

MLLI, UMBC, and Macondo: A Very Brief History

“Macondo era entonces una aldea de veinte casas de barro y cañabrava . . .”

This sentence is drawn from the memorable first paragraph of *One Hundred Years of Solitude*, the novel by the Colombian Nobel Prize winning author Gabriel García Márquez that was published in 1967, just one year after UMBC began admitting students.

If we pay attention to these words, we will find similarities to UMBC in its early years:

At that time Macondo was a village of twenty adobe houses, built on the bank of a river of clear water that ran along a bed of polished stones, which were white and enormous, like prehistoric eggs. The world was so recent that many things lacked names, and it was necessary to point. (García Márquez, 11)

UMBC was built (almost) on the bank of the Patapsco River, although I have never detected enormous stones that look like prehistoric eggs in it. The buildings, albeit not made of adobe, were functional red brick (the name of an early student publication) constructions, and students referred to the semi-rural campus as “Mud (*barro*) City” because of the continual construction (Beck, 7).

The campus was certainly so young that many things lacked names, and we did a lot of pointing to find our way around and help others to do the same. The campus was notoriously difficult to locate, and visitors needed to be given very specific, pointed instructions to get here, and many of them got lost anyway. (The segment of Route 95 connecting Baltimore and Washington was not completed until 1971, and the signs for the UMBC exits are quite recent. Among the many things that lacked names was our department-in-gestation, then an area of foreign languages (French, German, and Spanish) coordinated

UM BC NEWS

Vol. 1 No. 1 September 19, 1966

DR. KUHN GREET'S STUDENTS

By Dr. Albin O. Kuhn

The start of a college year is always a time of excitement for the students, the faculty and the staff. Entering the freshman year has special significance that is not quite recaptured in succeeding college years. Opening a completely new campus is an experience that few have known previously. This first year of the operation of the newest campus of the University of Maryland can be expected to be a rewarding experience for all concerned.

We welcome the new students to the way in which you will become a part of the activities on the campus and will begin to develop the traditions that are so important in college life. We do not expect UMBC to be quite like any other campus. Each of you brings individual background talents and education to our new campus. Collectively, you are a different student body from any previously assembled. In working with the faculty and with the staff of UMBC, make the most of this opportunity to help create a center of learning in which those who give their best in the classroom, in the laboratory and on the playing field develop a brilliance that is the mark of their efforts and the UMBC environment.

Decade In The Making

A little more than a decade of planning by the President of the University, Dr. Elkins, and by the members of the Board of Regents has gone into the development of this new campus so that it might open in September, 1966. Collectively, these leaders of the University have given significantly of their time and effort and have brought outstanding vision in the considerations leading to this new center of learning.

Dr. Homer W. Schump, Jr., Dean of the Faculty, together with several professors has, during the past year, assembled a faculty for our new University who come from many outstanding institutions of higher learning in this country. On the occasion of the opening, it is a pleasure to welcome these faculty members to the exciting challenge of developing this new campus.

State Firms Involved

The buildings we will be using during the first year are the result of appropriations from the State; the planning of the Maryland architectural firm of Rogers, Tallantire, Kostirsky and Lamb; the guidance of the State Planning Department; the Department of Public Improvements; and the high-technological board in the State, which is headed by the Governor of the State Department of Public Works. Further, they are the product of knowledge gained over the years by the Physical Plant Department of the University, which is headed on this campus by Mr. Guy M. Chisholm, Jr. The furnishing and equipment are the result of the planning of the State Department of Budget and Procurement and with on-site continuing work of Mr. Robert C. Brown.

As new students, you probably have been acquainted with Mr. Robert H. Turner, our Registrar, who came to UMBC from a similar position in the Munich center of the University's overseas program. You will soon meet Mr. John D. Hackett, Jr., who is in charge of the UMBC Library. He was the first UMBC full-time employee, starting in February, 1965, to assemble the Library for your use. In the near future you will come to know Mr. Arthur A. Libby, III, who is charged with the responsibility of developing the various programs in student life on campus.

Faculty work has marked the development of this new campus and we believe you may find it a congenial part of your life on campus. I hope we may find the opportunity to visit often during the coming year through the medium of this new campus newspaper. You will find many open doors to the offices of the faculty and staff as well as anxious to make UMBC an outstanding center for educational advancement. Use those opportunities and we may be surprised at the success achieved.

Used As Dormitory

This building which still stands today, was used solely as a dormitory. The old dormitory building was then converted to classrooms. The newer structure has been in constant use ever since and is now recognizable as the gray building at the South end of the campus. At about the same time, the stone house which is located near by was being used for vocational classrooms.

UNIQUE PLUS - for students and faculty at the Baltimore County campus is the magnificent estate of the late Donaldson F. Brown.

