

Retirement from the Skidmore College Faculty

Spring 2021



Faculty Meeting
April the Thirtieth
Two Thousand and Twenty One

Be It Resolved:

The faculty of Skidmore College expresses its profound appreciation and admiration for the following members of the Skidmore faculty who have this year expressed their determination to retire. The faculty further resolves that the following biographical highlights be included in the minutes of the faculty meeting of April 30, 2021 in recognition and celebration of their distinguished service and achievement.



Inaugural recipient of the Ralph A. Ciancio Award for Excellence in Teaching, Class of 1948 Endowed Chair for Excellence in Teaching, 2008 Moseley Lecturer—that’s quite a trifecta of high honors among the Skidmore faculty. The fact that all three of these have been awarded to John Anzalone speaks volumes about his 36-year career at the College and his role as an exemplary faculty member, scholar, mentor, and friend.

As our colleague Michael Arnush puts it, “John embodies the epitome of the teacher-scholar, possesses a remarkable breadth and depth of intellectual and artistic interests, invests himself in fostering and nurturing the success of others, and has a wicked sense of humor.”

John earned an A.B. degree at the University of Massachusetts at Boston and his M.A and Ph.D. degrees from the Romance Languages and Literatures Department at Tufts University, with a specialization in late 19th-century literature. He began his teaching career in 1976 at the University of Massachusetts at Boston, where he also directed the Year in France Program. From 1981 to 1985 he was assistant professor at Dartmouth College and also director of the Language Study Abroad Program in Blois, France. From early on in his academic journey, teaching, mentoring, and supporting study abroad were integral components of his passion for language, literature, and relationships.

In 1986 John came to Skidmore and, drawing on his experience, immediately became coordinator of the Skidmore Junior Year Abroad Programs in Paris and Madrid. That was quite the challenge for a new faculty member, given that at the time some 70 students per year were studying in Europe. Over the course of his years at the College, John coordinated the Skidmore in Paris Program for 16 consecutive years and on several occasions was on-site director of the Paris Program and the London First-Year Seminar, always with the same dedication to students and to the intellectual curiosity he inspires.

John has said that “Skidmore is too much of a treasure to keep it within our walls,” and he has certainly put that concept into practice by his varied and multi-faceted engagements with communities beyond the Skidmore campus. His outreach has included serving as director of the MALS program; working with

Skidmore’s University Without Walls, including teaching in its prison program at Comstock; and appointments as a Mellon Foundation-sponsored scholar at Middlebury College and a research associate at the Cornell University Library for Digital Collections. Farther afield, John’s erudition and curiosity earned him the European Union’s Journées Du Patrimoine recognition in 2016 for his publication of a facsimile of a WW I illustrated memoir, and he was the recipient of two guest professorships in Paris at the Ecoles des Chartes.

John’s work with students goes beyond the classroom, and he is one of the few among the humanities faculty who has consistently worked with students during the summer by engaging in collaborative research that has resulted in published works, in both traditional and online publications. Given his indefatigable nature, he has continued this role into his final semester at Skidmore by directing a student thesis on translation.

John’s scholarship exhibits the same intensity as his work in the classroom and is at once traditional, cutting-edge, nuanced, and ever so-interesting. He has written on several occasions for *Salmagundi* on topics ranging from “The Importance of Being Sartre” to a series of translations from Todorov’s *Letter from Paris*. His most recent books include a two-volume, annotated critical facsimile edition of a World War I illuminated journal by a *poilu*, a soldier of the line who survived the war, and *Jeering Dreamers: Essays on Villiers de l’Isle-Adam’s L’Eve future* in the “Faux-titres” series on Continental Literatures. Among his many other publications is an article that poignantly exemplifies John’s breath of interest and generous spirit of collaboration—“Clouds in the Sky: Eric Satie, Charles Martin and *Sports et divertissements*” in *Le Bulletin du bibliophile II*, Paris, written with former Skidmore President David Porter.

But John has also been publishing online, making his work available on open-source sites, as in the case of *The Great War Image Archive*, an annotated data base of rare and important images of the First World War, and *Jean de Boschère, Illustre Ymagier*, an annotated data base of illustrations by the Belgian Symbolist writer and artist. Both of these publications were developed as part of Summer Collaborative Research projects with Luke Conley, class of 2015. John’s *The Fantastic in Art and Fiction*, an image-bank monograph designed for Cornell University, was

designated a Yahoo pick of the week in June 2000. How cool is that!

