PAS, consortium partner awarded four-year, $2 million grant

By Hilary Hurd Anyaso

PAS and its consortium partner, the Center for African Studies at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign, have been awarded US Department of Education Title VI funding for both the National Resource Center (NRC) and Foreign Language and Area Studies (FLAS) programs. The total amount awarded for 2014–15, the first year of the four-year grant, is $518,000. The total commitment is expected to amount to more than $2 million through 2018.

With Title VI funding, PAS’s long-standing involvement with the African continent will extend to local engagement that makes the program’s faculty and student expertise, as well as rich library resources on Africa, available to a variety of communities. The NRC grant will fund collaborative activities between Northwestern and the University of Illinois that enhance African studies on both campuses and provide new opportunities for students and faculty, including annual joint symposia, new course and concentration offerings, and strengthened instruction in African languages.

Highlights for Northwestern include development of a new interdisciplinary graduate certificate in African security studies; an intensive summer workshop on Arabic manuscripts from Africa; and new practicum sites in Africa for the Access to Health Project, an initiative in which students and faculty from the School of Law, Center for Global Health, and Kellogg School of Management work with a developing-world community to assess and design ways to meet its public health needs. FLAS funding will allow Northwestern to offer two graduate academic-year fellowships and three graduate or undergraduate summer fellowships per year for students of African languages and related area studies.

Title VI support for research and education is the backbone of international studies and foreign language training in this country,” said Will Reno, professor of political science and PAS director. “This grant is crucial for PAS’s mission to train students and aid researchers to engage and work with counterparts in foreign countries. This grant will expand our program’s reach in a comprehensive range of research, teaching, and outreach activities.”

The consortium will also support the integration of African studies and languages into K–12 teacher education and community college curricula through partnerships with Northeastern Illinois University, Malcolm X College, the Newberry Library’s Teachers as Scholars Program, and the Global Reach Initiative in Urbana-Champaign.

Title VI was introduced as a part of the National Defense Education Act of 1958 as a means of promoting language development, with a focus on less commonly taught languages.
Professor Emeritus Ivor G. H. Wilks, one of the most distinguished historians of Africa, died at his home in Wales on October 7, 2014. He was 86 and had long been in poor health.

One of the groundbreaking Africanist scholars who decolonized African studies in the late 1950s, Wilks specialized in the Asante empire and its periphery and in West African Islam. He joined Northwestern two different times. In 1967 he came to the Department of History, resigning a year later to take a position at Cambridge University. Unhappy with Cambridge’s offering him limited opportunity to conduct research in Ghana, Wilks returned to Northwestern in 1970 and remained here until his retirement in 1993. He was appointed Melville J. Herskovits Professor of African Studies in 1984.

Wilks was a dedicated and inspiring teacher and adviser who took time to listen to his students. (A tribute from one of them accompanies this article.) Altogether he advised 28 students who completed PhDs in African history, and he served on the dissertation committees of another 35 in non-African fields.

His most influential publication, *Asante in the Nineteenth Century: The Structure and Evolution of a Political Order* (1975), was based on wide-ranging oral history fieldwork. It was awarded the African Studies Association’s Herskovits Award in 1976. Other major works were *Chronicles from Gonja: A Tradition of West African Muslim Historiography* (1986), coauthored with Nehemia Levtzion and Bruce Haight, and *Wa and the Wala: Islam and Polity in Northwestern Ghana* (1989). Many of Wilks’s articles were republished in the collection *Forests of Gold: Essays on the Akan and the Kingdom of Asante* (1993).

Wilks’s interest in Africa developed out of his strong Welsh nationalism. He found common cause in the anticolonial struggle in Palestine, where he was a lieutenant in the Indian army for two years after World War II. In 1948 he entered the University College of North Wales and, after graduating, accepted a teaching post in 1953 at the five-year-old University College of the Gold Coast (later the University of Ghana). He served in various capacities: lecturer in the philosophy department (1953–55), resident tutor for the Northern Territories for the Institute of Extra-Mural Studies (1955–58), resident tutor for Ashanti and Brong-Ahafo (1958–61), senior research fellow at the new Institute of African Studies (1961–63) and its deputy director (1965–66), and research professor in African history (1964–66).

