

# THE PRIMARY SOURCE

History and Political Science | Missouri S&T | Spring 2020

JAMES TRUSLER:

## TEACHING TEENS MORE THAN HISTORY

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# SCHOLARSHIPS MAKE THE LEADERS WHO MAKE HISTORY

In history and political science, students learn to ask the questions that matter most. For many students, the first step on this learning journey is scholarship support.

Our annual phonathon is underway, and we hope you'll take the time to talk to the student who calls. We also hope you'll consider a scholarship gift.

Your scholarship support will honor great teaching by helping future leaders make history.

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# DEAR ALUMNI AND FRIENDS,

This has been a year of change in Rolla.

As you may have heard, we now have a new chancellor, **Mohammad "Mo" Deghani**, and Provost **Robert Marley** stepped down at the end of last year. That resulted in a domino effect of interim appointments, with CASB Dean **Steve Roberts** moving to interim provost and Associate Dean **Kate Drowne** moving to interim dean.

The changes affected our department, too. Chair and professor **Shannon Fogg** moved to interim associate dean, and yours truly moved to interim chair. These promotions, temporary though they are, seem to be a good indication of the increasingly high regard in which the history and political science department and the humanities in general are held on this otherwise STEM-focused campus.

Our department continues to thrive. The number of history majors, currently 40, continues to climb slowly but steadily, from a low of 28 in 2015, and our graduates are finding interesting opportunities after graduation, from teaching and graduate school to business and video-game consulting.



As you will read more about on the following pages, our outstanding faculty members continue to publish and present their research and to win awards, while retaining their reputation as some of the best teachers on campus.

We always love to hear from former students, so send us an email to fill us in on your milestones and achievements. And stop by the office if you're in the Rolla area!

**Michael W. Bruening**  
Associate Professor and Interim Chair,  
History and Political Science



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## KEEP IN TOUCH

We'd love to hear about new appointments, degrees earned, job promotions and other family or professional news.

Tell us what you're doing with a degree in history and political science so we can feature your accomplishments among our alumni achievement stories.

→ [hist-ps@mst.edu](mailto:hist-ps@mst.edu)

# What happens in Vegas ...

may appear in print



Photo courtesy of Las Vegas News Bureau

In his latest volume of Las Vegas lore, **Larry Gragg** says deliberate publicity strategies changed the perception of Sin City from a regional tourist destination where one could legally gamble and access legalized prostitution just outside the city limits, to a family vacation spot filled with entertainment options and surrounded by scenic beauty.

"The rise in Las Vegas tourism from a million visitors in 1950 to 10 million in 1960 was no accident," says Gragg, a Curators' Distinguished Teaching Professor emeritus of history and political science at Missouri S&T.

*Becoming America's Playground: Las Vegas in the 1950s*, published by University of Oklahoma Press, presents a behind-the-scenes look at the development of tourism in Las Vegas.

Gragg says the unconventional yet highly successful promotional strategies of Steve Hannagan, a well-known publicist hired by

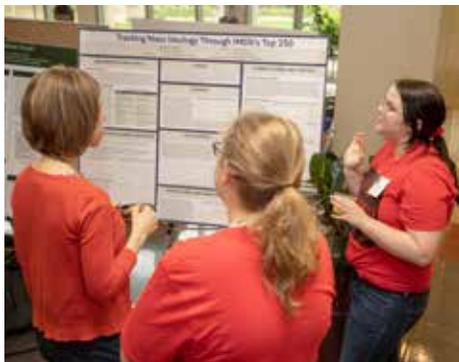
the city of Las Vegas between 1948 and 1949, propelled the city's growth of tourism. By ignoring Vegas' image as a gambling resort and heavily promoting it as the hub of a scenic wonderland where families would want to vacation, Hannagan began to change the city's public perception.

Don English, a popular photographer at the time, previously worked for Hannagan and came to Las Vegas in 1949 to join the News Bureau. He recalled the daily morning "hometown run" where news staff photographed small-town couples in front of their hotels, then sent the photos to the subjects' hometown newspapers to publish so their friends and neighbors would be inspired to make the same trip.

