ANOTHER RECORD YEAR
by Robert Cohen

It was the Fall of 1999. A small group of invitees met to hear about and discuss the possibility of developing a program for adult learners. Little did they realize that the next year of their lives would be consumed by this project. Led by Bernie Reisman, the originator of the idea, the planning group’s time became devoted to a mixture of frequent long meetings, endless telephone calls, countless memos, and much legwork. As the concept took shape, the details of the academic program developed. The practical issues of space, supplies, parking, etc. were addressed. The name, The Brandeis Adult Learning Institute, aka BALI, was adopted.

By April of 2000 they were ready to unveil their product. Invitational flyers were sent to libraries, senior centers, community centers, churches, and to a list of selected individuals from Brandeis rosters. The flyers invited interested persons to come to a reception featuring Brandeis President Jehuda Reinharz as the speaker. The date was May 4, 2000. As the 4:00 P.M. beginning time drew near, the organizers nervously milled about in the Napoli Room at Gosman, hoping at least 75 people would show up. Whatever concerns they had rapidly evaporated as the crowd grew to over 400. In fact, when the room lights went out and the air conditioning failed on that hot day, the crowd was so enthusiastic they remained to hear the presentations. The launching of BALI was a success.

In the Fall of 2000, BALI’s first class was offered. If you were then one of the 267 members, you would have had your pick from an offering of 18 courses. In May of 2005 if you were one of BOLLI’s 294 active members, you would have had your pick from an offering of 24 courses. In the Fall of 2009, our 400+ active members had their pick from 41 offered courses.

What makes us tick? From the very outset, people were not only interested in attending a life-long learning institute, but they admired its peer-run organization and wanted to be involved in its success. Another major factor in BOLLI’s success has been its focus on conviviality: be sure to check out our new Web page, www.brandeis.edu/bolli/conviviality.html.

As we start to work our way through BOLLI’s 10th year and look ahead to our May 13, 2010 Tenth Anniversary Celebration, on behalf of the Council I extend to all of you a hearty welcome and best wishes for another successful BOLLI year. I also extend a reminder that BOLLI is essentially a member-led organization. Our remarkable success is, in large part, due to our dedicated staff and the vibrant corps of talented, committed volunteers who contribute so much time, effort, expertise, and thought to our program. We have an eclectic list of volunteer slots—something for everybody. If you are not already a volunteer, give some thought to being one and speak with our Volunteer Coordinator [see page 4] about something suitable for you.
Annual Meeting

by Carol Shedd

Outgoing Council Chair, Len Aberbach, welcomed the more than seventy-five members who attended BOLLI's Annual Meeting on May 7. He thanked the outgoing Council members and committee Chairs for their service, and he introduced the new leadership slate.

Elaine Reisman, wife of BOLLI's founder Bernie Reisman, spoke movingly of her husband's passion for forming a convivial community of adult learners. She believes that Bernie, who now suffers from Alzheimer's, would have been delighted to see how BOLLI, today, embodies that vision.

Director Sharon Sokoloff told about BOLLI's new association with Hebrew SeniorLife at the NewBridge on the Charles retirement community in Dedham. There will be a separate HSL/BOLLI membership. Courses will be led by Brandeis graduate students, not BOLLI SGLs. BOLLI staff will help select the students, but all administrative work will be handled by the staff at HSL.

Incoming Council Chair Robert Cohen laid down a thoughtful and ambitious agenda for the coming year:

- reduce costs and attract new money
- train members to assume leadership roles
- re-examine the BOLLI guidelines after ten years of operation
- reassess all committees and their objectives
- increase opportunities for building social relationships
- plan a 10-year annual meeting celebration
- hold an even bigger art show of BOLLI members' works
- work toward developing a "cohesive cooperative group not afraid of being innovative"

It seems appropriate to end with words of wisdom from our outgoing Chair, "May you live in interesting times." Len discovered that this is actually a Chinese curse; but considering today's economic situation, he suggested it as a challenge and opportunity for BOLLI in the years ahead.

2009-2010 Leadership

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Missing the August issue of the Banner?

Sorry, we did not publish it this year as part of BOLLI's cost reduction.

