



Princeton Alumni Association of Germany

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PAAG honored for its promotion of German Studies

By David T. Fisher '69

As you may recall from the previous issue we entered a contest last year sponsored by an organization called "Deutschland – Land der Ideen" which holds an annual contest to find the best 365 ideas in Germany (one for each day of the year). Our idea was to establish an endowment for the expansion of the Princeton Summer Work Program to include other universities. This idea was selected as one of the winners and the award was presented to us at a gala event in Wiesbaden on the 26th of July, 2010.

Between the time of our selection for the award and the presentation in July significant progress has been made in turning the idea of an "International German Studies Endowment" into a reality. A current total of 110,000 Euros

has been pledged which is enough to get the endowment started. A charter for the endowment has been developed and provisionally approved by the German financial authorities. We are confident that the endowment will be a legal entity by the end of the year. At that point we will begin the implementation of a fund-raising plan which will systematically increase the endowment so that ever larger numbers of summer internships can be financed.

Including other leading universities benefits Princeton in several ways. By increasing interest in German Studies at other universities the potential job market for doctoral candidates from Princeton's German Department is strengthened. In addition, we have access to additional

sources of funding in Germany that would not be available if the program were limited to Princeton students. Finally, the program benefits from increasing the pool of applicants in order to be able to take full advantage of the range of internship opportunities that emerge. The larger the talent pool, the more attractive the program is to potential employers of interns.

Below: from left to right – guest of honor, Dr. Helena Kane Finn, Minister Counselor for Public Affairs, US Embassy in Berlin, David T. Fisher, Chair PAAG, Frank Mayer, Treasurer PAAG, Dagmar Westberg, principle endowment donor, Dr. Bernd von Maltzan, Board of Deutsche Bank and presenter of the award, Ethel Rauhof-Fisher, endowment donor.



My Experience at the Städel Museum in Frankfurt

by Chris Green



When Princeton students return to campus in September, I feel like we enter into a massive “Who had the best summer?” competition. Points are awarded for various categories: Service to Humanity, Money Earned, High Profile Position, World Travel, etc. There is always an invisible panel of celebrity judges posting scores, ranking each person on the overall quality of his or her summer. Saving children in the Arctic from melting ice flows will certainly score higher than working at your uncle’s ice cream parlour, though trekking in the Andes might not beat out being Donald Trump’s personal shoe assistant, depending on your view point. Of course, anything done is always heavily down played. “Oh me? Not much really, I just helped with the construction of the new Moon Lander, WAY more boring than your summer!” I got back to campus this year and, thanks to the Summer Work Program, definitely had some high scores

from the panel of judges. It is hard to pass off a summer in Germany spent working at one of the country’s largest art institutions as anything *but* amazing, and doubly hard for an Art History major such as myself.

When I was first told I had an offer through the SWP for a position with the Städel Museum in Frankfurt, I had no idea what an incredible opportunity the program had managed to get me. It seems like all I did was say “I would like to work somewhere with art, please,” and the SWP replied with “Alright, how would you like an internship with one of the largest museums in Germany?” The first thing I did was Google the Städel Museum, and all it took was a glance at the website homepage to convince me. Why was my summer so good? Mostly the bragging rights. I take pleasure in telling my class mates that during one of my multiple visits to the Städel art depot I got to pull out from the racks one of the only two Vermeer paintings in the world in which the artist depicted a man. Attending the VIP opening and press conferences for the Städel’s “Sahure: Tod und Leben eines großen Pharaos” exhibition which I was fortunate to arrive in time for was definitely a highlight. And as an Art History major, being able to see the inner workings of the museum, of the exhibition preparation, of the art conservation and curation, and of what it is like to work in such an institution was invaluable. It was an ideal summer job for me and convinced me of my desire to work in the field. And I haven’t even started on the *German* side of things.

You hear it all the time, but you cannot learn a language without living in the country. I should have listened more carefully to my German professors when they warned it would be a language-shock. A shock it was when I first arrived; I felt like I hadn’t learned anything, like my teachers had just been lying to me for years. But from slightly embarrassing language mishaps early on (to this day I will never know how I mixed up *Fahrrad* and *Motorrad*) my German improved incredibly to a thorough level of comprehension. My understanding increased in leaps and bounds, and helping to write publications and children’s games for the museum definitely helped. Helping with tours and summer camps pushed me to practice my *Aussprache* in front of groups of complete strangers, though I’ll admit children aren’t the most demanding audience. Regardless, when it came time to describe a *Kirchner* painting to a semi-circle of kids, I couldn’t have pulled it off if I hadn’t had the previous months of nothing but German behind me.

I am incredibly thankful for the amazing summer I was able to have which certainly stands out as one of my best and will remain so. I took so much out of my time in Frankfurt and I am continually amazed at the quality of a program like the SWP which gave me such an amazing position with the Städel Museum. It has put me on a clear course for the rest of my life and given me such a strong desire to return to Germany (if only for the *Apfelwein* und *Curry Gewürz Ketchup*).