Las Vegas publicity in this era also revolved around the Nevada Test Site, situated 65 miles outside the city. English's famous promotional photos include a striking black and white image of a nuclear detonation cloud framed by the iconic neon "Vegas Vic" and the Pioneer Club sign.

From 1950 to 1960, Las Vegas had the highest per capita income in the U.S., hotel building was thriving, and the city was deeply segregated. In an interview with platinum album recording star Johnny Mathis, Gragg learned that after his performances, Mathis was shuffled to the west side of Las Vegas, where most black residents lived, because African Americans were not welcome to stay in the same hotels with white guests. Mathis described his experience as "almost like watching a sad, sad movie."

# HISTORY RESEARCH IS ON FYRE



Top: Andrew Warner displays his research at the FYRE exhibit in the Havener Center. Bottom left: Mackenzie Shields (right) presents her research. Bottom right: Peyson Davis (left) discusses his research with assistant teaching professor Andrew Berendt.

The First Year Research Experience (FYRE) program offered through the College of Arts, Sciences, and Business gives new students a chance to work one-on-one with a faculty mentor on a specific research project.

FYRE students pose questions, check data and create knowledge. The program is designed to improve critical thinking, communication, and presentation and leadership skills.

This past year, history and political science was involved in three projects.

**Andrew Warner**, now a junior in history, worked with retired theater director **Jeanne Stanley** in arts, languages, and philosophy on "Researching, editing and publishing a play."

**Mackenzie Shields**, now a sophomore in history and technical communication, worked with **Max Tohline**, Engl'07, an assistant professor in arts, languages, and philosophy, on "Tracking mass ideology through IMDB's Top 250."

**Peyson Davis**, a freshman in undergraduate studies, worked with **Andrew Behrendt**, assistant teaching professor of history and political science, on "A Good Dish, but Thirsty: Paprika, Empire and the Exotic in Anglophone Tourism to Hungary, 1870-1940."



## LIVING HER PRIORITIES

**Anna Nisbett**, a junior in history and political science, is the eighth of 10 home-schooled children in her family. She's also an actress, singer and dancer who has performed in over 20 plays and musicals through Fine Linen Theatre, a non-profit community theater organization in Rolla her family founded in 2001.

Nisbett is enjoying her university education and says she loved her home school experience.

"I had lots of friends and activities, plus a lot of time with my family," Nisbett says. "I feel like I was educated well."

Nisbett's been running around the S&T campus since she was a little kid. Her father, **Keith Nisbett**, joined the mechanical and aerospace engineering faculty long before she was born, and when she graduates, she'll be the sixth among the children from her family who have become Miner alumni.

Nisbett received S&T's 2019 Outstanding History Student Award and the department's Stonehenge Scholarship for the last two academic years. Recipients are selected by faculty based on academic success and outside activities.

"It's a nice validation that people notice I'm doing well here. But I'm not building a resume on purpose," says Nisbett, who wants to do as much performing as she can. "I'm just having fun doing what means the most to me."

# TEACHING TEENS MORE THAN HISTORY



**James Trusler** is the kind of teacher a student never forgets.

With a smile that draws you in, and a voice that communicates acceptance and understanding, Trusler, Hist' 16, educates 200 teenagers a semester in his seventh- and eighth-grade world history classes at Rolla Junior High School.

"I was a 13-year-old student who struggled and didn't care about grades," says Trusler. "So I try to make history as engaging and exciting as I can."

Trusler engages his students by blending real-life stories into his lessons.