During Wilks’s time at the University of Ghana, scholars at African institutions explored a range of methodologies, old and new, to reorient the study of Africa to African agency and innovation rather than a response to European colonialism. One of the most important new tools was the use of oral materials (local traditions, Asante stool histories, lists of rulers, songs, and life histories). Wilks undertook the systematic collection of such materials in Akan areas, publishing many articles on transformation in state building, economies, religion, and community institutions.


Wilks continued writing and research in retirement. Among his projects were a study of colonial Asante, an Asante biographical dictionary, and a life of Abu Bakr al-Siddiq of...
Timbuktu. In 1995 he gave the Aggrey-Fraser-Guggisberg Memorial Lectures at the University of Ghana, a weeklong series that was published as *Ghana Past and Present: One Nation, Many Histories*. He told that audience, “I have no teacher or teachers, I have no *ismad*, no chain of teachers extending back over generations. My real teachers were men, and sometimes women, who had no academic credentials whatsoever, but whose understanding of the past was truly remarkable.” He ended the lecture series by paying tribute to six people who influenced his interpretation of Ghanaian history, including a World War I veteran, a member of the Kumasi Nsumankwa, a head butcher, a mufti of Bobo-Dioulasso, a Muslim scholar, and a Christian clergyman.

Wilks donated his valuable Ghana-related manuscript collection to the Herskovits Library. The core of the collection, some 12,000 cards, form the primary database of the Asante Collective Biography Project, which he founded in 1972 in collaboration with Thomas McCaskie, then a Northwestern history graduate student. The cards document items of biographical information drawn from a wide range of published, archival, and oral sources. They include material in English translation from Akan, Arabic, Danish, Dutch, French, German, and Hausa texts. The ACBP has two goals: to provide a readily accessible source of information of the Asante past and to lay the foundation for a future dictionary of Ghanaian national biography. Provisional steps towards this latter objective are described in the ACBP’s journals *Asante Seminar* (1975–76) and *Asantesem* (1977–79). Many graduate students in Northwestern’s history department have contributed data to the project and used data in it. A number of them now hold senior academic posts in universities and continue to publish on the history of Ghana.

Wilks is survived by his wife, Nancy Lawler; four children from his former marriage with Grace Amanor-Wilks: Professor Kojo Amanoor (Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana); Dede Amanoor (development consultant and politician in Ghana); David Amanoor (broadcaster with the BBC World Service); and Suzanne Peggy Amanor-Wilks (neurodevelopmental movement specialist, USA); and many grandchildren.

“Ivor Wilks taught history as a craft, much like cabinet-making, and his instructions were straightforward: assemble your tools, hone your skills, practice your craft... Ivor was an extraordinary teacher and mentor, patient and generous with his time, and remarkable in his ability to make students—be they disoriented freshmen or advanced PhD students—feel that their ideas were worthwhile and deserved to be taken seriously... He lived by the Asante proverb ‘Nyansa nyɛ sika na wɔakyekyere asie’ (Wisdom is not gold dust that should be tied up and put away).”

—Jean Allman (PhD 1987), former student of Ivor Wilks and currently J. H. Hexter Professor in the Humanities and director of the Center for the Humanities in Arts and Sciences at Washington University in St. Louis
The Herskovits Library has acquired a treasure trove in the 136 boxes of documents of Jan Vansina, a major figure in the study of Africa. In his career Vansina published 16 monographs and more than 200 articles on central African history and new sources of historical methodology, such as oral history.

The collection, spanning the years 1953 to 1994, includes field notes, correspondence, photographs, maps, manuscripts, drafts, and other papers used by Vansina in his research, writing, and teaching over more than 50 years. The original arrangement of the papers has been preserved.

“Professor Vansina’s gift is among the most major gifts to the Herskovits Library in its history,” said David Easterbrook, George and Mary LeCron Foster Curator Emeritus.

Esmeralda Kale, the current George and Mary LeCron Foster Curator, observed that “the materials on the ethnography of central Africa will be of particular interest to researchers.”

Vansina was a visiting professor at Northwestern in the 1950s. PAS founder Melville Herskovits had offered him a job with Northwestern, but he was committed to the history department at the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where he taught for more than 30 years.