Working for GEA Group AG in Bochum

by Julian Dean

This summer I worked with Donat von Müller ’83 in investor relations at GEA Group, an engineering conglomerate in Bochum.

I’ve always felt that international experience was a vital part of a Princeton education. For the summer after my freshman year I had twin goals of gaining international experience and gaining work experience, and the Summer Work Program allowed me to meet both these goals and more.

At GEA I worked on a longer-term project, studying analysts’ models of the

company’s “fair” stock price, combining them into a composite model and feeding it with internal company data. I also researched market trends in relevant customer industries and helped prepare slides for the company’s quarterly results presentation. Further, I tested my German competency by translating press releases between German and English.

I learned a lot about communication in a large company; of course the way one communicates internally differs significantly from the way one shares information with analysts and investors. I also learned about the importance of clear visual presentation of

data and extraction of usable information from complex data sets.

There was also a wider lesson about communicating across borders and cultures; I have developed new connections to Germany that will last well beyond this summer. I’ve broadened my horizons and experienced the country on a level than one cannot achieve simply through travel or even study abroad.

Although my internship was mostly in English, I improved my German by speaking with my coworkers. My time in Germany was highly valuable - and I’m now lobbying for Princeton to serve more German food in the dining halls!





Learning about Energy

by Stephen Stolzenberg

I spent this past summer working for the Gas Union GmbH in Frankfurt. I'd lived in Germany before, but I had never held a full-time job – let alone one in a foreign country. I knew this summer was going to be different.

The first day on the job, I'd only been in Frankfurt for two or three days. While I was still readjusting to speaking and thinking in German, I was bombarded with all kinds of new business and gas industry specific terms that I didn't even know in English. Instead of relaxing or sleeping on a beach in America, I found myself struggling to grasp what a Bilanzkreis, or an accounting grid, was. The flood of new ideas and terms slowed down after the first week, but working at the company kept me on my toes. I gained a better understanding of a wide range of business practices through my hands on experience that I could not imagine receiving from typical undergraduate business or economics classes.

Every two weeks, I packed up my workstation and moved to a new division of the company. This not only gave me the opportunity to understand how the company was organized and did business, it allowed me to get to know many of the company's employees. Working with and getting to know the employees of the company was the most interesting aspect of my internship. Most of the company's employees were in their thirties and forties. I've had the opportunity to interact with plenty of people who are older than me in my lifetime, but never as colleagues and peers in a professional setting. Eventually, I could have forgotten the age

difference if we'd had the same concerns. Although we could always talk about the World Cup, books, or share intercultural experiences, I had nothing to add to conversations about family and marital life. This proved to be the greatest gap of understanding between my co-workers and me. It wasn't language or culture. It was general life experience. This was a kind of education that I was not expecting to get during my internship.

My internship also gave me the opportunity to live and interact with Germans who were my age. I found housing for the summer in a WG, or Wohngemeinschaft. Unlike my co-workers, my housemates and I were at a similar level of life experience. We were all college students. The WG was an immediate source of friends that helped me feel like I was a part of my surroundings. My housemates introduced me to some of their friends and some new activities, including Viking boat racing.



ZDF German Television

by Shelina Kurwa

I had never heard of the city of Mainz before I learned I would be living there for two months, working as a summer intern at the main headquarters of Zweites Deutsches Fernsehen. Not to be deterred by my lack of knowledge about my new temporary place of residence, I quickly looked it up in the handy Germany travel guide I already had from a previous summer in Munich. There were about two sentences dedicated to the city – the first telling me that it, along with Wiesbaden, was too big or too popular to be worth my time as a traveler; the second telling me that the Gutenberg Museum, probably one of Mainz's biggest claims to fame, was, at best, a disappointment.

OK, so, not a part of the Top-Ten-Things-to-Do-in-Germany List then. Right. That was OK. I could deal with that. I mean, I was getting a fantastic

opportunity, working at ZDF and all – it wouldn't matter where I was living. Never mind the fact that I was already pretty terrified of starting work at a company where they spoke a language that I barely yet had a handle on (I'm pretty sure I got through GER 107: Advanced German on the basis of some sort of weird cosmic fluke). Everything was going to be OK.

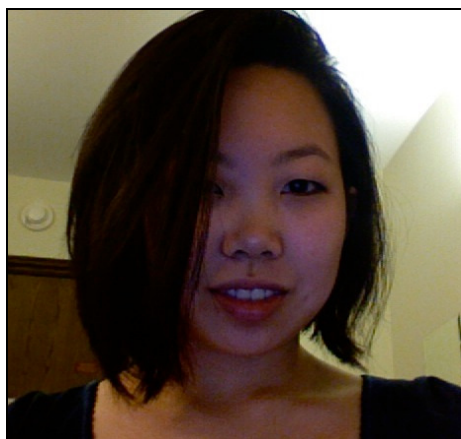
My first weekend in the city was...underwhelming. I was homesick. I was lonely. I was jetlagged. And I was terrified of Monday morning. Due to a startling masochistic streak that I had never before realized I had, I could not stop envisioning various scenarios of the massive number of screw-ups I was bound to make my first day. Getting lost on the way to work and being three hours late. Completely blanking out on the entirety of the German language. Destroying the coffee machine. Using "Du" instead of "Sie". It was bound to be a nightmare.