Colleagues comment on his passion, warmth, and erudition, and on his far-flung areas of interest. A colleague from the English Department, Susannah Mintz, describes his “prodigious learnedness, from military aircraft to Hitchcock to the French alexandrine to rock & roll... his zest for the odd, the uncanny, the outrageous possibilities of this life; and most of all, his display of true *amitié*.” Others speak of a presence that can fill any space and make everyone comfortable, be it a small seminar room, the faculty floor, or a social gathering where, as Reg Lilly from Philosophy put it, “He can begin a sentence with an impersonation of Curly from the Three Stooges and, as if one leads to the other, end with recitation of a scene from Billy Wilder’s *Double Indemnity*. It’s a heady experience with John, and you have to keep your wits about you.”

His tireless and ever-curious persona has nudged him toward the Theater Department, where he has consulted and acted, true to his performative self. And speaking of the performative, we can’t forget his role as bassist with the Rust Brothers, a faculty band whose noted gigs have included the annual Beatlemania concerts.

We wish John a rewarding retirement, with expanded time for family activities, films, lectures, travel, dog walking, and bass playing—wherever his curious mind takes him. And, we’re looking forward to a Rust Brothers reunion tour!

Pola Baytelman is a Steinway Artist internationally acclaimed for her performances of Spanish and Latin American composers. Born in Chile, Pola studied at the University of Chile’s National Conservatory, going on to a Masters and Artist Diploma at the New England Conservatory of Music under a Fulbright grant, where she studied with the renowned pianist Russell Sherman. She completed her DMA at the University of Texas at Austin. Pola began teaching at Skidmore in 1987.

Pola made her debut at the age of 17 with the Chilean Symphony Orchestra and has since performed numerous concerts in a wide range of countries including China, Hong Kong, India, Spain, the UK and

the US. She has given countless master classes and delivered numerous radio broadcasts around the globe. She has also served as a judge in several US and international piano competitions. An active recitalist with a broad repertoire that encompasses the 18th and 19th centuries, Pola also keeps the works of women composers in her scope: from Clara Schumann and Amy Beach to contemporary composers like Katherine Hoover and Hilary Tan. Pola is also the author of a reference work, published by Harmonie Park Press, on the Spanish composer Isaac Albéniz’s piano music. In addition, Pola teamed up with famed Albéniz scholar Walter Clark and was the pianist on a video documentary on the Spanish composer released in August 2019 (Albany Records). Pola has released three additional recordings: *From Chile to Cuba* and *Celebration of the New* (both Albany Records); and a recording of Robert Schumann’s works including the *Humoreske* (Centaur), which was listed by *American Record Guide* as one of the top performances of the classic work. She has recorded five CDs including: Isaac Albéniz’s *Iberia for Piano: A Musical Journey Through Spain* (2019), *Celebration of the New, American Composers* (2013), *From Chile to Cuba: Latin American Piano Music* (2009), *Robert Schumann* (2002), and *Iberia* (1998). The *Boston Globe* lauds her “intelligent, multifaceted playing.” Anthony Holland, Skidmore’s Orchestra Conductor, notes that Pola “has always aspired to and achieved the highest level of artistic performance as a virtuosi pianist throughout her career” and that “her dedication and professionalism have been admired by all of her colleagues for decades.”

Most notably, though, Pola has performed Albéniz’s monumental *Iberia* in tours of major US cities, and her 1998 groundbreaking CD of Albéniz’s work was reissued in June 2020 (Élan). Knowing of Pola’s reputation, *Fanfare* noted that “with a little hindsight the excellence of this new recording of *Iberia* was almost fore-ordained.” The reviewer for the *American Record Guide* wrote: “Baytelman presents one of the best performances of *Iberia* that I’ve heard in a long time. This is a beautiful album . . . Baytelman is not only a powerhouse player, but also a performer with a sense of narrative.”

As one of the first Artists-in-Residence at Skidmore, Pola has been a backbone of the department for decades. Her playing has been characterized as “formidable” and having a “diaphanous touch.” Pola was chosen to present the Moseley Lecture in 2005-06.

Her powerful performances are only matched by her stellar teaching. “Working with Pola for the past eleven years has been a tremendous experience,” says Evan Mack, Senior Teaching Professor. “I am always in awe of the growth in her students, the vitality of her performances, and the kindness and care she gives to her colleagues.” Jan Vinci, Distinguished Artist in Residence, likewise lauds Pola’s “inspirational musical approach to teaching.” Pola has arranged for more than 80 guest artists to give performances and deliver master classes at Skidmore, always with an eye to what best serves her students. Among the most distinguished artists that Pola has brought to campus may be included Simone Dinnerstein, Frederic Chiu, Jon Kimura Parker, Stephen Hough, and Jeremy Denk.

