

*Our monthly e-Bulletin provides quick updates on activities of THEN/HiER and its partners.*

## What's new with THEN/HiER?



\* **Eric Damer, THEN/HiER member**, has published a review of *Unearthing Canada's Hidden Past: A Short History of Adult Education* by Michael Welton (Toronto: Thompson Publishing, 2013) in *Adult Education Quarterly* 65, no. 1 (February 2015): 76-7. Read the review.

\* **Lauren Naus, THEN/HiER member**, has posted an announcement calling for nominations for The Champlain Society's Floyd S. Chalmers Award in Ontario History. The award recognizes the best book in Ontario history published in the previous year, in this case 2014. The deadline for nominations is April 30.



The Champlain Society



\* **Scott Pollock, doctoral candidate at the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education, University of Toronto (OISE/UT)**, has accepted the position of THEN/HiER Anglophone Graduate Student Committee Coordinator as of April 1. We wish the best of luck to **Heather McGregor**, the outgoing coordinator, who recently defended her doctoral dissertation.

## Upcoming Deadline

THEN/HiER is providing bursaries to cover airfare to attend the 2015 Historical Thinking Summer Institute, which will take place at the Museum of Vancouver from July 6 to 11. Through the use of historical thinking concepts, participants will explore the substantive themes of migrations, contact and cultural exchange over time. The deadline to apply for a bursary is May 15.

Bursaries for the Institute are also available from the Canadian Museums Association (CMA) to assist museum professionals in professional development training activities. More information.



The Museum of Vancouver  
Photo: Jenny van Enckevort  
UBC PDCE

## Feature Blog



Old streetcar on Hastings and Main, Vancouver, 1918,  
via Wikimedia Commons

The feature blog this month is from Chris Pedersen at UBC, THEN/HiER's most recent Anglophone Graduate Student Committee member. He takes up the topic of historical distance from various theoretical perspectives over time – developmental historicism, modernist historicism, postmodernist historicism, and postfoundationalism. The article, the first part in a series, is a very thought-provoking read!

## What's new with our partners?

\* **Active History** is holding a conference at Huron College in London, Ontario, from October 2 to 4. At *New Directions in Active History: Institutions, Communication, and Technologies*, historians interested in the practice of Active History can share their research, methods and projects with each other, and explore new directions for ActiveHistory.ca. The deadline for proposals is April 15.



\* **Canada's History** is holding its 2015 *Kayak Kid's Illustrated History Challenge* for Canadian students aged 7 to 14 who create their own illustrated story based on any aspect of Canadian history. Two prizes will be awarded – one English and one French – of \$1,000 each plus a trip to Ottawa to receive the award from the Governor General. The deadline for entries is May 1.

\* **The BC Historical Federation (BCHF)** is accepting submissions for two W. Kaye Lamb Scholarships. The awards are conferred upon university or college students in British Columbia for essays on this province's history. The deadline for applications is May 15.



## Graduate Student Committees

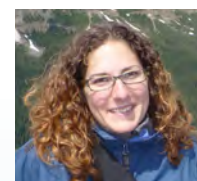
I am sad to say this month will be my last *e-Bulletin* report, but happy to announce that it is because I defended my dissertation, entitled *Decolonizing the Nunavut School System: Stories in a River of Time*, on March 12, 2015! I will be handing over the reins as coordinator of the Anglophone Graduate Student Committee next month to Scott Pollock, a doctoral candidate at OISE/UT. Please join me in welcoming Scott! I have



Heather with members of her doctoral committee  
Michael Marker, Penney Clark and Peter Seixas (left to right).

very much enjoyed serving in this role during this past school year, extending my participation on the committee since 2011. I look forward to continuing to be involved in THEN/HiER and its partner projects, such as the Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History (GUMICH) website *The Franklin Mystery: Life and Death in the Arctic*, and the Historical Thinking Summer Institute. Lastly, I am excited to extend a hearty congratulations to the Anglophone Graduate Student Committee members who will be presenting at the Canadian Historical Association (CHA) conference this June in Ottawa on our THEN/HiER sponsored panel with the francophone committee! They are Cynthia Wallace-Casey, Mary Chaktsiris and David Scott. I wish the committee all the best, and look forward to crossing paths with those members who will be at Congress. Contact Heather McGregor. Contact Scott Pollock.

