



JOHN FERRIES AND ARTIFICIAL INTELLIGENCE

BY RICHARD NEUGASS

You may have already taken an Osher at Dartmouth course from John Ferries, probably on the vast subject of China, so you know about the breadth of his knowledge and experience in that part of the world. But you may not know about his interest in AI. Here's the scoop.

John explained that he became interested in AI when preparing another lecture, "The Global Economic War." He learned that this "War", between competing global alliances led by the U.S. and China, is only minimally over sanctions, trade tariffs and embargos, and supply chain security. Instead, the big battle is over rapidly

emerging powerful new technologies like Artificial Intelligence, Quantum Computing, and Chips/Semi-Conductors.

AI dramatically took center stage in the media last year. A company called Open AI introduced software called "ChatGPT" globally in November, 2022, and Bill Gates immediately gave it credibility by proclaiming "It will change the world . . . It is as significant as the invention of the Internet in 1983." His curiosity piqued, John did a "deep dive" to learn more about it, which included numerous highly interactive, highly creative online sessions with ChatGPT. He was hooked!

Although AI is based on complicated technology, he learned that you don't have to understand it; leave that to the "techie's". All you need to understand is how easy it is for a beginner to use. In fact, it quickly becomes addictive. The more creative he got in prompts to ChatGPT, the more amazing were his results. And sometimes, the more frightening.

As AI exploded on the scene in early 2023, with more and more publicity coming out about its potential uses and risks, many people that John spoke with (particularly among the senior generation) expressed reluctance to understand it or even to

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PRESIDENT'S CORNER

Changes and successes are the themes of this letter to the members.

On July 1, 2023, I became President of Osher at Dartmouth, in what I trust has been a seamless transition from Steve Tofel. I would like to thank Steve for all his guidance and wisdom during the past year. Joining me as officers are Iain Sim as Secretary and Gene Currotto as Treasurer. Osher at Dartmouth will be seeking a Vice President/President Elect to join us.

To implement the strategy adopted by Osher at Dartmouth last November, some changes to standing committees were effected this past July. Two new committees were established: the Partnership Committee and the Membership Committee. The Marketing & Communications Committee was disbanded, and the Membership Services Committee was incorporated into the Membership Committee as a sub-committee. In addition, the Friends of Osher Fundraising Sub-Committee was moved from the Planning Committee to the Membership Committee.

In a surprise, fiscal 2022-2023 ended with a modest surplus instead of an expected small deficit. This change in financial results was driven almost entirely by the overwhelmingly positive response to the trips sponsored by Osher at Dartmouth, such as the SoWa Museum trip (Virtual King Tut), the Cog Railroad trip, the Quebec City trip, the Hamilton theater trip, the Castle in the Clouds trip, and many others. And there are several Boston Symphony Orchestra trips coming up, as well as trips to America's Music Cities and Costa Rica already planned for fiscal 2023-2024.

Despite the Chinese lecturers pulling out, the 2023 Summer Lecture Series was described by many members as the best Summer Lecture Series (SLS) ever



offered. Many thanks to the speakers, moderators, dinner hosts, sponsors, crew of the LOH, Osher at Dartmouth event volunteers, staff, and members of the SLS Committee for making the 2023 series a memorable success. Please note that the Hopkins Center is expected to be closed for renovations until September 2025, so the 2024 and 2025 SLS will again take place in the Lebanon Opera House.

The 2023 Fall Term is now underway, with a wide variety of interesting, thought-provoking, and fun course offerings. Visit the Osher at Dartmouth website to view our catalogue—many courses still have seats available. And thank the volunteer Study Leaders—they are the core of Osher at Dartmouth. As an aside, Osher at Dartmouth, Osher at UMass Boston, and Osher at UConn are participating in a course exchange. We are now offering five courses from these partner OLLIs—refer to the weekly email prepared by Sarah Chamberlin.