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The food is already famous. Weekend visitors will dine in one of three informal or formal dining rooms.

11 fireplaces, to achieve a meaningful life, and to make a contribution to society.

The 20 acres of land and buildings offer the student an exciting array of academic and recreational activities. The main house is itself an adventure in Georgian architecture. It has 64 rooms and 11 fireplaces. This count includes 12 bathrooms and several anterooms; it does not include porticos or loggias. The mansion is completely decorated with many periods.

Motorists driving east over the Susquehanna River bridge on the J.F.K. Highway are met by a spacious mansion placed atop a sheer rock cliff overlooking the sleepy town of Port Deposit, Maryland. This building and the surrounding 20 acres are now the property of UMBC.

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Dr. Albin O. Kuhn, vice-president of the Baltimore Campuses of the University of Maryland, reports that in addition to the main residence, Mr. Brown and his family established an endowment of \$250,000 to help finance the operation of the estate as an educational center. The UMBC faculty has recommended that the Center be devoted to the theme, "dedicated man in his environment". Under this general theme students and faculty will share scheduled

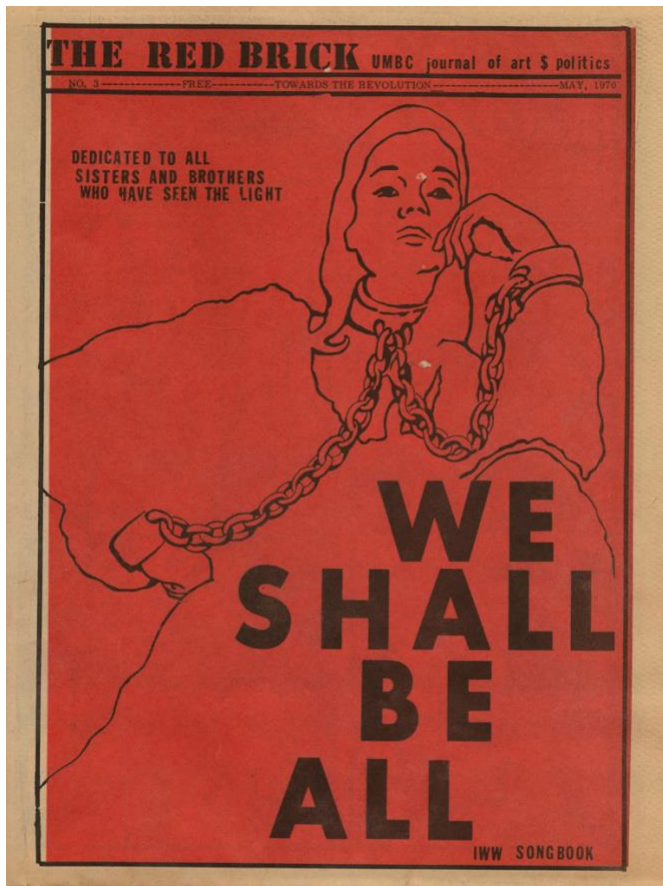
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Dr. Albin O. Kuhn (1916-2010), the president (then called Chancellor) of UMBC, pictured in the first issue of the UMBC News (later the Retriever), published on the opening day of classes.

For a higher-resolution image, see the end of this file.

by our founder, the late Dr. May Roswell. Buildings had generic names such as Academic One, Gym 1, and Lecture Hall 1 (Beck, 7).



The Red Brick, an independent socially conscious student publication in 1970

The narrator of *One Hundred Years of Solitude* goes on to note that all the inhabitants of Macondo were under thirty, no one had died, and the town was organized in an egalitarian fashion. When I came to UMBC in 1971, not all the faculty members were under 30, but many were, and, of course, so were most of the pioneering students. No one had died; therefore, there were not yet the endowments which would later allow buildings to be named. (Note that some buildings, including the Fine Arts Building where the MLLI offices are currently housed, are still to be endowed.) Inspired by the egalitarian social movements of the 1960s and 1970s, faculty members largely shared similar outlooks on education. The titles “junior” (non-tenured) and “senior” (tenured) faculty may have existed, but the differences between the two were blurred. Like the founders of Macondo, we were attracted to UMBC because of its radical newness and the opportunities to design a program, rather than inheriting one. We saw ourselves as program builders dedicated to developing a strong, creative curriculum for the exciting students in our classrooms.

Growth and Crisis

The first Macondinos were constantly looking for contacts with the outside world, and as a foreign language area on a distinctively provincial campus, we looked for those contacts through study abroad. In January 1973, UMBC in Salamanca, Spain, directed by Dr. Robert Sloane, was the first foreign language study-abroad program sponsored by the campus. It was organized through personal contacts in Salamanca, and the monies left over were returned to students! (That didn’t last long.) In subsequent years, study-abroad was pursued in all areas, and in 2016 MLLI undergraduate and graduate students study in programs throughout the world, including UMBC in Montpellier, France, UMBC in Barranquilla, Colombia, and in the MA program in Salamanca, Spain. Several alumni have won prestigious graduate fellowships to continue their studies abroad (Fulbright, Rhodes, Boren, etc.)