The BOLLI Banner is published by the Banner Editorial Committee:

Richard Glantz, Publisher
Tamara Chernow, Co-Editor
Carole Grossman, Co-Editor
Carol Shedd, Secretary

Phyllis Pressman Cohen and Joan Kleinman, contributing writers
Sophie Freud, Council liaison
Len Heier, photographer

Banner archive: www.brandeis.edu/bolli/banner/index.html

Vol 10 Number 1 - 2 - September 2009
Rapaporte Seminars: The Summer Intensives

American Foreign Policy
by Ron Levy

What are the 10 foreign policy challenges for President Obama? Professor Robert Art set the stage by listing these and addressing a few of them in the context of an overarching grand strategy: the national security of America. Bob Art, Christian A. Herter Professor of International Relations at Brandeis, led a five-morning Rapaporte Seminar in early June, captivating and educating 37 attendees crammed shoulder-to-shoulder in a Has- senfeld conference room.

Professor Art began by telling us that the history of international relations is the history of balanced economic and political power, and then by discussing briefly each of the 10 grand choices facing America. Following a long period of Cold War, the U.S. had no powerful opposition during the 1990s; but now China is beginning to redress that imbalance in economic terms and will, eventually, in military terms. On each succeeding day, Bob laid out his views, respectively, on the U.S./China relationship, on the Israeli/Palestinian crisis, Iran, and on the U.S.’s position in the global economy.

Each session started with a mini-lecture on a topic, followed by an opportunity for students to express their views and to be challenged in their thinking. Attendees entered the week with a deep interest in American foreign policy, a reasonable understanding of the issues confronting us, and an extensive suggested reading list. We came away significantly better informed by what Bob Art calls his use of the “Attack Socratic Method.” By this technique, Bob pressed speakers to elaborate and defend their comments and opinions.

All in all, it was an exhilarating week and a wonderful learning opportunity with one of Brandeis’s best teachers!

Contemporary Art
by Sophie Freud

In this course on Contemporary Art, Brandeis Professor Peter Kalb returned to the Rapaporte Seminar series to cover the edgy art scene: Appropriation Art, Installation Art, Body Art, and Performance Art.

Prof. Kalb introduced us to dozens of contemporary artists from different schools, with slides and explanations, while also raising more general issues about art.

We grappled with:
- art as social criticism or (sometimes hidden) political protests
- how knowing the context of a piece of art enriches our appreciation while great art also transcends the context
- the roots of some modern expressions in ancient and Renaissance art history
- art as documenting human suffering and human endurance
- art as mourning
- art as a response to violence (There is art after Auschwitz, we concluded)
- art transcending and sometimes merging different cultural traditions (comparing our Vietnam War Memorial with a hugely different Vietnamese war remembrance)
- permanent versus temporary art
- art and ethical issues
- art that crosses conventional boundaries and breaks customary taboos.

Throughout the week our instructor tried to help us understand the definition of Art. Why is smearing a floor with brown-tinted hair an artistic enterprise? Producing art, Peter Kalb suggests, is a conceptual enterprise, beyond technical expertise. Art is the execution of an idea that usually involves surprise, and perhaps novelty. His class evaluations were extremely enthusiastic.

Save the date: BOLLI Tenth Anniversary Celebration, May 13, 2010, 6–10 P.M.
From Russia with Love

by Phyllis Pressman Cohen

If you were to design your ideal course what would it include? An interesting subject? A knowledgeable, interesting, well spoken and engaged leader? Each week’s text enhanced with film clips and other visual media? Informed and involved student colleagues? Guest speakers with first hand knowledge of the subject? Have I got a course for you!

Ron Levy’s course entitled Russia: The Bear in the Room, offered in the Spring of 2009, had all those elements and more. Each week a full classroom listened intently as Ron spoke briefly on a subject which he had carefully researched. Very often he utilized a video clip from some actual event or a news program to make history come alive. In addition, two guest speakers who had actually grown up in the region under discussion visited the class to give presentations and entertain lively question and answer sessions. To round out the course, several class members prepared interesting and well-researched presentations. Notably, the course was appealing to both men and women; and the class list reflected that. Not coincidentally, many of us were descended from immigrants from the USSR.