The pace of renovation of Suite 210 at One Court Street in Lebanon has quickened. Osher at Dartmouth hopes to occupy Suite 210 by January 2024. This suite will house a social space with audio-visual, library and kitchen facilities, and another classroom. We

hope to reinstitute Literary Nights once this space becomes available.

Lots going on, and don't forget the upcoming Special Lectures, Events, and Hot Plates/Hot Topics lunches, as well as the Fall Kick-Off scheduled for Wednesday, September 27, from 2:00 PM to 5:00 PM in the Three Tomatoes tent in downtown Lebanon.

Lastly, I would like to thank Lisa, Sarah, Diane, and Joan for their patience, dedication, and help. It could not be Osher at Dartmouth without the terrific staff that we have.

Peter Paquette,
President

John Ferries and AI, cont.

try it out. It seemed "too intimidating" a task for them, so he decided to prepare a presentation that explained AI and ChatGPT in very simple, user-friendly terms, which actually demonstrated its ease of use; sort of a "helicopter" view of it.

He wanted his presentation to include a description of the power struggle going on between tech giants to become the dominant player in AI, and to include an updated, candid assessment of governmental attempts to understand where it is headed and to control it, so far an elusive challenge.

The big challenge John has faced in putting together his AI presentation has been in keeping up with all the new AI uses and misuses as they have so rapidly emerged and become part of our modern global culture. What is current today is out of date tomorrow. His decades-long appreciation of the value and currency of lifelong learning has made him determined to bring to Osher and other organizations as up to date an assessment of the current (and future) capabilities of AI as possible.

And that is exactly what John did on August 31st in a well-attended HyFlex presentation at Osher's Court Street classroom. His presentation wowed us to the exhilarating possibilities and alerted us to the very real dangers in this technology's potential development.

DIRECTOR'S CORNER

Dear Osher Members and Friends:

The start of September has been beautiful. It finally feels like summer. But wait...it's fall!

Fall term is well underway and we hope you will join us by registering for a course or two. We have several wonderful courses that are offered every term by our very dedicated cadre of amazing Volunteer Study Leaders, who spend hours preparing their various courses for your enjoyment.

We have unfortunately cancelled several courses this fall, more so than any other previous term, and this is very concerning to me personally. Our Study Leaders are the heart and soul of our organization. It's heartbreaking when courses are cancelled due to insufficient enrollment, especially considering the amount of time and effort each Study Leader donates to bring their program to our members. With that in mind, I'd like to provide a gentle reminder to our friends and members of Osher at Dartmouth: It is always best to sign

up for courses as soon as you can. If enrollment for a particular course has not yet met the minimum requirement as we approach the start date of a particular course, that course could potentially be cancelled. This occurs after consult with the Study Leader, usually two to three weeks before the course is scheduled to begin. Please do not wait to register; sign up as soon as you can!

We've also begun to realize that it's becoming harder to attract volunteers to our organization. Volunteers are vital for Osher at Dartmouth to continue to operate. Please consider giving back to the organization you care so much about by donating your time and talents to any of the committees that help us operate efficiently and effectively: Fundraising, Partnership, Membership, Finance, Curriculum, Planning, or Governance.

We are also looking for one or two volunteers to assist with corraling articles for our quarterly newsletter; this includes reaching out to folks and



following up on suggestions for stories. Maybe you would like to write for our newsletter? Contribute photos of classes? Submit a short poem? We'd love to feature original work by our members.

Some other volunteer opportunities:

- Our event planning team is looking for a few members.
- Consider teaching a course or becoming a Class Representative or a Class Monitor.
- The Osher office could also use a hand, as we'll be experiencing a slight shift in scheduling this winter, leaving us with the need for someone to answer phones and greet visitors to the office for a couple of hours each weekday afternoon.

Our organization is kept running with the support of four staff members and over 250 volunteers a year. We appreciate their help and the gift of their time, and hope you'll consider adding your own support to that same effort.

Thank you for reading this, and thank for your consideration. We hope to see you in a class this fall or maybe even on one of our many wonderful committees.