Vansina is considered one of the founders of the modern study of African history. His work on precolonial state building in Congo, Rwanda, and Burundi helped reorient the study of African history from its former European emphasis to a modern African emphasis. His first book, *Oral Tradition: A Study in Historical Methodology* (translation, 1965), explored how to use rigorous historical methods to document the historical evidence left by the Kuba from the Belgian Congo before there were textual records. He insisted that it was possible to study precolonial African history in a systematic framework using the oral tradition. This methodology instilled a sense of self-confidence in the new African history.

Vansina was a member of the University of Wisconsin–Madison history faculty from 1960 until his retirement in 1994 and also chaired the African languages and literature department. He pushed for its creation of a full-fledged African history program, which began in 1965. He also managed the university’s African research seminar and, with his colleague Philip Curtin, established the Comparative Tropical History Program, which encompassed African history and African studies.

“He pioneered in placing the study of precolonial Africa on a firm methodological basis. … There is no historian of Africa who has not been influenced by Vansina, directly or indirectly,” said Jonathon Glassman (history), who studied with Vansina at UW–Madison.

“Vansina’s archive . . . will draw scholars from around the world to dig around in the copious notes, interview transcriptions, and other field materials, which are especially rich for the full sweep of central Africa, from Angola and DRC to Rwanda and Burundi, but are also rich for early 20th-century Libyan military history,” said David Schoenbrun (history), whose work has been profoundly influenced by Vansina. The entire Northwestern community—and those from around the world, but especially in Africa—should be grateful that Vansina has entrusted the Herskovits Library with the curatorial responsibility for easing access to this archive. It was the perfect choice.”

A finding aid to the Vansina collection is at http://findingaids.library.northwestern.edu/catalog/inu-ead-afri-archon-1486. The papers are available in the Herskovits Library 8:30 a.m. to 4:45 p.m. Monday through Friday. Appointments are recommended. For more information, visit the Herskovits Library website or e-mail africana@northwestern.edu.
Northwestern well represented at annual Africanists meeting

Several Northwestern scholars presented papers, chaired panels, or participated in roundtables and panel discussions at the African Studies Association meeting in Indianapolis in November. The meeting’s theme was “Rethinking Violence, Reconstruction, and Reconciliation.”

Faculty participants included Galya Ruffer (international studies), who served on the program committee and organized multiple panels with a focus on refugees and returnees, the role of diasporas, and the effects of violence on linguistic communities. Will Reno (political science) presented a paper, “The Logic of Post-State War: Violence and Personal Networks in Somalia,” chaired a panel titled “Ending Africa’s Persistent Civil Wars,” and cochaired another panel, “Rebel Mobilization and Organization in Africa.” Rachel Beatty Riedl (political science) took part in a roundtable on new directions in African party research.

Graduate students attending the meeting included Kofi Asante (sociology), chair of the panel “New Directions in East African History” and presenter of the paper “We Want Good Governors and Plenty of Good Roads: Gold Coast Merchants and the Making of the Colonial State, 1850–1950”; Nathaniel Mathews (history), who chaired the “Violence and Political Struggle in Kenya” panel and presented a paper titled “Oman’s African Past: Nation and Empire in the Making of the Zanzibari-Omanis, 1964–Present”; and Amy Selby (history), “New Directions in East African History” panel chair and presenter of “Switching the Stigma: Metapragmatic Discourse and Identity in World War I German East Africa Concentration Camps.”


Also presenting papers were Esmeralda M. Kale (Herskovits Library), “Uncovering Hidden Gems”; William Murphy (PAS affiliate), “Metapragmatic Logic of Violence: War Narratives in Postwar Liberia and Sierra Leone”; and Sarah Davis Westwood (visiting scholar), “Unknown Soldiers: An Early History of the Tirailleurs Haoussas.”

Online library guide created on Ebola crisis

As the Ebola crisis has been in the news for the past year, the Herskovits Library has created an online LibGuide (http://libguides.northwestern.edu/Ebola-AfricasResponse) to provide information on the disease in West Africa.