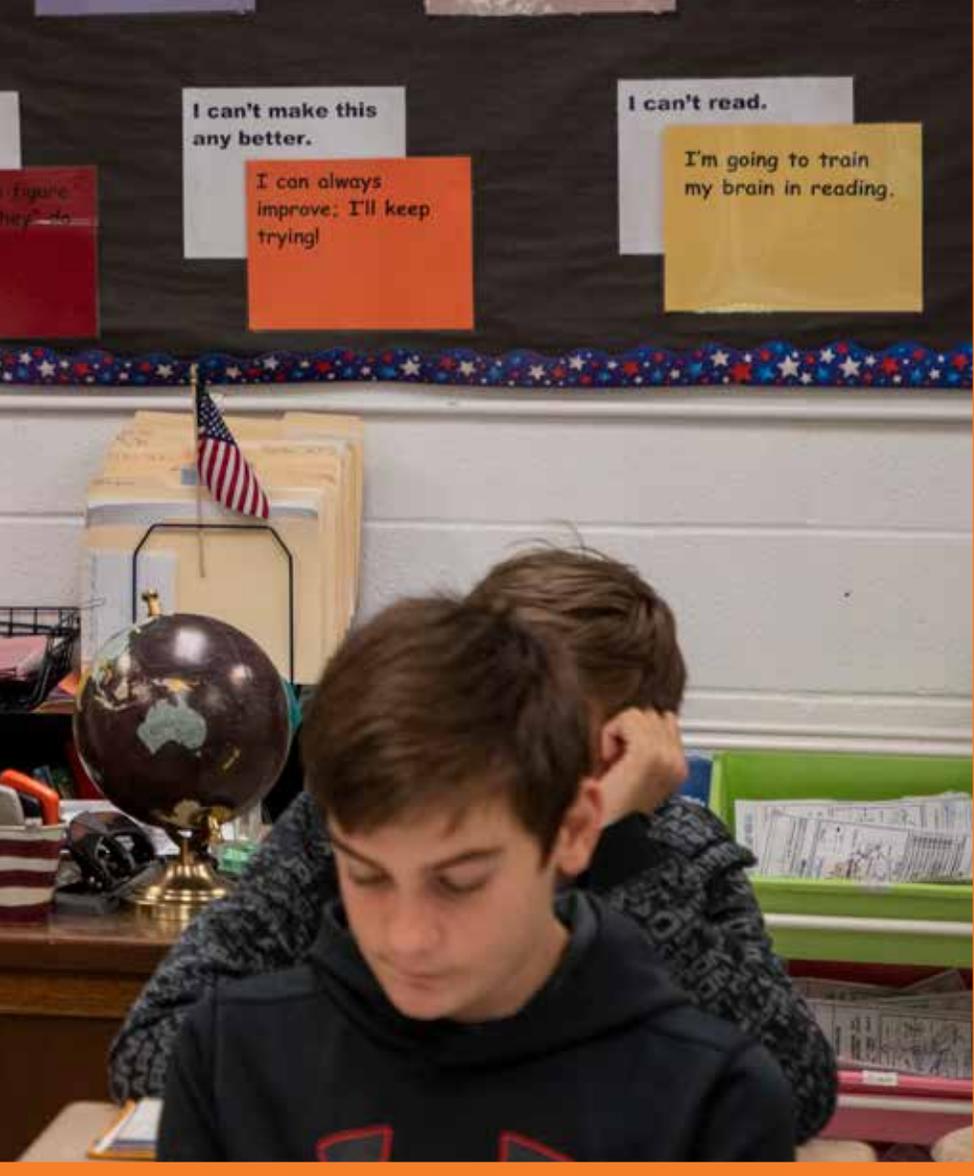
"I'm not just teaching history — I'm giving them a piece of myself," he says. "I want them to know that being human and making mistakes is normal, and hopefully my stories will help them remember that lesson."

Trusler's unconventional path to teaching gives him a lot of stories to share with his students. For starters, he didn't complete his high school education, and the lack of a diploma made getting a job difficult.

"Learned helplessness is real," he says. "You start closing your own doors."

To start opening more doors, Trusler earned a GED (General Education Diploma) in 1991, and took a job in the grocery business in southeast Missouri.

Twenty-three years later, Trusler's wife, a pharmacist, asked him if he had thought about going to college. Although he had found success as a supermarket manager, the question made him confront the gnawing inner belief that he might not be smart enough to earn a college degree.



