

# SHORT SUBJECTS

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## A Row on the Potomac

**B**UILDING A BOATHOUSE has hardly been smooth sailing for Georgetown University. Nearly 20 years after Georgetown began negotiating with the National Park Service about a new home for its men's and women's rowing teams along the Potomac River, the proposed site remains empty, and some local groups hope to keep it that way.

Georgetown shares a facility with several other teams, and few dispute the need for a new boathouse. But cycling and preservation groups object to the planned location and size of the teams' planned digs: a spot near the entryway to the Capital Crescent Trail, a scenic hiker-biker path from Georgetown to Silver Spring, Md. Pedestrians and cyclists, they say, would have to share 800 feet of the trail with motor vehicles traveling to and from the 18,682-square-foot "boathouse."

Erik M. Smulson, the university's spokesman, says it has already compromised on the project: "We reduced the square footage to ensure that the boathouse is the right fit for the location." The trail, he adds, will be widened during construction. The facility originally was to be placed a mile upstream, but the park service arranged a land swap in the early 1990s to put it in a designated "boathouse zone."

In April park-service officials concluded that the boathouse would "not negatively affect the historic setting of the C&O Canal," which runs parallel to the Potomac. Now they are reviewing public-comment letters, which discuss such details as the number of seconds a walker will have his view of the water obstructed by the boathouse or the benefits offered by the new shrubs Georgetown will plant.

A decision on one of four boathouse alternatives, including a "no build" option, is expected by year's end.

—SAMANTHA HENIG

## The Many Faces of Shakespeare

**S**OMEWHERE IN CANADA, the country's 501st adaptation of Shakespeare awaits discovery by Daniel Fischlin and his colleagues at the University of Guelph.

As the guardian of the Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project (<http://www.canadianshakespeares.ca>), Mr. Fischlin intends to identify and catalog the country's endless number of variants on the works of the Bard of Avon. Among his finds so far: an adaptation of *Henry V* in which the Toronto Maple Leafs lock ice-hockey sticks with the Montreal Canadiens; Peter Skagen's 1999 *Rodeo and Julie-Ed*, whose title tells its tale; and *'Speare: The Literacy Arcade Game*, an Internet-based three-dimensional adventure in which players in search of Shakespearean facts and wisdom ride spaceships around a Prosperian galaxy.

"It's a daunting task," says Mr. Fischlin, a professor of English and theater. In the five years since he began the project, 60 researchers have worked on the collection, which has hard-copy and online components and which takes in not only plays, but any other work that contains direct uses or echoes of Shakespeare.

"Adaptations are interesting things to do because it's taking the cultural capital of Shakespeare and attaching it to your own name," Mr. Fischlin notes. "There's a double payoff."

Anything that borrows from the Bard goes into the database. The result has been that a project that he thought would be quickly over has ballooned, and seems nowhere near complete. "We started digging around, and we've come up so far with close to 500 plays from pre-Confederation in 1867 to the present," he says.

Mr. Fischlin began the project out of frustration. "As a young professor, I invariably got stuck with large Shakespeare classes," he says. "You get 300 students looking for some way to make contact with the plays who don't have any context." So he looked to Canadian adaptations as a way to engage Canadians.

Of 500 plays, songs, films, and other works, a third are by French Canadians, often in local patois, and many are by and about indigenous Canadians. Of the latter, says Mr. Fischlin, "many take place in the context of aboriginal theater as a place where

healing occurs, as part of a deep sense of what some of the necessary rituals of healing are." For example, *Hamlet le Malécite*, written in French by Yves Sioui Durand, is about the extinction of the Maliseet tribe of New Brunswick and environs.

One part of the project is an online compendium of rare adaptations. To date, 40 texts have been stored there, and Mr. Fischlin and his colleagues plan to add another 40.

Among Mr. Fischlin's least favorite adaptations, which he considers profoundly racist but which he nonetheless put on the site for the sake of completeness, is *Chief Shaking Spear Rides Again, or The Taming of the Sioux* (1975), by Warren Graves. Accompanying each online play is an introductory essay with embedded links to other study materials.

Mr. Fischlin has not been able to locate projects similar to the Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project in other countries. "It's odd," he says, "because you could easily do one anywhere from South Africa to the United States to Australia, or even in countries where English isn't the native language, but Shakespeare is the most produced playwright. There's so much investment in Shakespeare."

—PETER MONAGHAN