Initially we focused on the following issues: the history that led to the Russian Revolution; the Communist era and its leaders; and the characteristics of the Soviet Empire. Then we spent considerable time on the events leading up to the break-up of the Soviet Union in 1991 and its aftermath. Much discussion was devoted to Putin and his role; to Medvedev; the gas crises in the area; how much control Russia has over the states which were once part of the USSR; and how Russia’s economic, political, and economic power is being used today. There was particular emphasis on the role Russia plays vis-à-vis the EU, NATO and the West.

It seems Ron has been preparing for this class all his life. Born in Iraq, he has lived in India, England, Canada, and the U.S.A. As an international business consultant he has traveled extensively in Europe, Asia, and, particularly relevant to this course, the Baltic States, Hungary, and the Czech republic. He chose to lead a course on this subject because he perceived that there was great interest in the region, it is important politically to the U.S.A., and he himself wanted to have a greater knowledge of the countries.

Previously he has led or co-led courses on Current Events both foreign and domestic, the history and development of the European Union, and the Soviet Republics. He is a longtime BOLLI stalwart and is also active in the larger Brandeis community as an executive board member of the Brandeis National Committee.

We Need You to Volunteer

Rochelle Gordon, the BOLLI Volunteer Coordinator, provides assistance to the program and administration by matching volunteers with tasks and projects. Upon registering for BOLLI, members may check off that they are willing to volunteer, a great way to help out in large and small ways. We call on volunteers to assist in the Gathering Place, hang posters or signs, move chairs, help with the audio/video equipment, prepare mailings and other office tasks, and serve as classroom assistants. BOLLI volunteers are always willing and able to give a helping hand.
For nearly two years, senior administrators at Brandeis and BOLLI have been working with Hebrew SeniorLife (HSL) leaders to develop a partnership to enhance both organizations. HSL is an integrated, eight-site system of senior health care, housing, research, and teaching. It has been a pioneer and standard-setter in these systems for decades. (Check out their Web site, [www.hebrewseniorlife.org](http://www.hebrewseniorlife.org)). On June 15th, HSL opened its newest site, NewBridge on the Charles, a continuum of housing and health care for older adults, located in Dedham.

Like all new initiatives, the first year will be devoted to developing, implementing, reviewing lessons learned, and improving. In that vein, the 2009–2010 academic year is a pilot year of this relationship.

There are two parts of our initial arrangement with HSL. First, Brandeis is providing NewBridge residents access to the educational, cultural, and social events held on campus that we call “value-added.” These opportunities include programs offered by the graduate professional schools and centers and institutes such as The Women’s Studies Research Center; The Schusterman Center for Israel Studies; The Crown Center for Middle East Studies; The International Center for Ethics, Justice, and Public Life; and the Schuster Institute for Investigative Journalism. NewBridge will pay a fee for a certain number of these special “HSL/BOLLI” memberships; and this revenue will come to our program.

The second part of the relationship is an innovative model of seminars, e.g., four- or six-session programs, offered at NewBridge. There will be a fee per resident participating in the seminars. These programs will be led by Brandeis graduate students who will receive a stipend and will balance the twin goals of being scholarly and participatory. The opportunity called the *Lifelong Learning Instructorship* will enable these Brandeis graduate students to design their own courses, hone teaching skills, enhance their résumés, earn a stipend, and reach out to mature adults who have a strong interest in learning.

We are developing this model with the assistance of Greg Freeze, Dean of the Graduate School of Arts & Sciences, and Michaele Whelan, Vice Provost, to whom we report. The dean and his staff are recruiting and selecting students with the goal of conducting two seminars in the Fall of 2009 and four in the Spring of 2010. The vice provost and I will be meeting with potential candidates, interviewing them, and conducting an extensive orientation focused on teaching and learning with older students.

These two programs enable HSL to bring the “Brandeis brand” to their new community as one aspect of a wide range of lifelong learning programming. These programs also bring additional revenue to BOLLI at a difficult time and assist Brandeis graduate students both financially and professionally.