## AN ENGAGING SCHOLAR

**Diana Ahmad** found her life's calling at age 6, when she knew she wanted to be a professor. Now into her 20th year at S&T, she's still following that path.

Ahmad, a Curators' Distinguished Teaching Professor of history, was one of 15 faculty members across the University of Missouri System to be chosen for the 2018–19 inaugural class of Presidential Engagement Fellows, an annual cohort selected for their excellence in teaching, research and ability to engage an audience when communicating their expertise. The fellows share their knowledge across the state during their term.

Ahmad researches the history of the 19th Century American West, focusing on the relationship between domestic animals and their human companions on the Overland Trail, drug use during the era, and the 19th century U.S. naval expansion in the Pacific.

"I was beyond flattered when I found out I had been selected and excited to be able to do more of what I love," says Ahmad.

Ahmad adapted her presentations to the audiences she served. Vienna Grade School students picked stories from a plastic bucket for Ahmad to tell. The Rolla Kiwanis Club learned about prostitution and opium use in frontier days. And faculty and students at S&T's Research on Tap event learned why the prairie dog symbolized America as a new, growing nation.

"Our Presidential Engagement Fellows have to be able to represent the university on a human level, ranging from talking to academics to little kids," says Ahmad.

Trusler overcame that doubt and enrolled in East Central College in Rolla, earning an associate of arts degree in history. He went on to Missouri S&T as a full-time student, and graduated magna cum laude in 2016 with an emphasis in secondary education.

And his hard work has paid dividends. In March 2019, Trusler received the Beginning Teaching Award at the 2019 Missouri Association of Colleges for Teacher Education (MACTE) conference.

**"I was a 13-year-old student who struggled and didn't care about grades, so I try to make history as engaging and exciting as I can."**

He says he appreciates both the rigorous education he received and personal support from his professors.

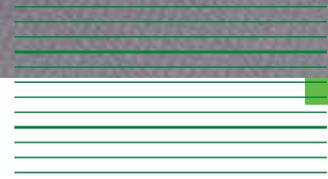
Today he is pursuing a master's degree in military history through an online program at Southern New Hampshire University. He's also working more technology into his classroom with a goal to engage students by using YouTube as a teaching tool.

"My story is one of a false belief in ineptitude — not doing what I should and then trying to catch up later," says Trusler. "I try to let my students figure out that it would be easier to just do the work now, and hopefully they'll wake up before I did. I want to hug them all and drag them up."

"My path is unusual; life doesn't usually work out this way," says Trusler after three years of teaching at Rolla Junior High. "I love it here. I can't see myself anywhere else." ■



Collaboration room rendering



## WHERE HUMANITIES AND TECHNOLOGY MEET

The history and political science department is working with other S&T humanities and social sciences departments to build the Collaboratory, which will be a state-of-the-art communication hub where students and faculty can collaborate, experiment, research and engage. In this new 1,150-square-foot digital lab to be located in the Humanities and Social Sciences Building, researchers will get hands-on experience with state-of-the-art technologies needed to create and share knowledge in today's world.

In the Collaboratory, students and faculty will apply cultural, historic and scientific analysis to some of the world's most pressing concerns.

The space will contain three areas:

- » **Display room** — a flexible public venue for educational displays
- » **Collaboration room** — an open area with movable furniture, large monitors and whiteboards, and 3-D scanning and printing capabilities. Here faculty and students can plan digital pop-up museums, podcasts, oral histories and geographic information system (GIS) mapping projects
- » **Digital production room** — includes podcasting and video production studios to seamlessly produce professional-quality presentations and green-screen recordings.



Photo courtesy of National Archives

## A 'BOLDLY REVISIONIST' LOOK AT WORLD WAR II IN THE PACIFIC

In his 13th book on U.S. military history, **John C. McManus** examines the Army's experience in the Pacific and East Asia.

*Fire and Fortitude: The US Army in the Pacific War: 1941–1943*, published by Dutton Caliber, begins with an account of the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor — the event that drew the U.S. into war with Japan — and concludes with the November 1943 Battle of Makin.