By the end of 2014 the World Health Organization reported a total of 20,206 cases of Ebola, out of which there were 7,905 deaths. The first case of the current Ebola outbreak was reported in Guinea, followed by serious outbreaks in Sierra Leone and Liberia. Struggling economies, low per capita income, and fragile infrastructures have limited the ability of these countries to fight the epidemic. Nigeria and Senegal, however, are two success stories, now declared by the WHO as Ebola free. Mali has reported only seven cases.

While scientists work to develop a vaccine, it is important to document the affected countries’ efforts to contain the epidemic. The LibGuide aims to meet this need and also provides information about previous Ebola occurrences. In addition, an exhibit in the library during winter quarter will focus on several different viruses, including Ebola, and infectious disease outbreaks throughout history.
Panofsky awardees carry out summer predissertation fieldwork in Africa

Established to honor Hans E. Panofsky, the late curator of the Herskovits Library, Panofsky Predissertation Awards support Northwestern graduate students’ fieldwork or archival research in Africa. Eleven awardees completed trips last summer.

**Priscilla Adipa** (sociology) went to Accra to explore how physical and geographic characteristics of selected art venues shape cultural experiences within these spaces. She established contacts for her ethnographic and interview-based research.

**Kofi Asante** (sociology) conducted research in England and Ghana to analyze how cracks within colonial administrative structures enabled or foreclosed certain forms of nationalist activism. He collected data in the United Kingdom’s National Archives at Kew and the Public Records and Archives Administration Department of Ghana, focusing on the correspondence of various Gold Coast governors and the secretaries of state of the colonies in London. He found documentation of the often sharp disagreements between the official Colonial Office policies in Britain and the government policies in the Gold Coast.

**Marco Bocchese** (political science) spent time in Addis Ababa researching relations between the International Criminal Court and the African Union. He interviewed diplomats from African nations as well as non-African diplomats about three issues: how well the ICC officials understood African politics; whether African foreign policy experts ignored the ICC; and how parties addressed misperceptions of one another.

**Magda Boutros** (sociology) carried out fieldwork in Cairo on grassroots strategies to combat sexual assault in public spaces. She interviewed 30 volunteers from five different social movements, each founded in or after 2012, that have operated intervention teams for the protection of women during public gatherings. She also undertook participant observation at workshops and conferences organized by these movements.

**Moses Khisa** (political science) did fieldwork in Ethiopia and Uganda on how coalition politics during the initial stages of a new regime sets in motion political developments that shape the nature and form of political institutions.

**Sakhile Matlhare** (sociology) was in Berlin to research the experiences of African visual artists who left economically developing regions to live and work in Germany. Drawing from interviews, art talks, and art archives, her work aims to trace mechanisms underlying the sociocultural economies that survive and thrive alongside the well-documented monetary inflows and outflows in local and global art markets.

**Christopher Muhoozi** (history) traveled to southwest Uganda to investigate the history of ethnic thought and identification in Ankole. Visiting archives and key people, he sought to unravel the processes underlying categorization as either Bairu or Bahima.

**Jessica Pouchet** (anthropology), went to the Usambura Mountains of Tanzania, where she made logistical and administrative arrangements to begin longer-term ethnographic research. In this biodiversity hot spot partially protected by the Amani Nature Reserve, she interviewed village leaders, environmental activists, and government foresters. She also did archival research that documents the relationship between village governments and the Nature Reserve as well as the role of language in the politics of forest management.

**Vanessa Watters** (anthropology) was in Accra and Lomé to explore how economic marginalization and racialization at home and abroad inform people’s engagement with transnational Islamic development organizations.

—Compiled by Sakhile Mathile
Documenting items destined for the Herskovits Library of African Studies, I see and describe an abundance of rarities. One that stands out is a photocopy (pictured) of a 75-page manuscript handwritten in French that I pulled out of an envelope one day in early 2012. What caught my eye were the drawings: a village domestic scene on the front sheet and sketches of leaves and seedpods amid the beautifully penned text. The boldly written title was “L’Enfant Sarakolle” (The Soninke Child), and the author was one Modibo Keïta.

There was no clue as to the origin or date of the document or how it happened to be in our collection. An online search eventually yielded a partial answer. In a footnote to a 2008 article in Liens, Nouvelle Série, Abdoul Sow at Université Cheikh Anta Diop de Dakar (UCAD) listed “L’Enfant Sarakolle,” among other documents, as being a cabier de l’élève (pupil’s notebook) from 1932–36.