Your very proud Director of Osher at Dartmouth,

Lisa King

AI-GENERATED POETRY

Sonnet for a Sticky Note

In hues of neon, a square's tale unfolds,
A messenger of mem'ries, small yet bright,
Upon the canvas of the day it holds,
A beacon for the thoughts that take their flight.

Sticky note, adhesive companion true,
You grace our world with swift and simple grace,
Aflutter like a rainbow's fleeting hue,
Yet steadfast in the tasks you help embrace.

From office desk to kitchen's bustling fray,
You cling with purpose, reminding us well,
With gentle touch, you gently guide our way,
A silent sentinel, stories you tell.

Oh, humble paper guardian of note,
You bind our days, in colors we devote.

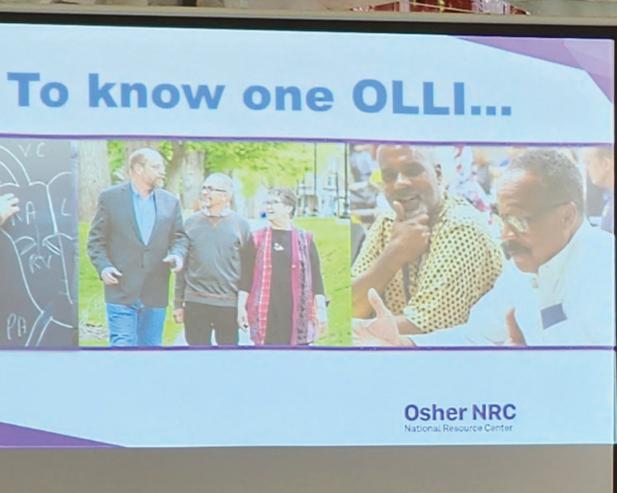


Meditation on Red Pandas, a haiku

Amidst leaves they play,
Red pandas dance through the trees,
Nature's art displayed.

Both poems were generated in less than two seconds by ChatGPT. Image above of red panda holding sticky-note generated by canva.com in about fifteen seconds.

Prompts initiated by Sarah Chamberlin, August 31, 2023 after John Ferries' AI lecture.



A DAY WITH STEVE THAXTON

BY STEVE TOFEL



Those who were able to attend this year's Annual Meeting and hear the keynote address from Steve Thaxton, Executive Director of the Osher National Resource Center, are already aware of how thoughtful and perceptive he is about his passion, lifelong learning. I had the pleasure of spending the better part of 24 hours with him and got to see a totally different side of what makes the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) function.

Our focus at Osher at Dartmouth is largely introspective. We look at our curriculum, our finances, and other metrics of success, e.g., the number of courses and students, our fundraising efforts, the number of trips we offer, and the quality of our Summer Lecture Series, and compare it to our own history, but not to other organizations. Steve, on the other hand, studies

the "business" of lifelong learning. A non-profit business to be sure, but one that needs to be studied constantly on a "compare and contrast" basis.

Why do some OLLIs succeed brilliantly, while others, with apparently similar profiles, appear to languish? Why did Covid nearly destroy some branches, but offer others the chance to rebuild and rebrand themselves? Why do some succeed with largely academic curriculums, while others, though also successful, offer a far less academic approach and much greater reliance on socialization? These are the questions that Steve studies to create a more empirical approach for assisting the 125 OLLIs in the national network.

Perhaps most gratifying is hearing Steve's assessment of Osher at Dartmouth. His positive comments

ranged from our most impressive curriculum, our new facilities at One Court Street, the professionalism of our staff, the relationship with Dartmouth, even down to the quality of the questions asked at the Annual Meeting. Of those questions he commented, "those were some of the best I've gotten; a very impressive group of members."

One couldn't spend a day with Steve Thaxton without feeling proud of what we've accomplished and the comfort of knowing that the national institute is in such capable hands.

And, on top of all that, he's one of the nicest people you will ever meet.