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**Helicopter Friends**  
*by Judy Cohen*

On one warm and sunny spring day, the International Friends and the SID students walked the Freedom Trail in Boston. The students were to take the train from Brandeis to North Station. The host families and the students were to meet in front of the Samuel Adams statue at Fanueil Hall. I gave explicit directions how to get from North Station to the Quincy Marketplace. After the tour, the students wanted to stay and shop in the marketplace. I began long, detailed directions on how to get back to North Station without getting lost. Very quietly, Maria Nandago tapped me on the shoulder. “Mom, I got here from Africa.”
**BOLLI Doesn’t Stop When Classes End**

by Tamara Chernow

What is sadder for a high school student than the need to go to summer school? Quite the contrary is true for BOLLI members. There is a feeling of sadness when classes end in the spring and there is no “school” in the summer. Fortunately for many members there are interesting choices for staying connected and being intellectually stimulated:

- Rapaporte Seminars [*See reviews on page 3.*]
- New Yorker Short Story Discussion Group
- Current Events Discussion Group
- Summer Dramatics Group (read, discussed, analyzed, saw productions on video, and did readings of 2 plays).

A special opportunity was offered to BOLLI members when the Brandeis Gateway Program for entering freshman asked for our help. About a dozen BOLLI members agreed to hold five weeks of English conversation practice with 3 to 6 students each. Those of us who participated were rewarded not only with good feelings for helping young students, but with the chance to learn about life in another country from the point of view of 18-year olds.

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**Do You Prefer A or B?**

by Naomi Schmidt

For the final class session of *Making Sense of Wine* we gathered at the Newton home of Ron and Maxine Rubin to put into practice all that we had learned during the semester by embarking on an elegant five-course wine and food dinner. Starting with appetizers of spanakopita and crab cakes, accompanied by two different kinds of champagne, we then savored additional courses of quiche, salmon, *coq au vin*, and lamb shanks, each accompanied by a pair of wines which were the subject for comparison.

Co-SGL Allan Kleinman gave each participant two plastic cups, labeled A and B so that with each course we were able to sample two wines. Peter Schmidt, the other co-SGL, led a discussion about their relative features and merits. Each of us also had a scorecard to mark our individual preferences within each pair and, over coffee and dessert, to rank our top three choices.

Between courses, Allan presented readings on pairing food with wine and the group conducted an experiment comparing the effectiveness of bleach with a commercial product for removing red wine stains. Dan Oprian, Brandeis Professor of Biochemistry, explained the operative chemical reactions.

While there was some agreement on the wines that ranked at the top of lists, there were quite a few instances where we differed in our preferences. One thing we all did agree on, however, was that this had been an excellent learning experience and also a most convivial one.
Imagine an organization with over 80,000 members dispersed at 122 separate sites. How would you provide support and resources to each of these groups? What mechanisms would foster more effective communication and strengthened connections?

Answering these questions is the role of Kali Lightfoot, Executive Director of the National Resource Center for Osher Lifelong Learning Institutes at the University of Southern Maine in Portland. Kali had been the director of the local Osher but moved to her current position when the Center was funded with an endowment from the Osher Foundation in 2004. It is currently housed in a beautiful state-of-the-art building shared with the Muskie School for Public Service and the OLLI at the University of Southern Maine.

The Center annually publishes the *LLI Review*, a journal of original research on 50+ learning. Kali also disseminates an informal newsletter with notices, announcements, and interesting items. She attends national conferences to stay current with research on aging, brain fitness, and adult learning; and the Center itself sponsors a national OLLI conference every 18 to 24 months. The Center's Web site, [http://usm.maine.edu/ollinational](http://usm.maine.edu/ollinational), provides links to all OLLIs and to sources about adult education. ASK OLLI is a Web log for OLLI administrators to share ideas, practices and strategies for handling challenges such as the current economic downturn.

In addition to two half-time assistants, the Center supports a full-time Director of Communications, currently Anne Cardale. Anne seeks innovative ways to enhance a sense of community both among OLLI directors and among individual members. The Web site hosts a Life Story Archive and a new “Planet OLLI” which compiles posts from several different blogs. Other ideas Anne is considering include a “second life” site with online classes and meetings and the use of avatars for individuals to engage in cyberworld communities.

