The French Government Honors IU Bloomington Professor

Indiana University Bloomington's Rudy Professor of French and Italian and of Linguistics, Albert Valdman, has received numerous international honors and accolades in a lifetime dedicated to research and teaching of the French language, French linguistics, pidgin and Creole studies, especially Haitian (see accompanying story) and Louisiana Creoles, the field of second language acquisition, and bilingual education. His work and scholarship have been recognized by the government of France, the U.S. embassy in Haiti, the International Association of Applied Linguistics, and the American Association of Teachers of French, and he holds an honorary degree from the University of Neuchâtel (1991).

In addition to authoring or editing numerous books and textbooks, Valdman founded IU's Creole Institute in 1964 and is the founder and editor of the journal Studies in Second Language Acquisition, published by Cambridge University Press. Among his most recent books as senior author and editor are A Learner's Dictionary of Haitian Creole (1998), Dictionary of Louisiana Creole (1998), and Chez nous: introduction au monde francophone. Chez nous (1998) is a first-year French language textbook co-authored with Cathy Pons, who received her Ph.D. in French linguistics at IUB. In addition, Valdman has written more than 200 articles and reviews for the major professional journals in his fields of research.

On October 26, Valdman was decorated with the highest academic honor that the government of France can bestow to recognize outstanding contributions and devotion to teaching, scholarship, and research, the Commandeur dans l'Ordre des Palmes Académiques. This ministerial order was created by Napoleon Bonaparte in 1808 and comprises three ascending ranks, Chevalier, Officier, and Commandeur, all three of which Valdman has now been awarded.

The award ceremony, which took place before an overflow audience in the Moot Court of the School of Law, was presided over by the French ambassador to the United States, His Excellency François Bujon de l'Estang, accompanied by General Consul Jean-René Gehan, Cultural Counselor Pierre Buhler, and Cultural Attaché Olivier Boasson. Dean for International Programs Patrick O'Meara and Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences Kumble Subbaswamy made the introductions.

This distinctive award, said the ambassador, “not only acknowledges exceptional academic excellence, but ... is also a testimony of the gratitude of France to all those who ... have spared no effort to maintain and enhance the teaching of the French language and culture.” He praised Valdman as a "staunch defender of the linguistic diversity of French" and cited him as one of the world’s top specialists in the study of French-based Creole languages. He concluded his remarks to Valdman with these ceremonial words: “By a decision rendered by the Prime Minister of the French Republic, you have been named Commandeur des Palmes Académiques. This distinction expresses the recognition of your tireless activity on behalf of the promotion and development of French language and culture.”

In a prepared text responding to the ambassador’s remarks, Valdman in turn paid tribute to the dedicated teachers of French in the United States, to IUB for supporting a French graduate program specializing in linguistics as well as language and literature, and to colleagues and students willing to work on non-mainstream French-related language varieties outside of France.

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research, an action agenda will be developed that will match specific issues with potential solutions. The project is expected to be completed in 2001.

**The Indiana Immigration Network**

Cinergy/PSI has awarded IUIRC a Cinergy Workforce Partnership Grant to create the Indiana Immigration Network, an online resource for community service providers working with new Americans who have chosen to make Indiana their home. Working in collaboration with the Indiana Association of Cities and Towns, IEDC, and the South Central Indiana Human Resources Association, IUIRC will develop a Web site to profile key resources, programs, and organizations throughout Indiana that are addressing the needs of Indiana’s growing immigrant population.

"Community efforts to aid this new population are cropping up in isolation throughout the state," said Charles Bankart, IUIRC program manager. "This Web site provides an opportunity to centralize information about these efforts and make them more widely available."

Specifically, the Web site will serve as a searchable database of key community stakeholders (businesses, social service providers, government offices, schools, hospitals, cultural organizations, churches, citizen groups, etc.) that are actively involved with immigrant issues in their communities. Brief descriptions as well as contact information for these organizations will be listed in an easily searchable format.

Bankart is being assisted in this project by Maria del Pilar Muriel, an undergraduate in folklore, who is gathering information on approximately 35 small- and medium-sized towns and communities throughout Indiana that are addressing the needs of Indiana’s growing immigrant population.

"Our hope for this project is to create an online resource that will encourage dialogue among service providers throughout the state who are actively working to make their communities more responsive to the needs of Indiana’s ‘New Hoosiers,’" says Bankart. IUIRC will be responsible for maintaining and updating the Web site.

—RMN

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Prior to the award ceremony, Ambassador Bujon de l’Estang took the opportunity to present a formal lecture on “The State of the European Union and the Priorities of the French Presidency” (see sidebar). The presidency of the European Union rotates every six months, and France held the position until the end of 2000.

The day’s activities, which concluded with a banquet in honor of the ambassador and Valdman that was hosted by Patrick O’Meara, were co-sponsored by the Department of West European Studies, the Department of French and Italian, the Office of the Bloomington Chancellor, the Office of International Programs, and the International Law Society.

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**Priorities of the French Presidency of the European Union**

His Excellency François Bujon de l’Estang, who has been France’s ambassador to the United States since 1995, spoke movingly of France’s responsibilities and priorities in holding the presidency of the European Union (EU) from June through December 2000. This was a crucial time in Europe, in which negotiations were under way to transform the institutions and functions of the EU prior to the enlargement of its membership, including important implications of adopting a common currency for trade and business worldwide. He reviewed the history of the EU, outlined France’s four major priorities of the EU presidency in preparing for the future, and spoke of the relationship between an integrated EU and the United States. His entire address can be heard via full audio stream at IU’s Web site, broadcast.iu.edu/lectures/frambassador/index.html.