That was the key to beginning to situate the document and its creator, for Modibo Keïta is the name of the first president of Mali. The path led to École William Ponty, a government teachers’ college on the island of Gorée near Dakar, which Modibo Keïta from Bamako, French Sudan, attended in 1934–36, graduating at the head of his small class, and to a collection of papers known as cahiers William Ponty. More than 700 of these mémoires de fin d’études (student theses) were produced between 1934 and 1946; they now form part of the archive of French West Africa at the Institut Fondamental d’Afrique Noire (IFAN) at UCAD. These texts have attracted interest over the years because École William Ponty became known as a “nursery” for leaders of French-speaking West Africa, including the future President Keïta. Although the Ponty teachers evaluated them only for their use of French, the papers may provide valuable ethnographic information. They are also attractive because of their illustrations.

When I asked David Easterbrook, then our Africana curator, how this copy came into our collection, he said that in 2000 Mette Shayne, then a librarian at Northwestern, had commissioned doctoral student Christopher Hayden, who was headed to Dakar to research his thesis, to photocopy items for the Herskovits Library. Hayden visited both IFAN and the national archives of Senegal, contributing copies of numerous primary resources to our collection.

I wanted to do more with the manuscript by the young Modibo Keïta than merely catalog it. At the African Studies Association conference in Baltimore in November 2013, I met Kassim Kone, a Malian author of several Bambara-related publications who teaches at SUNY Cortland. Kone was then president of the Mande Studies Association, of which I became a member and to which I proposed a paper for the Ninth International Mande Studies Conference at Bobo-Dioulasso in June 2014.

While attending the conference, I visited the Mémorial (Monument) Modibo Keïta, built in Bamako in the late 1990s during the presidency of Alpha Oumar Konaré, who oversaw the “rehabilitation” of Keïta’s reputation. Keïta’s difficult presidency was ended by a military coup in late 1968, when he was imprisoned for almost nine years in northern Mali without trial. In February 1977 he was transferred to Bamako, where he died under suspicious circumstances. The military regime’s announcement of his death described him merely as a “retired teacher,” omitting his political legacy.

The memorial’s director, Modibo Diallo, and research assistant, Moussa Traoré, showed me their collection of framed presidential photographs of Keïta. I left them a copy of our photocopy of the Ponty manuscript, which they knew of but had not seen. So, in a small way, I returned something of Modibo Keïta back to his birthplace almost 80 years after he completed his student paper.

César Braga-Pinto (Brazilian studies) is coeditor of João Albasini e as luzes de Nwandzengele: a jornalismo e política em Moçambique 1908–1922 (Maputo: Alcance, 2014), a 400-page collection of articles by Albasini, the prolific writer, activist, and founder of Mozambique’s first black newspapers.

Robert Launay (anthropology) presented talks on “Writing Boards and Blackboards: Islamic Education in Africa” at the University of Urbino (Italy) and at the Zentrum Moderner Orient (Berlin) last June.

Sakhile Matlhare (sociology graduate student) took part in a November 19 gallery conversation about the exhibition “Wangechi Mutu: A Fantastic Journey” at Northwestern’s Block Museum of Art.


David Peyton (political science graduate student) was awarded the Social Science Research Council’s Dissertation Proposal Development Fellowship this past summer. The fellowship supported Peyton’s summer research in the Democratic Republic of Congo and his participation in two proposal-writing workshops, the first in Berkeley, California, and the second in Arlington, Virginia. In addition, he received a Fulbright-Hays Award to support his 2015–16 fieldwork on urbanization trends in the DRC.

Jessica Pouchet (anthropology graduate student) has won Fulbright-Hays and Wenner-Gren Foundation research grants to conduct fieldwork on her dissertation project, “Conservation and Conversation: Language and the Politics of Participatory Forest Management in Tanzania,” during 2015.

Galja Ruffer (international studies) is coeditor of Adjudicating Refugee and Asylum Status: The Role of Witness, Expertise, and Testimony (Cambridge University Press, 2014).