"*Fire and Fortitude* is an epic human story, one that I have wanted to tell for years," says McManus, a Curators' Distinguished Professor of history and political science. "The army that fought Japan was the third-largest American ground force ever sent overseas in time of war, and yet few World War II historians have ever delved into its incredible history.

"I discovered tremendous amounts of new, original source material," he adds, "and came to realize that the Pacific War set the tone for so much subsequent American history, such as the brutal nature of the fighting, the preeminence of Asia in American strategic thinking, the rise of post-colonial nationalism, the importance of cultural know-how, particularly in counterinsurgent warfare, and the crucial role of leadership for any military force."



Photo courtesy of Laine Whitaker

# HISTORY GRADUATE LANDS DREAM JOB IN GAMING

“If you see a job and don’t feel confident about it, apply for it anyway.”

That’s the advice **Laine Whitaker**, Hist’19, gives fellow Missouri S&T graduates looking for their dream jobs. Whitaker did just that this year by landing a job at video game company Wargaming, which is based in the Mediterranean island country Cyprus.

While studying history at S&T, Whitaker knew he wanted to use his interest in military history in the gaming industry. He sent what he called a “Hail Mary” application to Wargaming his junior year. He says that they weren’t ready to hire him then, but they invited him to try again.

He applied again during his senior year, and he got a job as a content manager.

“The company is fantastic,” says Whitaker. “They throw events for employees. They care about making sure you fit in and take care of yourself, but also get the work done.”

Whitaker works on the game *World of Warships: Legends*, a multiplayer online game that the company says, “brings iconic warships and history’s greatest commanders” together for naval battles on gaming systems.

Whitaker writes articles and press releases about the history behind the naval ships and commanders, making sure they are historically accurate. His knowledge of American culture and family structures allows him to help Wargaming improve its marketing to U.S. peers.

He says he puts the skills he learned at S&T to good use.

“I learned writing-intensive skills and practical analysis at S&T,” says Whitaker. “I learned how to find a wide variety of sources and how people read.”

“You don’t get your dream job by dreaming about it.”

“You don’t get  
your dream job  
by dreaming  
about it.”



Photo courtesy of UIS Athletics

## HISTORY GRAD RETURNS TO COACH BASKETBALL

**Bill Walker**, Hist'87, former head men's basketball coach at the University of Illinois Springfield (UIS), joined the S&T athletics program as head men's basketball coach in April.

"I always loved my time at the university and no matter where I've been, I have followed the program closely and have been rooting for it from afar," Walker says. "It is a great honor to come back and occupy the seat that **Billy Key** and **Dale Martin** held so honorably during my time there as a student-athlete."

Walker began his coaching career as a graduate assistant at the University of Alabama-Birmingham, then became a full-time assistant at the University of Missouri-St. Louis, the University of Central Missouri, the University of Minnesota and Texas A&M University. He spent two seasons as a professional scout for the New Orleans Hornets, then spent a year at Drake University as an assistant coach before moving to UIS.

## ALUMNI NEWS

- » **Kimberly Harrison**, Hist'09, is an environmental archaeologist for the state of California.
- » **Eric Haynes**, Hist'90, is teaching middle school writing at KIPP: Triumph Academy in the St. Louis area.
- » **Tyler Johnson**, Hist'09, was named assistant director of admissions at S&T.
- » **Logan Strother**, Hist'10, an assistant professor of political science at Purdue University, published an article on race and the second amendment in *The Washington Post*.

## UNDERGRADUATE HISTORIANS WIN RESEARCH AWARDS

Students in eight categories received recognition and cash awards this past April as winners of the 15th annual Undergraduate Research Conference at S&T. First-place winners were awarded a cash prize of \$500. Second- and third-place finishers received \$250 and \$100, respectively.

Several history students were honored.

**Donald Morard III**, a senior in history, won first place in the arts and humanities oral presentation session for research titled "The Anti-Soviet Forest Brother's Movement." Research advisor is **Shannon Fogg**.

**Mark Allison**, a sophomore in history, won second place in the arts and humanities oral presentation session for research titled "Kings, Old Ironsides, Levelers and a Rump." Research advisor is **Michael Bruening**.