A dedicated and tireless teacher, Pola has delivered a wide range of piano courses over the course of her 34-year career, including private lessons, chamber music, fortepiano, and keyboard skills. As a Distinguished Artist-in-Residence, she has guided numerous Filene scholars in piano to successful careers in music and non-music fields. Hannah Knaul ’18 says: “Piano lessons with Pola were always lively and fun. I loved choosing new pieces to learn with Pola because she has such a wide repertoire herself, and could think of such interesting pieces for me to play. She challenged me to try new genres and composers and branch out from traditional western music which I appreciated and cherished.” Not only does Pola teach piano, but she also arranges for the purchase, evaluation, and maintenance of all of the pianos in Zankel; no little job since we have more than 50 of them on site, including, two harpsichords, an 18th century replica of a Walter fortepiano (Mozart’s piano) and an original 19th Graf fortepiano, all of which Pola tends with consummate care.

Thoughtful, collegial and generous of spirit, Pola is the epitome of artistic and professional integrity. Throughout her career, she has poured her heart and time into serving her art, her department and the college. But, most importantly, she has poured her heart and soul into serving her students. Perhaps, Joseph Eisele ’17 best sums up the sentiments of her students and colleagues when he writes of Pola: “Your warmth, support, and wonderful teaching made me look forward to every lesson. And I know I speak for everyone when I say it was such a treat to get to hear you play. I still sometimes reminisce when I hear you play the Mendelssohn Variations! I hope you enjoy

your very well-deserved retirement, knowing that your students love you, and that you made so many people’s days bright and helped them along their music journey.”

Thank you, Pola, for helping so many along their musical journeys.

A brilliant artist, dedicated colleague, and beloved friend, Debra J. Fernandez came to Skidmore College in 1990. Her academic career was marked by promotion to full professor in 2006; and from 2012 – 2017 she was appointed Porter Chair to honor creative contributions to the Dance Department and to the College. Debra’s work as an artist/scholar is both broad and deep. She has composed musical works for chamber ensembles as well as choreographed over seventy unique dances which have been presented throughout New York and beyond at such diverse venues as The Yard, P.S.122, the Frances Tang Teaching Museum, and the Hyde Collection. A comprehensive view of Debra’s career reveals a beautifully woven tapestry which parallels her work as an artist — contemplative, eloquent, and profound.

Following her graduation from the University of South Florida in 1974, Debra was invited by New York City Ballet (NYCB) choreographer Todd Bolender to work with him in Istanbul, Turkey, in his national ballet company. Subsequently she spent twelve years in NYC honing her craft in dance and music, including work in commercials and film. In 1990 she moved to Saratoga Springs to join the Skidmore dance faculty, where she helped create the current structure of the Dance Department, the form in which it continues to thrive today. She envisioned and implemented a curriculum for Choreography in Dance, expertly guiding countless students through this coursework — many of whom continue in her footsteps now as professionals. An inherent educator, Debra’s investment in both student and faculty learning has always been a priority throughout her career. Her legacy within the department is vast, yet the impact she has made through this one curricular development of Choreography may be the most lasting among her pedagogical accomplishments.

In addition to teaching Choreography 1 and 2, Debra has taught all four levels of ballet technique, three levels of Jazz, and Music for Dancers. She developed

new courses such as Performance Elements, a Yoga based course to enrich the performance of dancers and actors; Jazz and Ballet in Contemporary Performance Workshops; and Jazz Intensive, a unique Summer 6-week program offered through Skidmore Special Programs.

Debra's artistry is a complex mix of curiosity, humanity, irony and risk-taking. She gently guides students and artists to inhabit new spaces and express new dimensions. Her work stretches far and wide and is demonstrated by scholarship that includes many dance genres as well as experimental and traditional theater and opera. In 1994 Debra was invited to work at the Williamstown Theater Festival as a movement instructor and choreographer, a relationship which continued for seven years. Further collaborations with artists from the festival led to performances at The Virginia Opera, The Belgrade International Theater Festival and the Hysterical Ontological Theater in NYC, to name only a few. The Virginia Opera's production of *Orfeo and Eurydice* was described by *The Richmond, Virginia Times-Dispatch* as "...a dreamy, almost hallucinatory conception...". She has indeed received accolades for her interdisciplinary spirit and ability to cull the essence of a theme and develop artistic expression around it. Debra is at the top of her field as a master choreographer and collaborator.