David Schoenbrun (history) presented a paper, “Pythons Worked: Constellating Communities of Practice and Conceptual Metaphor in Northern Victoria Nyanza, c. 800–1200 CE,” in October as part of a Society for American Archaeology–Amerind Foundation seminar titled “Learning and Doing: Communities of Practice in Scalar Perspective.” Next spring Schoenbrun will be a visiting professor in the Department of History at Duke University.

Helen Tilley (history) won the Society for the Social Studies of Science’s Ludwik Fleck Prize for her book Africa as a Living Laboratory: Empire, Development, and the Problem of Scientific Knowledge, 1870–1950 (University of Chicago Press, 2011). The book explores the dynamic interplay between scientific research and imperialism in British Africa and emphasizes intersections with environmental history, development studies, and world history.

Christine Tolbert-Norman (1968 alumna), mayor of Bentol City, Liberia, has published It Is Time for Change (Amazon Digital Services, 2014), an anthology of selected speeches by her late father, William R. Tolbert Jr., who was president of the Republic of Liberia from 1971 until his assassination in 1980. Olusegun Obasanjo, former president of Nigeria, wrote the preface.

Julie Santella (political science alumna) won a Fulbright grant for research in Tanzania in early 2015.

Juliet Sorensen (law) will work with French colleagues on West African health and human rights issues when she participates in a faculty exchange program next June at Sciences Po.
Medical and cultural anthropologist joins faculty

The Department of Anthropology has welcomed Peter Locke as an assistant professor. Locke is a cultural and medical anthropologist who focuses on bringing ethnographic evidence to the comparative study of global health and humanitarian intervention in postconflict societies. His field research, writing, and teaching explore the intersection of humanitarian work and current modes of evidence production in contexts of contentious local politics and lingering histories of conflict and mass violence.

Prior to his Northwestern appointment, Locke was a postdoctoral research associate and then a lecturer for the Program in Global Health and Health Policy at Princeton, where he earned his PhD in 2009. Although his dissertation focused on Bosnia-Herzegovina, Locke has recently accompanied small teams of undergraduates on ethnographic research visits to Sierra Leone. There Locke and the students worked with the leaders, caregivers, and beneficiaries of a US-funded medical humanitarian nongovernmental organization to explore how the dynamics of the “new world of global health” play in a nation where public health infrastructure is limited.

Locke will teach the following courses at Northwestern: Health and the Social Markers of Difference, Introduction to International Public Health, Qualitative Research Methods in Global Health, Medical Humanitarianism, and War and Public Health.

SECOND ANNUAL GLOBAL HEALTH CASE COMPETITION SET FOR FEBRUARY 14

Teams of undergraduate and graduate students from all schools and disciplines at Northwestern will compete to develop innovative, feasible, and sustainable global health solutions at the second annual global health case competition February 14.

Cosponsored by Global Health Studies/International Program Development, PAS, and the Feinberg School of Medicine’s Center for Global Health, the case study competition aims to train the next generation of global health leaders through a unique experience built upon a real-world challenge.

For more information, please visit the Global Health Studies website: https://globalhealthportal.northwestern.edu/nughcc.

Send your news updates to african-studies@northwestern.edu so that PAS can share word with the Africanist community at Northwestern and beyond.
JANUARY

22 6 p.m.
Africa Seminar (Afrisem) for graduate students: “Even If Your House Is Not Nice, It Is Better Since You Have a Say Over It: Fighting for Political Smallness in 19th-Century Busoga (Uganda),” William Fitzsimons (history).

21 noon–1:15 p.m. (lunch provided)

FEBRUARY

4 noon–1:15 p.m. (lunch provided)
PAS Affiliates Series: “Orientalism and Islamism: A Comparative Study of Approaches to Islamic Studies,” Ibrahim Hassan (religious studies, University of Jos; Fulbright research scholar and Institute for the Study of Islamic Thought in Africa visiting scholar).

5 6 p.m.

11 2–5 p.m.

MARCH


14 6 p.m.

18 noon–1:15 p.m. (lunch provided)
“Biography, Scholarship, and Community in 17th-Century Morocco,” Sabhat Adil (Near Eastern languages and civilizations PhD candidate, University of Chicago; ISITA visiting scholar).

25 noon–1:15 p.m. (lunch provided)