**Mackenzie Shields**, a sophomore in history and technical communication, won second place in the arts and humanities research poster session for research titled "Tracking Mass Ideology through IMDb's Top 250." Research advisor is **Max Tohline**, Engl'07.

**Michele White**, a senior in electrical engineering, won third place in the arts and humanities poster session for research titled "Then vs. Now." Research advisor is **Diana Ahmad**.

# INVEST IN EXPERIENTIAL LEARNING

S&T's unique experiential learning environment gives our students a competitive edge in the workplace and in graduate school. The Collaboratory's technology-rich space offers new opportunities for students to integrate vital skills from STEM and the humanities.

Missouri S&T's Collaboratory will be essential to our mission to integrate education, research and application to create and convey knowledge that serves the state and helps solve the world's great challenges.

**You can help advance our mission.**

The gift you make to Missouri S&T's Collaboratory can help us build a better future for tomorrow's leaders and scholars.

For more information and naming opportunities, please contact **Kristen Gallagher**, executive director of development for the College of Arts, Sciences, and Business, at 573-341-6050 or [gallagherk@mst.edu](mailto:gallagherk@mst.edu).

[history.mst.edu/experiential-learning](http://history.mst.edu/experiential-learning)

## S&T WOMAN OF THE YEAR

This past April, **Kate Sheppard**, an associate professor of history and political science, was named the 2019 Woman of the Year during a campus ceremony.

The award, which includes a \$2,000 stipend funded by **Cynthia Tang**, Econ'85, is given annually to a female full-time tenured or tenure-track faculty member. It recognizes efforts to improve the campus environment for women and minorities.

Sheppard's colleagues and students commended her as a role model and praised her for her contributions to educating students and wider audiences on the history of women in science.

"Dr. Sheppard's willingness to engage actively in issues that affect women's lives, and her leadership by example in multiple arenas of research, teaching, mentoring, and participating in activities that promote diversity make her an ideal candidate to be recognized by the Woman of the Year award," wrote a fellow faculty member.



# FACULTY ACCOMPLISHMENTS



## PRESS

With the 75th anniversary of D-Day, **John McManus** was in high demand this year. He appeared on the History Channel's "Presidents at War" series, CSPAN, and St. Louis Public Radio, was interviewed by the French newspaper *Le Figaro*, and gave multiple talks.



## BOOK CHAPTERS, ARTICLES AND PODCASTS

- » **Diana Ahmad's** article "The Oxen were the Unheralded Heroes of America's Overland Trails" was featured as part of the Smithsonian's "What It Means to be an American" series.
- » **Tseggai Isaac** published "In China's Vanguard Civilization: Is there Shelter for the Third World?" in the *Comparative Civilizations Review*.
- » **Alanna Krolikowski** was featured on a ChinaPower podcast on "China's Civilian Space Program."
- » **Michael Meagher** published "Democracy on Trial: John F. Kennedy's Political Thought" in the *Journal for Interdisciplinary Studies*.



## INVITED LECTURES

- » **Michael Bruening** was invited to present a paper on "Zwingli in the Pays de Vaud" at a conference in Zurich, Switzerland, commemorating the 500th anniversary of the Zurich Reformation.
- » **Patrick Huber** was invited to speak at the Missouri State Archives in Jefferson City. His talk was titled "Remembering the Ste. Genevieve Race Riot of 1930: Historical Memory and the Expulsion of African Americans from a Small Missouri Town."