Inspired by the weaving together of the contemporary social movements (gay liberation, civil rights, women’s liberation, anti-Vietnam war, and others), we broke the established curricular restrictions by becoming interdisciplinary long before the term became fashionable. When a new faculty position in Spanish became available in 1974, we hired a Latin American

historian, the late Dr. Ricardo Palomares. Since then the social sciences (history, anthropology, sociology, cultural studies) have always been an integral component of departmental teaching and scholarship. (In 2016 it is still unusual to find social scientists in a foreign language department.) At the same time, we began to hire linguists to take part in the development of a number of interdisciplinary courses taught in English based on linguistics and semiotics, and these courses would become the basis of an innovative core for language majors. In other areas, we hired a specialist in bilingual education, and that post constituted the beginning of the English for Speakers of Other Languages program (ESOL) in the Education Department. Additionally, MLL faculty members collaborated in the establishment and teaching of Women's Studies (now Gender and Women's Studies), and courses were regularly cross-listed with Afro-American Studies (now Africana Studies).

In 1971 the long post-World War II economic boom ended, and public university budgets throughout the country, like those of other areas in the domestic public sphere, were threatened. In Maryland, programs with a relatively small number of majors were scrutinized. With separate



*Continual Construction.
The Administration Building in 1969*

majors in French, German, and Spanish, we felt vulnerable. Thus in 1978 the faculty members decided to create a single major in modern languages with specializations in three languages, and the Department of Modern Languages (ML) was established.

In keeping with the increased importance of linguistics and semiotics in the field, in 1979 the department was renamed Modern Languages and Linguistics (MLL), and the common core of three courses--The World of Language; Textual Analysis: Words, Images, Music; and World Language Communities-- for all majors was adopted. The department won a grant from the Fund for the Improvement of Post-Secondary Education (FIPSE) to support the implementation of this unique interdisciplinary major, which won the department national recognition. Many foreign language departments have the acronym MLL, but it usually stands for Modern Languages and Literatures. That second "L" for linguistics made our program distinctive. (See DuVerlie and Rosenthal; Field, Freeman and Moorjani; Field and Moorjani; Moorjani and Field; and Rosenthal on these changes.) Moreover, although it is

common for there to be linguists in foreign language departments, it is quite unusual for there to be a strong undergraduate major in linguistics, such as the applied linguistics major at UMBC. In the ensuing years, a Russian major was added, and the department was awarded a grant by the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH) to develop the communicative competency approach to foreign language instruction, still new at the time.

Graduate Study in Intercultural Communication

Like Macondo, our department grew and became increasingly complex. Although graduate studies in the humanities at UMBC were restricted by the Maryland Higher Education Commission (MHEC), in 1985 the MA in Intercultural Communication (INCC) was approved. Through its interdisciplinary character and various concentrations, this masters program brings together students and faculty members from Latin America, Asia, Africa, and Europe, as well as North America in intercultural study and research in such a way that participation in the program provides a significant intercultural experience. This MA is an unusual combination of traditional foreign language study and the new discipline of intercultural communication. Like the undergraduate major, the MA also has a common core of courses taught in English: Intercultural Pragmatics; The Ethnography of Communication, and The Political Economy of Culture, and all students study in at least two languages and analyze a minimum of two cultures. A US culture track for non-native speakers of English was added to the INCC program that had initially included Francophone, Germanic, and Hispanic studies. Attracted by the US culture track, many international students joined the program and shared their knowledge and experiences in various ways. Many of them made major contributions to the instructional program by serving as native-speaker teaching assistants. Several graduates have continued to make contributions to departmental teaching and research.



An INCC gathering in 2015

Among these international students have been numerous Fulbright scholars. Working through the Spanish Fulbright Commission, Dr. Alan Bell established an exceptional arrangement through which that commission would designate one Fulbright scholar specifically to UMBC on a regular basis, an arrangement that is still in effect. This Fulbright award is one significant manifestation of the prestige INCC has achieved internationally.

In the 1990s we moved on to doctoral studies as one of the founding departments of the interdisciplinary PhD in Language, Literacy, and Culture (LLC) in 1998, and two of the first

LLC students, Dr. Sandra López Rocha and Dr. Isabel Moreno López, were INCC graduates and teaching assistants in Spanish. (On the graduate programs, see Sinnigen, and Sinnigen and Medina.)



