

Bringing Research to LIFE

In Brief

Local rock star honoured by Carnegie Museum

Distinguished Professor Frank Hawthorne, Canada Research Chair in Crystallography and Mineralogy, has received the 2008 Carnegie Mineralogical Award, given out by the Carnegie Museum of Natural History.

The award, established in 1987 by Carnegie Museum of Natural History and underwritten by the Hillman Foundation, honours outstanding contributions in mineralogical preservation, conservation and education that match the ideals advanced in the museum's Hillman Hall of Minerals and Gems. It is considered one of the most prestigious awards in the fields of mineralogy, lapidary art and geology.

The award will be presented to Hawthorne on February 14th at the 2009 Tucson Gem and Mineral Show.

Hawthorne is an Officer of the Order of Canada, a Fellow of the Royal Society of Canada, a foreign member of the Russian Academy of Sciences and has received many awards for his scientific work, including the Killam Prize in Natural Sciences.

According to Thomson Scientific, Hawthorne was the most cited geoscientist in the world for the decade 1997-2007.

Upcoming

Speaker Series

When Family is Business and Business is Family

By Reg Litz

Wednesday, February 25, 2009

7:00 PM

Robert B. Schultz Lecture Theatre,

St. John's College

For more information:

Phone: (204) 474-9020

Café Scientifique

Could keeping your kids too clean make them sick?

Wednesday, March 4, 2009

McNally Robinson, Polo Park

1485 Portage Avenue

For more information:

Phone: (204) 474-9020

Walking along the Möbius strip

BY SEAN MOORE

Thousands of families currently own and operate a family business in Winnipeg, but if typical estimates are any indication, 70 per cent of them will not continue into the second generation, with only 10 per cent making it to a third generation.

Such a culling suggests a family business, and for that matter a business family, is harder to sustain than first impressions let on. Perhaps then it is time to view the two entities through a different framework, one that better captures the relationships involved.

On Feb. 25, as part of the Bringing Research to Life speaker series, Reg Litz, professor of entrepreneurial studies at the Asper School of Business, will give a free public lecture titled When Family is Business and Business is Family (details below), in which he will discuss how the metaphor of the Möbius strip can help business families, and family businesses, better understand the implications of the complex relationship they find themselves in.

"For a long time now," Litz said, "people have been trying to define a family business. In the last twenty years there have been literally dozens of different definitions for the family firm. After thinking a bit more about it, I thought, 'hey, there must be another way to understand it'."

Part of his inspiration for this came from the French philosopher Auguste



Submitted Photo

Marketing professor Reg Litz will present at the next Bringing Research to Life speaker series on Feb. 25.

Comte who proposed that there are three ways to learn about something: direct observation; experimentation; and comparing it to something you already understand. It was this last point that struck a chord with Litz when he read it years ago.

When a family becomes a business family, and a business becomes a family business, the walls usually separating work from home dissolve. What were once two independent systems become one. A family's output in the way of, say, labour, now becomes the business input.

Likewise, the profits reaped from the business become the monetary input a family depends on. And this is where, Litz argues, the relationship becomes like a Möbius strip – a single continuous surface bounded by a continuous curve.

"When we think about family business the Möbius strip metaphor suggests that it, and its twin institution, the business family, result from a twisting toward and connecting to."

As a result, a new word is needed to talk about these coexisting institutions; this word, Litz argues, is house. Armed with a new lexicon, we can start asking questions about mortality. Why do houses fall?

The House of Vanderbilt. The House of Barney. The House of Mondavi. They all crumbled. Why? And did they have to?

"My work is focused on moving towards a more enlightened view of the larger system so as to better understand how and whether it ought to continue, and also to understand when, perhaps, it ought not to," Litz said.

Family businesses start for a variety of reasons; an infinite array of precipitating moments can act on family members and push them into a successful business venture. But longevity has never come with a guarantee.

To learn more about how family businesses and business families walk along a Möbius strip, come to Litz's free lecture on Feb. 25, at 7 p.m. in the Robert B. Schultz Lecture Theatre, St. John's College. For more information, call 474-9020.

Happy self-deception day

BY JENNIFER ROBINSON

"I get very popular around Valentine's Day," laughs Marian Morry, psychology professor. She is referring to the annual pre-Valentine's Day onslaught of media attention she receives regarding her research on romantic relationships.

Morry studies how individuals in relationships perceive their partners, which means that she is in a unique position to shed some light on the question, is love really blind?

According to Morry, individuals who are satisfied with their relationships tend to overestimate the similarity of their partners, and the more satisfied you are, the more commonalities you are likely to perceive.

"This makes sense in a way since when you start a new relationship, you don't know the person very well, yet you are madly in love. Similarities suggest that you have things in common which will make the relationship work," Morry said.

Perceived similarities span a wide range of characteristics, including values, beliefs, and behaviours. But why would we want to deceive ourselves in this way?

"Being similar validates our own beliefs or traits and makes us feel good about ourselves. We can also more easily predict the behaviour of a similar person, and it suggests that the other



Photo by Jennifer Robinson

Marian Morry, psychology, studies how people in romantic relationships perceive their partners.

should understand us better...so we are somewhat unrealistic, but it probably bodes well for our relationship."

She points out that if we were to be more realistic about our partners, we would probably perceive their dissimilarities which would decrease the relationship's potential for longevity.

Interestingly, both men and women are equally likely to perceive similarities

that aren't necessarily there when they are happy with their relationship.

Morry has recently found that when we are attracted to someone, we tend to perceive them as similar -- yet slightly better -- in comparison to ourselves. She mentions that this also bodes well for the relationship since it makes us less likely to look for other partners. A similar yet slightly better version of yourself is a pretty tough act to follow.

While this may seem plausible in the early stages of a relationship, one would think that this exaggerated view of your romantic partner would disappear after you actually get to know the object of your deception. But Morry's research indicates that this is not the case, since we perceive the person as being only slightly better, rather than putting them high on a pedestal from which they can easily fall.

Furthermore, she notes, couples are going to be somewhat similar to begin with. Not only do we like to date people that we have things in common with, but perceptions of our partners' similarity can in turn influence their behaviour in ways that are in keeping with how we perceive them.

Thus, while happy couples do have actual similarities, their self-deceptive tendencies (as documented by Morry) give some credence to the idea that while love may not actually be blind, it is probably at the very least visually impaired.