And then, I had my first day. And it was fantastic.

The fears I had about my lack of language skills quickly disappeared, as all my colleagues patiently allowed me to stumble along at my own pace – without that creeping self-conscious feeling that normally accompanies my attempts to speak the language. Everyone seemed welcoming and friendly; by the end of the day I'd already made friends with a girl who would become one of my closest allies during my stay – and with whom I am still in regular contact over email.

But most of all, there was the work itself. From day one, I was given the chance to learn about television and the television industry. I didn't have to worry about destroying the coffee machine – I was never expected to make coffee! I got to read scripts and analyze storylines and even discuss my opinions on the soundtrack for four unaired episodes of *Küstenwache*. It didn't matter that reading a script probably took me about ten times the amount of time it would take a native German speaker; my supervisor still encouraged me all the same.

I got a close-up, hands-on learning experience about what it takes to be a television producer, or *Redakteur*, while improving my German skills and increasing my confidence with the language – and all in an incredibly supportive, understanding environment. And I think, by the end, I might have even got my script reading time down to about nine times the amount of time it would take a native German speaker. Maybe. 🇩🇪



Learning Thuringian

by Brenda Jin

The Thuringian accent is difficult to understand for native and non-native speakers alike; luckily, I've had two summers to work on my comprehension while interning at the annual Weimar Kunstfest.

I have to admit that my first day in Weimar last year, I blankly nodded along as my roommate gave me a tour. The same day, I had been absolutely bewildered as I attempted to order a loaf

of bread and received what sounded like an enthusiastic “no” in response. But this time around, I knew the local terminology; I stepped foot in the city knowing that “no” is a variation of *na* (which sometimes means *ja*), and I bravely became familiar with every Döner Kebap in town (including the unfortunate franchise members City Kebap and City Kebap II), and eventually discovered my favorite hand-made pita at Döner Okzident.

What makes the Kunstfest Weimar internship truly unique, besides the chance to attend three weeks' of spectacular performances, is the opportunity to interact with a variety of people in situations calling for varying degrees of linguistic formality—with my internship directors Frank and Andi in the office at Theaterplatz, with Dr. Nike Wagner at such events as Carolin Widmann's performance of Jörg Widmann's *Etudes I-III für Violine solo*, with audience members as I ushered them to their seats and advised them that audiovisual recordings were prohibited, and certainly not least of all, with the other workers.

Because the Kunstfest offers an annual opportunity for temporary work at the end of the summer, many students are

employed as ushers, coat-checkers, sales associates, surveyors, and ticket-checkers. And it's on the ground, alongside these fine Thuringians, that an American student can pick up a certain jargon unattainable from within the walls of a classroom or office, a jargon to end the obligatory formality of internal English-German translation, and to thoroughly disguise a Jersey accent.

And even though it was exciting to work at Theater Erfurt, where I was an interpreter and wardrobe assistant for the German premiere of *Nearly 90²* by the Merce Cunningham Dance Company, it was even more personally momentous that the Thuringian accent steadily became intelligible to me, and that my American way of speaking German traded itself for something a little more “local.” Thus armed with my new language abilities, I finally had the gumption (and adequate information) to venture into the Gerber 3 squat—a decrepit structure covered with spray-painted murals and anarchist graffiti—to meet with new friends over multiple tastings of the nationally-prized, locally brewed Ehringsdorfer. 🍷

Many of the fascinating internships described in our newsletters, particularly those at cultural institutions, are unpaid. They are only feasible for our students because the PAAG provides stipends to help the students meet their living expenses while in Europe. The PAAG receives no financial support from Princeton for this project so we are completely dependent on those few generous donors who have made these internships possible. Each stipend recipient at an unpaid internship receives between 400 and 600 Euros a month from the PAAG. This summer the PAAG provided over 7,000 Euros in stipends. We would like, therefore, to ask you to consider making a donation for this purpose so we can continue to expand this wonderful program. As you can see from the students' articles, these internships provide young people with a life-changing experience. People or organizations who support an internship can have the stipend named after a person or an institution of their choice.

Donations to support the internship program can be made to the account no. 129001844 at the Nassauische Sparkasse Wiesbaden, BLZ (Bank Code) 51050015, IBAN DE10 5105 0015 0129 0018 44 SWIFT Code: NASS DE 55

Save the Date!

The annual meeting and Thanksgiving Dinner of the PAAG will take place on the 27th of November, 2010

Help select the Class of 2015! Volunteer for Alumni Schools Committee work by contacting Leslie von Wangenheim (LVW@WANGENHOME.COM) or Frank Mayer (affaldssakt@hotmail.com).

Impressum

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