From its inception in 2000, Debra was invited to establish a relationship with the space and concept of the Frances Young Teaching Museum. In fact, since its opening, she has created five evening-length works focused specifically on the Tang as interactive performance space. *TangO*, a collaboration with David Porter and Margo Mensing, centered around a live performance of John Cage's "Sonatas and Interludes for Prepared Piano." It was commissioned for the grand opening. In 2002 she created *Balls*, named as one of the "year's ten best" by *Metroland* and described as an "unabridged thesaurus" of dance, "compelling, odd and beautiful." Her second collaboration with David Porter and Margo Mensing in 2004 is entitled *Mak 3*; it was an evening of dance, theater, music, art, and film constructed and created to illuminate the live performance of George Crumb's masterwork, "Makrokosmos III."

Debra has also solidified a lasting relationship with the Arthur Zankel Music Center during her tenure at Skidmore. Most notable is her choreography of *Swan*

Song in 2010 to a score by Richard Danielpour. In October of 2012 *Swan Song* was presented again as a part of Saratoga Dances II, curated by Justin Peck, dancer and now resident choreographer of New York City Ballet (NYCB). Featuring guest performances by NYCB dancers Abi Stafford and Andrew Scordato alongside two Skidmore dance majors, the *Albany Times Union* wrote, "Debra Fernandez's *Swan Song*... painted the most magical and mysterious images of the evening." Her third and final collaboration with David Porter and Margo Mensing in 2012, *Keeping Company with Cage*, was also presented on the Zankel stage. Skidmore, however, has not been her only performance venue. In addition to her work on campus, Debra has showcased her talents in multiple artistic residencies and venues beyond Saratoga. She was a fellow in the selective and renowned Djerassi Resident Artist Program (Woodside, California) in 2001. An avid advocate for dance, she was also chosen as one of the first Artists-in-the-Schools for The Yard, a colony for choreographers in Martha's Vineyard, where she was asked to return as the first teacher in their Junior Theater/Dance workshop program.

Debra's contributions to the College are as rich as her scholarship. She served as department chair for eleven years, a great feat by all standards. She also served on the Committee for Appointment and Tenure (CAPT), Promotions Committee (PC), the Arts Subcommittee of CEPP, multiple search committees, and the Arts Planning Group. Debra is a longtime yoga practitioner and created the first yoga program at Skidmore College, which ran from 1997-2001. In her typical commitment to service at the College, she both implemented and taught this program on a volunteer basis. Debra has twice served on the choreography panel for The New York State Council for the Arts and also served in 1994 as a panelist for the New York State Foundation for the Arts. She has also collaborated with directors Phil Soltanoff and Carolyn Anderson as a choreographer on over seven productions in the Skidmore Theater Department.

A talented listener and masterful mentor, Debra's contributions to the lives of her students and department faculty/staff are as significant as her work as an academic. Debra invites those around her to reflect and find meaning within themselves – this is a rare gift. Her artistic mentorship and gentle reminders to 'cut your darlings' has been adopted into vernacular by most of her students, colleagues, and dance alumni. When serving as chair, Debra's typical response to

requests has been, “Sounds great! What do you need?” This memory will forever remain with all who were lucky enough to be her colleagues. Debra’s unconditional support for others and her unique ability to lead by example has fostered immeasurable projects, pieces, and even careers within the discipline of dance. Her fervent invitations to find answers from within and ‘trust your gut’ has shaped the lives of all who are blessed to work with her. Jon Cooper writes:

I cannot put into words how much you have profoundly shaped me as an artist, a dancer, and a human. My time at Skidmore within your guidance, creation, and friendship means more to me than I can express. You have given me, and so many others, such incredible life lessons and memories that I still call upon today to help me navigate my path forward. Our candor, our laughter, our unapologetic editing and critiques, all lift me higher, make me smile, and have made me the artist and human I am. Thank you for always believing in me, especially when I doubt myself, and for being my mentor and friend. I could have not have been blessed with a better, kinder, more beautiful, soulful, talented teacher.

Always in perfect fashion and eager to meet the next challenge, Debra, and her beautiful dog Bodhi will be sorely missed even as the image of their whizzing through the halls of the dance theater and directing all that come into their path remains. Debra will leave a void within the department that cannot be filled: we can only attempt to continue in her legacy with the courage, intelligence, and wisdom that she astutely gifted us throughout her tenure. May we strive to work with the passion, laughter, and joy Deb has brought this department for the last 31 years. May we work to guide each other with the warmth and love that Deb has provided to us. Deb, we send you forward with gratitude. Paraphrasing the words of her student Jon Cooper: “Within our work, now and always, is an effort to make you proud.”