As Heather mentions above, several of our committee members will be presenting at a bilingual panel in Ottawa in June during the CHA conference. Francophone committee members on the panel include Raphaël Gani, Geneviève Goulet and myself. The object of the panel, entitled *Why Should History Education Research Matter to Historians?*, is to present graduate students' research in history education at the largest conference of historians in Canada, which fits perfectly with the mandate of THEN/HiER. More details on this must-see event will appear in future *e-Bulletins*. On the blog *Enseigner l'histoire*, I invite you to read the reflections of Catherine Déry on the difficulties in reconciling pursuing a Master's degree and teaching at the secondary level. I have also written the first article in a series on the final stages of doctoral studies. Happy spring to all! Contact Marie-Hélène Brunet.



Marie-Hélène Brunet

## Research Snapshots

This section of our monthly e-Bulletin highlights our members' research projects.

**Scott Alan Metzger, Associate Professor**  
**College of Education, Penn State University**

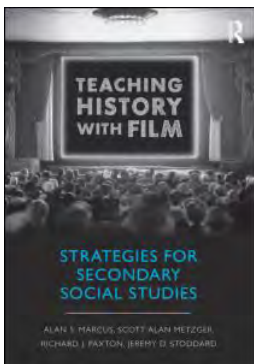
### Do Media Teach the Past?

My high-school history teacher showed *Becket* (1964) in class. I loved the film but was surprised to learn (when I studied the source play in college) that Thomas Becket really wasn't Saxon like in the movie. Nonetheless, I still felt like I gained something from watching this film—I was certainly more interested in medieval history because of it. Was that why my teacher chose to show *Becket* in his class, or did he (mistakenly) think it was accurate, or did the film's theme of moral resistance to tyrannical authority resonate with his politics in the 1980s?



When I became a high-school teacher, I brought my love of history movies into my classroom. Most of my students were equally excited—especially teenage boys, as this was the era of *Saving Private Ryan* (1998) and *Gladiator* (2000). I had a sense that my students would gain some educational benefit beyond just excitement or visual interest, but I grew uncertain upon learning the hard way how unreliable history movies tend to be in terms of factual accuracy. My experience as a novice practitioner using film was unfulfilling. When completing my Ph.D., I discovered a growing domain of research on history and popular culture. Alan Marcus introduced me to a community of scholars interested in educational uses of history films by inviting me to contribute to his edited book *Celluloid Blackboard: Teaching History with Film* (Information Age Publishing, 2006).

So after a doctorate, a decade of study, and a number of publications, what have I learned in response to the question, “Do media teach the past?” My answer is—yes, but not very well on their own. It is clear that mass media are highly influential on the general public, including students. Pretending that media influence doesn't affect students' academic learning isn't a satisfying option. Even when students are savvy enough to acknowledge that media are not always historically accurate, they often don't know how to distinguish fact from fiction. Images and messages in media can colonize the memory and imagination—an impact on historical thinking that may be only semi-conscious. The view that media by themselves “teach” the past is highly problematic, as any educational effects frequently are ancillary to the film's goals. A well-prepared, knowledgeable teacher is required to help students view historically oriented media critically and analytically, not just as entertainment. Students learn from media best when they have educative questions to think about and activities to apply what they learn.



One major conclusion emerging from my work with teachers and other scholars interested in history and media is the importance of instructional intentionality. Picking the right media title is not enough (though that helps). A really good historical movie can be badly used in the classroom, and a historically bad movie can be put to good educational use. The key is to have planned instruction and scaffolding that positions students to engage meaningfully with media for clear learning purposes. Alan Marcus, Rich Paxton, Jeremy Stoddard and I demonstrate such purpose in *Teaching History with Film: Strategies for Secondary Social Studies* (Routledge, 2010). Through actual classroom examples, we explore techniques that support advanced learning goals like historical empathy, analytical/interpretive thinking, debating controversial issues, and history films as visual narratives.

My hope is that scholarship like this can establish historical media literacy as a recognized skill in social education and teacher training. History is not just academic—the past is also a source for making sense of the world, and for how people and communities define their social identities. Being “literate” in identifying and critiquing media messages about how the past connects to the present world is a 21<sup>st</sup>-century skill if I've ever heard one.

While movies are a prime media form for dealing with historical topics, in recent years I've become just as intrigued by other media forms—such as music that includes meaning-making about the past, and video games that empower people to play in the past and encounter alternate versions and experiences. Now I am serving as lead editor of a forthcoming research *Handbook of History Teaching and Learning* (to be published by Wiley-Blackwell tentatively in early 2018). It will be exciting to have separate full chapters on Film, Media, and Popular Culture as well as Digital Simulations, Games, and Technology. Research on media and historical thinking and learning is rapidly growing, as is consensus in the educational community that this is a crucial issue for citizens living in a media-saturated age.

**\* MORE TO COME NEXT MONTH!**