UMBC in 1999

MLLI

In the early 1990s the collapse of the Soviet Union coincided with the rapid expansion of digital communication in the latest wave of globalization. During these years the term "intercultural," seldom used previously, became popular. Intercultural communication simply means communication across cultures. We, however, strive to achieve critical or transformative interculturality, a theory and practice derived from indigenous social movements in Latin America. The goal of this utopian concept is cultural, economic, and political equality, an especially relevant project in these times of menacing extreme inequalities (Tubino).

As intercultural communication became increasingly present in our curriculum and research, in 2008 the faculty members chose to rename the department as Modern Languages, Linguistics, and Intercultural Communication (MLLI). The name is admittedly long and unwieldy, but it does describe the departmental teaching and research appropriately, and it indicates what makes the department unique as we strive to achieve equality in the linguistic and cultural diversity that we study and promote. (See Medina and Sinnigen on the change of name.) The departmental faculty is currently composed of specialists in linguistics, the social sciences, second language pedagogy, bilingual education, literary analysis, cultural studies, and intercultural communication.

During the last twenty years language instruction in the department has expanded in the areas of non-European languages, and MLLI now offers Arabic, Chinese, Hebrew, Hindi, Japanese, Korean, and Wolof, along with French, German, Russian, and Spanish. Recently two new interdisciplinary programs have been initiated at UMBC, Media and Communication Studies (MCS) and Global Studies (GS). Dr. Edward Larkey was one of the founders of MCS and Dr. Tania Lizarazo has a joint MLLI-GS appointment.

As Macondo grew, hierarchies and inequalities also increased, and the same has been true of MLLI, as it is in the world. As a result of corporate globalization, universities, including UMBC, began to adopt a business model. Perhaps the most glaring inequality within the department, and in the profession in general, is the exploitation of adjunct faculty who teach many of the elementary and intermediate language courses. These undercompensated, dedicated, and highly qualified faculty members make essential contributions to the MLLI curriculum, but those contributions are not recognized by the UMBC and other university administrations in spite of the repeated policy recommendations of the Modern Language Association (MLA) and urgent appeals from departmental chairs to increase their salaries and benefits.

A note from the author

This brief summary of the history of the Department of Modern Languages, Linguistics, and Intercultural Communication is based on remarks I made at the celebration of the 50th anniversary of UMBC on September 16, 2016. At that time I was asked to keep my comments “brief, 5-7 minutes.” In such a short amount of time, I had to be extremely selective in the history I told, and I chose to focus on the instructional program. Therefore, many research and other accomplishments were unfortunately omitted, as they are here also. I was privileged to be a full-time member of the department from 1971 until 2015. Throughout those years I learned so much from many students and colleagues, and I want to thank all of them for their contributions to our continual program building. Before retiring I was fortunate to participate in the hiring of several creative and dedicated teacher-scholars who will keep MLLI at the forefront of education in our field. Macondo will continue to prosper in an era of acute intercultural challenges.

John H. Sinnigen

NOTE: I wish to thank my colleague Angela Moorjani for her assistance in putting together this Very Brief History. Any omissions or errors are exclusively my responsibility.



Aerial View of the Campus in 2016

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Vol. 1 No. 1

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REVIEWING PLANS - for the opening of the Baltimore County Campus at Catonsville is Dr. Albin O. Kuhn, vice-president of the University of Maryland.

126-Year History Of UMBC Site Recalled

by Martin Schlesinger

In this issue and succeeding ones, the newspaper will run an account covering the history of UMBC and the campus. The article below concerns the exchange of hands of the land on which the college now stands.

In 1840 the State of Maryland acquired a large tract of land from the Stabler Estate. An Orphans' Home, "The Baltimore Trade School", was established that same year. A few years later a large building was constructed near the southern end of Walker avenue. This building provided both dormitories and kitchen facilities for the 50 members of the school. The remaining area was farmed by this institution, thereby making the farm more independent and providing more activities for the orphans. This trade school was used until World War II. By 1845 about 300 acres in the Catonsville area belonged to the State of Maryland. Because of the need for more space for the school, a smaller building was erected around 1890.

Used As Dormitory

This building which still stands today, was used solely as a dormitory. The old dormitory building was then converted to classrooms. The newer structure has been in constant use ever since and is now recognizable as the gray building at the South end of the campus. At about the same time, the stone house which is located near by was being used for vocational classrooms.

The property was later added to the Spring Grove State Hospital. This institution continued operation of a farm on the land until the late 1960's. In 1966, 436 acres were turned over to the University of Maryland, Baltimore County.

Estate Provides Natural Weekend Setting

Motorists driving east over the Susquehanna River bridge on the J.F.K. Highway are awed by a spacious mansion placed atop a sheer rock cliff overlooking the sleepy town of Port Deposit, Maryland. This building and the surrounding 20 acres are now the property of UMBC.

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