Francophone literature, 20th-century French literature, the history and theory of criticism, comparative literature and film—these are the areas of study, research, and teaching in which Hédi Jaouad has engaged students, faculty, and friends for more than 30 years at Skidmore College.

Hédi’s intellectual curiosity and versatility of scholarship are exemplified by a publication record that includes seven books and countless articles on a panoply of authors such as C.G. Jung, Isabelle Eberhardt, C.A. Cingria, Michel Foucault, W.M. Thackeray, Robert Browning, Paul Bowles, Jacques Derrida, Abd-el-Kader, Rachid Boudjedra, Kateb Yacine, and Mohammed Dib. He has maintained a highly active research and publication agenda that is still going strong. He is currently preparing to submit a new manuscript, *Romancing the Emir: Abd-el-Kader’s Reception in American and English Literatures*, and a second book, *The Immortal Adventures of Isabelle Eberhardt: A Biography*, is scheduled for publication in 2022.

Our colleague María Lander describes Hédi as “a great conversationalist, a connoisseur of literature who is always seeking new authors and film directors to add to his repertoire,” noting that “all this curiosity makes him a prodigious scholar and a tireless reader.”

Hédi’s higher education started at the University of Tunis, where he graduated with a B.A in English. He then moved on to La Sorbonne in Paris, earning an M.A in English literature and from there to Temple University, where in 1983 he received a Ph.D. in French literature with a specialization in Francophone studies.

Before coming to Skidmore in 1989, Hédi taught French language and literature at various institutions, including Temple University and the United Nations International School. He was also a translator at the United Nations in 1988. His teaching experience both in English and French ranges from first-year courses to graduate seminars.

When Hédi arrived at Skidmore, his position was much needed to provide the department (then called Foreign Languages and Literatures) and the College with a Francophone perspective. Notable in that respect is his sustained role (20 years and counting) as editor of CELAAN, a review published twice a year by the Center for the Studies of the Literatures and Arts of North Africa. The journal publishes articles on Maghrebian authors and French authors from the Maghreb, as well as notes on North Africa’s role in the work of authors from France and elsewhere. Under Hédi’s leadership, more than a dozen Skidmore faculty and students worked on CELAAN’s special issue—*Student Perspectives on The Maghreb Vol. XV*,

No. 1 (2018). Our colleague Charlene Grant, who was an associate editor of CELAAN, said, “Hédi’s deep love of and incredible depth of knowledge of the Francophone literature of northern Africa and of French colonies inspired so many students, both at Skidmore and in graduate studies at SUNY-Albany and elsewhere, including my own.”

To engage local educators, Hédi conducted a workshop for high school teachers from the Capital Region, funded by the French Government's Cultural Services in New York. Held at Skidmore, the workshop afforded over 20 teachers an opportunity to learn about Francophone literatures and cultures. In the summer of 1994, he taught a faculty NEH summer institute on La Francophonie at Old Dominion University. He organized the international conference "Le Maghreb à la croisée des cultures" in Hammamet, Tunisia in 1997 and co-organized the International Conference of the Conseil International d'Études Francophones in Sousse, Tunisia in 2000.

Hédi was a Fulbright visiting professor and scholar twice during his time at Skidmore. The first occasion was in 1996, when he was hosted by the Department of English at the University of Tunis, and most recently in 2018, when he was hosted by the Department of English at the University of Manar in Tunisia. All this international experience was shared with his colleagues at Skidmore in a very real way, as described by our colleague Mao Chen: “I still remember that, with the funding from a Title VI federal grant, Hédi helped organize a memorable peregrination to Morocco and Tunisia in 2007 as part of the Maghreb Workshop. This educational expedition and seminars profoundly altered and enriched my cultural understanding of North Africa and were deeply appreciated by all of my colleagues.”

We know Hédi’s love for literature and film will continue to inspire his research, and we can count on more publications coming from him-- perhaps even two documentaries he has been working on... (“Kateb Yacine in New York” and “Dizzy Gillespie in Tunisia”). We wish Hédi a wonderful retirement and more time to sip coffee downtown.

To put it mildly, Leslie Mechem’s final year of teaching at Skidmore College was not boring. No one would have blamed her had she opted to teach remotely and, quite

literally, phone in her classes. But that has never been Leslie’s way, pandemic or no pandemic, and anyone who knows her could hardly have been surprised when she decided to forge ahead and teach in person both last fall and this spring — an experience both intense and in tents. And all of this in addition to anchoring our culminating senior-year course, *The Classics Major and Beyond*, and supervising not one, but two senior theses. Phased retirement this is not.