## AWARDS

- » **Andrew Behrendt** won a Missouri S&T eFellows Grant to sponsor course design for his new class, HIST 4281: Historical Representation in Video Games.
- » **Petra DeWitt** and **John McManus** were among the first winners of the Sustained Excellence in Outstanding Teaching Award, which recognizes faculty members who won Outstanding Teaching awards for nine of the previous 10 years. They won the award in both 2018 and 2019. **Michael Meagher** and John McManus won the 2018 Outstanding Teaching Award. **Kate Sheppard** won a 2018 Experiential Learning Award.
- » **Andrew Behrendt, Michael Bruening, Petra DeWitt, Shannon Fogg** and **Jeff Schramm** received the 2019-19 Outstanding Teaching Award.
- » **Petra DeWitt** received the 2019 Faculty Service Award.
- » **Patrick Huber** won the 2019 Faculty Excellence Award.
- » **Patrick Huber** for the second time won the Belmont Book award for the best book on country music for his book co-authored with Brian Ward, *A&R Pioneers, Architects of American Roots Music*, which was also named one of the top books of 2018 by the Bluegrass Situation. The book also garnered a certificate of merit from the 2019 Association for Recorded Sound Collections Awards for Excellence in Historical Recorded Sound Research for Best Historical Research.
- » **Alanna Krolikowski** secured a University of Missouri Research Board Grant for her book project "Aircraft, Spacecraft, and Statecraft: Strategic trade between China and the United States."
- » **Kate Sheppard** received the 2019 Faculty Teaching Award.



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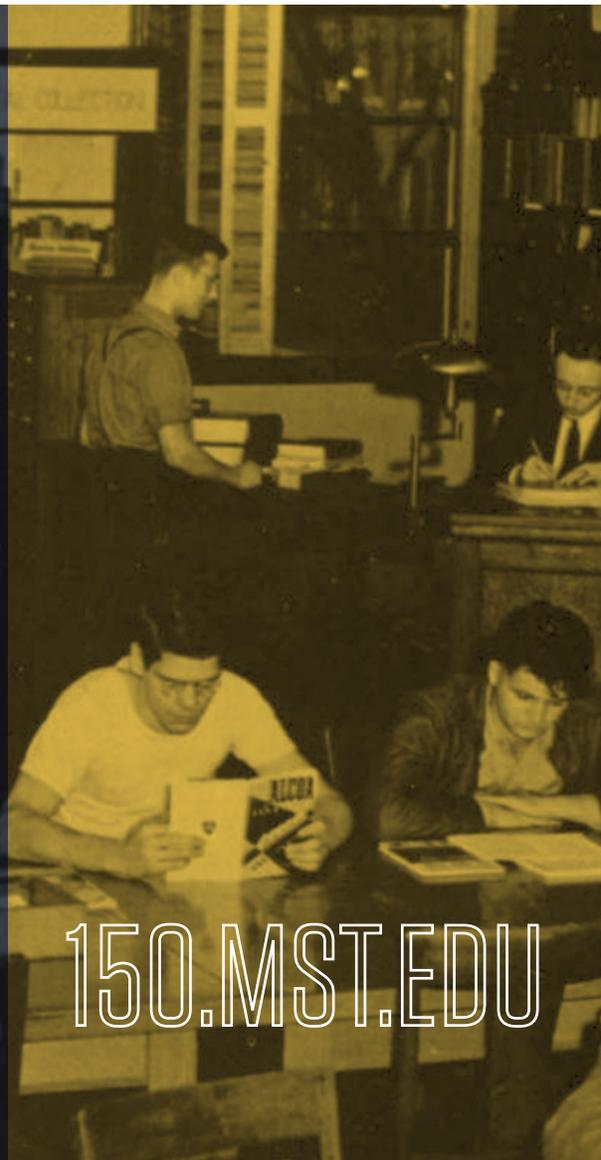
# 150 YEARS:

## History Celebrates the Missouri S&T Story

From our founding in 1870 as a pioneering technical school to our 21st century standing as a national technological university, the Missouri S&T story spans a century and a half of remarkable change.

Now, to commemorate the university's 150th anniversary, our own Curators' Distinguished Teaching Professor emeritus **Larry Gragg** has written a book capturing 150 years of Miner milestones, memories and mischief. Copies of *Forged in Gold* will be available in time for the kickoff of S&T's yearlong 150th celebration next October.

Make plans to join your fellow alumni for a year of special events including MinerFest 150 in October 2020 and a mega-best-ever "Bestival" over St. Pat's Weekend 2021.



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