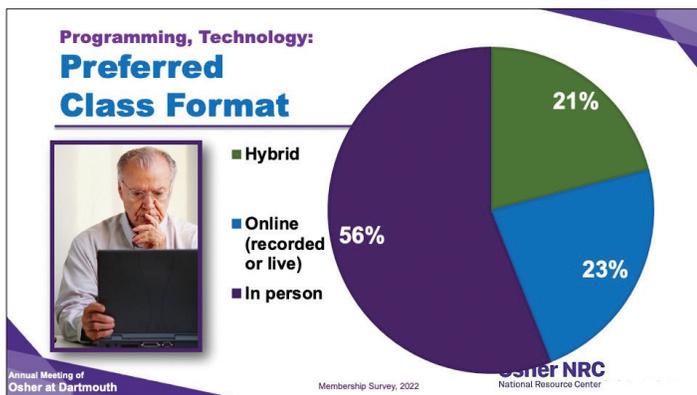
Above: Steve Thaxton stands at the podium during his presentation at Osher at Dartmouth's 2023 Annual Meeting in Quechee.



IMAGES FROM STEVE THAXTON'S SLIDESHOW



There are over 100 Osher Institutes throughout the United States.



In-person classes are preferred by over 50% of nation-wide Osher members.

Pioneers of U.S. Lifelong Learning

Bernard Osher

- Osher Foundation 1977
- Maine native; San Francisco based philanthropist
- Began funding Osher Institutes in Maine and California 2001

Osher NRC
National Resource Center

Bernard Osher has a long history of supporting lifelong learning efforts.

Subscribe to the Osher Network Newsletter

- www.Osher.net
- Link on bottom of landing page

Osher NRC
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Subscribe to the Osher Network Newsletter for interesting stories and information about lifelong learning.

FINANCE COMMITTEE UPDATE

The Finance Committee will be wrapping up the June 30, 2023, year very shortly. It looks to be a positive year-end result, and for that we're all happy.

Our committee monitors and recommends for acceptance to the Leadership Committee the financial activities of Osher at Dartmouth and works within the parameters of Dartmouth College financial and administrative constraints. With the expectation of some membership turnover this year, we welcome members who would like to volunteer for this important committee. We have a diverse group including former forprofit industry CFOs, bankers, international service organization leaders, hospital leaders, and senior educators. A strong understanding of how budgeting and decision making impact any organization is welcomed, no matter the arena.

Please contact osher@dartmouth.edu if you are interested in volunteering on the Finance Committee.

Thanks!

Gene Currotto,
Treasurer, Osher at Dartmouth



CURRICULUM COMMITTEE STATUS

The Curriculum Committee's five subcommittees all work closely with the office staff and our Study Leaders to offer an exceptional curriculum that meets the needs and interests of our Osher at Dartmouth members. The subcommittees' efforts are crucial to our success.

- The Recruiting subcommittee identifies potential Study Leaders and encourages them to offer new courses for Osher at Dartmouth.
- The Vetting subcommittee reviews and approves course proposals.
- The Support subcommittee anticipates and meets the needs of

our Study Leaders as they guide participants through a variety of course formats (in-person, by Zoom, and by HyFlex).

- The Reviewing subcommittee devises strategies to gather, interpret, and act upon feedback from course participants and Study Leaders.
- The Special Events subcommittee arranges outstanding Special Lectures, Hot Plates/Hot Topics, Literary Nights, and course-related trips.

Throughout the summer, these subcommittees worked together to offer you a wide-ranging choice of courses and special events. And

there's even more to come this fall, as you can see in our weekly bulletins, on the Osher at Dartmouth website, and in our course catalogue.

Along the way, subcommittee members not only give back to the organization you enjoy and support, but also gain in knowledge and forge real friendships. Are you keen to share your skills and enthusiasm? We hope you will join one (or more) of these five 'mighty' groups!

**Hilary Llewellyn-Thomas,
Chair,
Curriculum Committee**

IMAGES FROM SUMMER 2023



2023 Summer Lecture Series

This year's series featured a group of invigorating, challenging, and informative speakers. In the image at left, moderator Bill Sullivan engages the second-session speaker, RADM Mike Studeman, on the topic of "The Military Challenge: Is Conflict Inevitable?"