For 31 years, Leslie has anchored the Classics curriculum and contributed extensively to other areas of the College. Her Classical Mythology course remains one of our most successful offerings with students from all corners of the campus, and at the end of each fall her office overflows with creative projects ready to be graded. Leslie has been a mainstay of our ancient Greek sequence at all levels — elementary, intermediate, and advanced — and has been a regular coordinator of our gateway course, *Classical World*, throughout its long evolution from lecture-driven class to flipped classroom.

But it is through her expertise in Greco-Roman archaeology that Leslie has carved out her niche. All of the above courses are informed by Leslie’s perspectives on the material culture of the ancient Mediterranean — most notably *Classical World*, which features a field trip to the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Leslie’s guided tours of the Greek and Roman galleries have been a highlight of this annual excursion, whether she will hold forth on the exquisite braids of the New York Kouros or break down the styles of Pompeian wall-paintings. More than this, Leslie has contributed directly to the Art History curriculum with courses on classical art and archaeology. Her survey courses — Greek or Roman, alternating annually — count toward both the Classics and Art History majors, as do other offerings on ancient sanctuaries, daily life in antiquity, and other topics. Leslie has indeed carved out a niche, but it is equally true to say that her retirement will leave a huge hole to fill.

Further afield, Leslie has regularly taught Scribner Seminars for the First-Year Experience since that program began, and her courses on gender in the ancient world have counted not only toward Classics, but also toward Gender Studies. On the strength of her three terms as Director/Chair of Classics, she was appointed Director of Women’s Studies, which under her leadership became the Gender Studies Program we

know today. Not to put too fine a point on it, but the vibrancy of the College owes much to Leslie's teaching and service, and she leaves an enduring legacy of creativity and interdisciplinarity.

No amount of writing can encapsulate the whole of a career, and this citation can only glance at some of Leslie's other achievements, such as leading intrepid travel seminars to Greece and London; or serving on the boards of the Saratoga Springs Preservation Foundation as well as the Design Review Commission. As a way of saying not goodbye, but until we meet again, let me join my colleagues in Classics in wishing Leslie contentment in retirement, replete with lush gardens, new travels, and good wine.

On November 6, 2017, Barbara Norelli positively floated through the Scribner Library lobby in 1917 period dress, a bright yellow sash proclaiming "VOTES FOR WOMEN" from shoulder to hip and a smile as bright and wide on her face. She called passing female students over to cast symbolic votes and guided all comers through the accompanying exhibit of Skidmore's involvement in the New York women's suffrage debate that she had produced in collaboration with two colleagues from Special Collections. This image endures when reflecting on Barbara's contributions to our library and to the profession. Like the suffragettes she celebrated, Barbara has been tirelessly dedicated to and passionately vocal about her causes: academic librarianship, information literacy, reference services, social sciences teaching and research, and most of all, Skidmore students.

Barbara Norelli began her career in 1978 as a law librarian at the Supreme Court Library in Troy and Albany Law School, with a stint in Heafey Law Library at Santa Clara University in the late '80s. She was hired at Skidmore in 1993 as a part-time reference librarian, transitioning to full-time a few years later as the Social Sciences Librarian. At that time, she also oversaw government documents, but when Scribner Library moved away from being a government repository around 2001, she became Social Sciences and Instructional Services Librarian, a title she has kept to this day. She brought her law library chops to the college. Ruth Copans, Scribner Library's previous College Librarian, admits that, "For years, I always tried to get the reference shift just before Barbara, so if

a student came in with a business or legal question I found particularly challenging, I could tell them to return once Barbara replaced me on the desk. Her ability to utilize the more arcane resources for legal and business research was unmatched."

To say that Barbara's work has been student-focused is an understatement. Her colleagues observe genuine care for students, evidenced by the ways she goes above and beyond when they need her help with their research. It was not uncommon for Barbara to leave an evening reference shift and continue working with students afterward to ensure they had what they needed. Faculty affirm the impact those hours had. According to Professor Kate Graney, Barbara taught Political Science majors "not just how to do research, but how to learn." More recently, Barbara built on that experience at the Reference Desk to establish Scribner Library's peer research assistant program, training students to take evening shifts at the desk and, during the pandemic especially, via the Library's chat reference tool.