Kali observed that Osher Institutes do not fit one mold as each reflects local preferences. Citing a few interesting examples of programming, however, Kali mentioned that the George Mason University OLLI has a gardening club—the Dirty Knees Club—that landscapes around its building. San Francisco hosts an artist in residence. Some OLLIs organize hiking clubs; others perform service-learning projects. For example, the University of Southern Mississippi OLLI helped with rebuilding after Hurricane Katrina. Duke University's OLLI lists among its activities two book clubs and “Language Tables at Lunch.”

Historically, Kali explained that the Senior College at the University of Southern Maine morphed into the first Osher program in 2001; and, in fact, the OLLI acronym was created there. A year later, the Osher Foundation approached continuing education directors in California offering $100,000 for three years; thirty two took advantage of the offer. The Osher network has grown tremendously. Five years ago there were 43 institutes, about a third of the present number. Now the Osher Foundation is not accepting any new affiliates although, Kali noted, there are about 300 non-Osher LLIs.

As it fulfills its mission to promote excellence in adult learning communities, the National Resource Center in Portland will benefit lifelong learners everywhere.
Oct. 3  (8 P.M.; lecture 7 P.M.)
**Lydian String Quartet**
Beethoven *Quartet in E flat, Op. 127*
Shostakovich *Unfinished Quartet*
Schoenberg *Quartet No. 2, Op. 10*, with soprano
Dominique Labelle

Oct. 4  (3 P.M.)
**Fauxharmonic Orchestra**
Paul Henry Smith, conductor
Webern *Symphonie*
Varèse *Ionisation*
Beethoven *Second Symphony*
Brandeis student compositions
The Fauxharmonic Orchestra is a computer-based instrument that Brandeis alumnus Smith has created to perform orchestral music using Macs, Wii controllers, and Bang & Olufsen speakers. The concert will open with a demonstration and end with a Q&A session for anyone interested in the musical or technical facets of this new mode of performing orchestral music. Learn more at www.fauxharmonic.com
$5 for BOLLI members with i.d.

Oct. 9  (8 P.M.)
**Marquee Series: Blues**
Paul Rishell and Annie Raines, performers
Rousing interpreters of country blues, the original acoustic style that gave birth to electric blues, R&B, and rock. “While their guitar, harmonica, and vocals are roiling, muscular, and masterful, their shows are down home-friendly and fun-loving.” – *Boston Globe*

Oct. 17  (8 P.M.)
**Together Again**
Daniel Stepner, performer
An evening of unaccompanied Bach, followed by stand-up comedy

Oct. 18  (3 P.M.)
**Brandeis-Wellesley Orchestra**
Neil Hampton, conductor
Mendelssohn *The Hebrides Overture, Op. 26*
Mendelssohn *Capriccio brillant, Op. 22*
Michael Shafir, piano
Beethoven *Symphony No. 1 in C, Op. 21*
Nicholas Alexander Brown, asst. conductor
$5 for BOLLI members with i.d.

Oct. 24  (8 P.M.)
**World Music Series**
Obbini Tumbao, conductor
The band’s powerful horn section—trumpets and trombones—is supported by an ebullient rhythm section of congas, timbales, bongos, piano, and bass. “If Mambo Kings Poncho Sanchez and Tito Puente got together to jam with Herb Alpert and Ry Cooder of the Buena Vista Social Club, it might sound something like Obbini Tumbao.” – *Boston Globe*

Oct. 25  (1 P.M.)
**MusicFest 2009**
A highlight of Fall Fest weekend, the Brandeis music department ensembles present a fun-filled performance sure to delight everyone’s musical tastes.
Free and open to the public

**SPINGOLD THEATER**
For tickets, click on go.brandeis.edu/BrandeisTickets or call (781-736-3400, option 5)
Save $2 handling fee by buying tickets directly at the box office
In addition, BOLLI members receive a $5 discount off the $18 or $20 price
For substantially greater savings, consider purchasing a season pass to all Spingold performances

Oct. 8–10, 15–17  (8 P.M.) and Oct. 17, 18  (2 P.M.)
**Everything in the Garden**
Written by Edward Albee and directed by Eric Hill