Feb 21 Global Hot Spots, Topic to be announced
 May 2 Global Hot Spots, Topic to be announced

Watch for special events bus trip and lecture announcements. Each announcement is sent out six to eight weeks prior to the event and contains a description and registration information. After the initial dissemination, event reminders are included in the weekly email announcements.

As we begin planning for 2014 and the spring term, it is worth remembering that the quality of the special events program is the product derived from the willingness and enthusiasm of its committee member volunteers. They organize events based upon their own personal cultural and educational experiences, as well as selecting and implementing those submitted by the PLATO membership. Our committee size has generally been able to keep pace in supporting our active bus trip and lecture schedules. Nonetheless, new members with new ideas and the energy to help make it happen are always welcome. For more information, contact Chairperson Bob Blitzke at 608-271-7741, bblitzke@charter.net.