Barbara's devotion to student learning was borne out by her passion for information literacy instruction. Early on in her career, she taught library instruction sessions for a variety of campus classes and has taught Scribner Library's flagship course, LI 100 Electronic Information Resources, more often than anyone else. Over the years, Barbara has been at the forefront of Information Literacy initiatives in the NY6 and Association of College and Research Libraries (ACRL). She was instrumental in advocating for information literacy to be included in the general education curriculum and led the recent effort to create an information literacy framework and rubric for the college.

It wasn't just that Barbara has been an accomplished, dedicated teacher. She has also been a scholar whose efforts to innovate have resulted in scholarship intended to help others transform their own practices. The best example of this can be found in her lengthy collaboration with Professor Timothy Harper, as he describes at length:

"I have worked closely with Barbara Norelli since 2002. Barbara served as the Social Science Librarian during my tenure (2002 – 2010) as MB107 Faculty Coordinator. Barbara and I jointly instituted many innovations to the MB107 program including a rigorous library

assignment, assessment of learning with respect to research skills and outcomes and the role of embedded librarian where Barbara became a full member of and contributor to the MB107 Faculty Team. Barbara participated in the orientation meeting, taught at least one class for each section of MB107 and served as subject matter expert to the MB107 Faculty Coordinator throughout the calendar year. For example, I consulted with Barbara regarding assigned readings related to the Executive Presentation case each summer.

Around 2004, Barbara and I developed a research partnership. Our MB107 Faculty Coordinator-Embedded Librarian collaboration resulted in a highly productive research partnership which has produced three publications, a forthcoming paper, and ten conference presentations/proceedings. Our scholarship has focused on issues around libraries and management, as well as their intersection. Additionally, we have authored two additional papers, which we hope to submit to journals prior to Barbara's retirement. Moreover, we have successfully collaborated on papers with three scholars external to Skidmore, a testament to Barbara's versatility."

It was Barbara's work with Business students, in particular, that led to her 2004 President's Award at Skidmore.

Barbara's long career has inspired others, both in Scribner Library and throughout the state. She put herself out there, rolled up her sleeves, and got involved. Her professional and campus service is too extensive to describe here. Fellow librarian John Cosgrove, who has worked alongside her for decades, shared the words below that sum up what we've all come to appreciate about her:

"In addition to the high quality of her librarianship, her professional work, and her service, Barbara really cares. She cares for the library, for our faculty, and, most especially, for our students. She is willing to commit herself completely to get the best available answer to whatever question is posed because she really cares about doing a good job for the person she is working with. It's a trait that

cannot be taught or paid for, but one that Barbara possesses in great store."

Janet Sorensen arrived at Skidmore in the fall of 1985 full of energy and unbridled optimism. She had just received her MFA in painting from The University of Iowa, one of the highest-ranked painting and printmaking departments in the country. Her undergraduate degree was from Kansas State University, where she had graduated *summa cum laude*. She moved from the midwest to upstate New York and threw herself into the job of teaching with enthusiasm. From the beginning, students were drawn to Janet like a magnet, and she quickly became the faculty sponsor for many student groups in the Art Department. This is no surprise, given how her colleagues in the department describe their first impression of her as having a spark and exuding even more energy than those excited students. In the thirty-six years since she arrived, Janet has changed very little: you can still see her energy and spark in the way she moves through the halls and in her grin when she is excited about a new project, a rich critique with students, or a conversation with a colleague.

Janet is both a painter and printmaker and has taught classes in both the Drawing & Painting and Printmaking areas in the Art Department. She has taught a variety of courses including Painting I, II, and III, Drawing I and II, Water-based media, Color, Visual Concepts, numerous Independent Studies, and her FYE course "Eyes Wide Open," which she has taught an impressive eight times. Janet believes deeply in the power of using our hands and minds together to make objects, and she has lectured widely on creative inquiry and process at conferences and events. She teaches her students to smell and touch the world around them and to transform their sensory experiences into visual images. As the title of her FYE suggests—"Eyes Wide Open"—all of Janet's teaching invites students to imagine the transformation that happens when you learn to see all of the layers of your environment.

Janet is an active listener in the classroom, and her thoughtful responses have convinced many of her students that she is a mind reader. One of her students writes, "Janet knows all. And it's all because she listens. She reads people, hears what they have to say, and is incredibly thoughtful and conscientious in her response. She genuinely wants what's best for you, and

is absolutely magic in her ability to know what to say.” This aptitude for listening has led to a long roster of advisees who rely on her as a guide for navigating their educations, but also their lives. Her capacity for empathy has also made her a teacher of teachers, and many faculty members describe how she has taught them important lessons about how to be patient, to listen deeply, and to be present in their classrooms.