At right, moderator Shehzad Qazi asks questions of speakers Marc Chandler and Dartmouth Professor Jennifer Lind on the topic "The Economic Challenge: Is There a Win-Win Outcome?"



Quebec City

Osher members enjoyed a trip to Quebec City this past May. Linda Miller captured an image of members on one of the group's walking tours.



Isles of Shoals

Laurie Wadsworth captured a picture of Osher members on a ferry ride during their three-day trip to the Isles of Shoals.

FEEDBACK—AN IMPORTANT TOOL

Why bother filling out the anonymous feedback forms distributed at the close of every Osher at Dartmouth course? Who doesn't get annoyed when a "How'd we do?" email pops up seconds after even the most trivial transaction at CVS—must Osher do this too?

Actually, yes. Your feedback is central to our work of building and maintaining what is widely recognized as one of the nation's leading lifelong learning programs. Feedback pays off on three levels. Let's start with the most important:

1: What's in it for me?

Providing feedback gives course participants a chance to reflect on their own experience; helps Study Leaders improve their courses; and communicates valuable information to the Curriculum Committee and staff. Was the course experience what you'd hoped it would be? Are you inspired to dig more deeply into the topics addressed? Would you welcome another course from this Study Leader? Do you have observations to share about the course or suggestions to make it better? Filling out a feedback form gives you direct influence on the content and delivery of individual

courses and the nature and shape of the curriculum at large.

2: How do Study Leaders benefit?

Am I getting my points across? Have I asked participants to do too much reading – or not enough? Are the supporting materials I provided helpful? Am I talking too much? Do I handle discussions effectively? How am I doing with technology? Am I showing too many slides, or is there too much material on each slide? Would participants take this course again, knowing what they now know about it and me? Should I consider offering another course with Osher at Dartmouth? If so, what would people like to see me do?

These are the kinds of questions study leaders have about their own work. Only you can answer them. Study leaders receive copies of the anonymous feedback forms you complete, they read them carefully, and they take your advice to heart. Just ask them!

3: How do the Curriculum Committee and staff use feedback?

The Curriculum Committee's Review Subcommittee reads all anonymous feedback forms. From

this we identify, and share with the staff, developing trends such as:

- A preference for discussion over lecture
- A distaste for over-stuffed PowerPoint presentations
- Emerging enrollment patterns (like increased enthusiasm for Winter Zoom courses, when weather and travel diminish in-person attendance.)
- Desire for new courses, such as more science courses accessible to a general audience.

Feedback aids the Curriculum Committee's "Vetters" in helping study leaders develop interesting and appealing courses. Participant feedback also guides the staff in deciding what support opportunities (like HyFlex training) will be necessary in preparing for coming terms.

In short, completing an anonymous feedback form at the end of a course is the one sure way you have of shaping Osher at Dartmouth's curriculum and making it better for all concerned. Please take advantage of this opportunity to invest in our program – and in your experience.

Vic Henningsen,
Curriculum Committee

WELCOME, JOAN!

Osher at Dartmouth's new Assistant Program Manager is Joan Gennette (pictured at right), who joins Osher after spending many years as a small business consultant in Vermont. Prior to that, she worked in financial services and systems consulting. Joan hit the ground running! She says she is excited to be part of the team working to support the wonderful lifelong learning opportunities offered at Osher at Dartmouth. If you happen to be in the neighborhood, stop in at the Osher offices and say hello!





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We would like to extend our special thanks to our program sponsor:

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And to our Fall 2023 sponsor:



Their support helps us continue to provide courses, programs, and events throughout the year.

ENDLESS CREATIVITY...

Images from Kate Farricker's Fall 2023 Mixed Media Art Journal course.



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ARE STILL
AVAILABLE!**

Visit
osher.dartmouth.edu
for more
information.

Our Fall term runs
from August 22
through
December 14.