Janet has had an active life as an artist, showing her work both nationally and internationally in a long list of solo and group exhibitions, and she has also shared her work through artist’s talks as far afield as Cardiff and Florence. Her paintings and prints reflect her curiosity about the natural world and our place within it, engaging in the practice of close looking that she learned from her father when she was young. In the series *This Moment*, Janet visited the same wild rose bush over a series of days and months in the winter to understand how it changed and revealed new forms in different light and weather. With remarkable dedication and attention to detail, she created a series of paintings that seem to dance and come alive with color and light. In each one, the form of the rose bush is both familiar and unfamiliar: across the series, we see it anew as highlights and shadows move across it and take on blue, red, and yellow casts over the day.

Like this series, much of her work invites reflection on the changes that happen in the natural world over a season or a year. She paints flowers that are withered and shell-like, buds bursting with new life, and seed pods that are dormant and waiting. In her paintings, Janet embraces time as a life-force that consistently changes our landscape, revealing the fragility and incredible phenomenon of the life cycle. Her paintings celebrate the small, often overlooked details of the natural world and encourage the viewer to stop and dwell on what we can learn from the poetry of these moments. In her work she looks on our behalf, finding new things in the landscape to bring back to us so that we can see the world through her eyes.

Janet loves to learn—from the language of geese to the mycorrhizal networks of trees, she is always seeking new ways to understand the natural world. She is an avid reader, and her vast knowledge of the natural world shapes her paintings and prints as well as her interactions with everyone around her. If you ask her a straightforward question, be prepared for her to respond to a question with a bit of knowledge about the social structures of bees or the tensile strength of a tree

trunk. In these stories she passes on a wisdom that is situated in old and complex natural systems, and a deep belief that we can learn from them.

Janet is also a continual learner of her craft. Throughout her career she has returned to the classroom herself to study disciplines including silk aquatint, book binding, and Hanga woodcut with artists such as Robert Cartmell at SUNY Albany, Kathy Caraccio at the Women's Studio Workshop, and Scott McCarney at the Rensselaer County Council. Janet openly shares the knowledge and skills that she gleans from others. In 2015 she co-curated an exhibition in the Schick Gallery of the work of Jeffrey Elgin, a former Art department faculty member and her longtime mentor, titled *Jeffrey Elgin: Thus Passed Some Days – Twenty Years upon an Overgrown Path*. Sharing Jeffrey’s work with the Skidmore community, she paid tribute to a teacher by carrying forward his teachings and bringing them to another generation of students.

Janet’s dedication to the Skidmore community is clear in the hours she keeps. She has been known to return to Saisselin after a lecture or dinner to advise a student group or to call prospective students, and she is often the first one in the building in the morning. She has served on a myriad of different departmental and all-College committees. She has banked over fifteen years combined on different curriculum committees and has shaped both the Art Department’s curriculum as well as the newest all-College General Education curriculum. During her time at Skidmore she has served on many committees that support and recognize students, including the Periclean Executive Committee, the University Without Walls Committee, the Backus Award Committee, and as a UWW Advisor.

One Art Department colleague describes Janet as “tempered steel”—she has a strength that is complemented by her incredible flexibility. One of her first acts of leadership came in the summer of 2017, when she received a phone call at 3:00 am from Paul Davis to let her know that the fire in Saisselin was mostly out. As the incoming Chair that summer, Janet worked tirelessly beside Paul and Mike West in the days that followed to rescue paintings, drawings, and other materials from the wet studios, and then worked all summer to restore and transform the third floor of the building. In her last year as Chair she has again worked tirelessly alongside Paul to transform Saisselin

so that we could continue to teach and learn in the Art Center throughout the Covid-19 crisis. In these moments and others, Janet is a generous collaborator: she will tell you that she is strengthened by the people she works with and that she is constantly in awe of the work that Art Department staff do to keep the Department functioning. While her time as Chair has been bookended by crises, Janet has been determined not to focus on the difficulties, but instead to appreciate our community and history. She commemorated the 40th Anniversary of Saisselin with a community celebration and created an oral history project that documents the lives and hopes of the Skidmore Art alumni.

Janet is a light that has illuminated the halls of Saisselin for 36 years. She has generously gifted her time, energy, and compassion to the Department, the College, and her students. Through her words and images Janet has taught us how to be better teachers, better community members, and better artists. She has given us new eyes and has changed the way we see the world. The ideas that Janet has gifted us will continue to grow, take root, and change Skidmore's Art Department even after she is gone. As one of Janet's students wrote of her, "She will change your world." We are lucky to have been changed by Janet.