

# THE ARGONAUT

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## Camus comes to campus

*Virtual Reality library exhibit Connects Students to Figure & Flagship of Social Justice*

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Albert Camus once said, "If there were no beauty, love, or danger in the world, then living would almost be easy." In other words, life and existence may be tragic, but they can be beautiful as well.

The Modern Languages and Cultures Department of Notre Dame de Namur University (NDNU) and the Alliance Française Silicon Valley (AFSCV) are hosting a month-long exhibition to celebrate the legacy and centenary of French Algerian writer, philosopher, and "engaged" intellectual Albert Camus.

The Camus 1913-2013 Digital Exhibit features an interactive display and mobile smartphone applications and is open

to the NDNU community in the Gellert Library the entire month of April.

Dr. Hélène Laroche-Davis, department chair and professor of French and film studies at NDNU, and Lorenzo Giachetti, lecturer in French and Italian at NDNU, will oversee the digital exhibit and host a roundtable discussion panel of Camus's philosophy and works in the library on April 16. Students from the French, English, and Philosophy majors will also speak during the conference.

"We're going to be talking about Albert Camus in the 21st century," Giachetti said. "How can we continue to read him, why is he important, what does having an exhibit like this do to Camus?"

**Continued on page 3**

The multimedia, multilingual exhibit, offered in 12 languages such as Arabic, English, German, and Spanish, will engage visitors worldwide as it travels to 40 countries in 2014.

The exhibit embraces present day digital media that students are already familiar with—mobile technology. The exhibit requires visitors to download the IFCAMUS mobile app, sponsored by the Institut Français, which is available online for free in app stores for smartphone and tablet devices.

Viewers can use the app's "mosaic" option to upload a photo of them interacting with the exhibit, thus joining a global photographic mosaic.

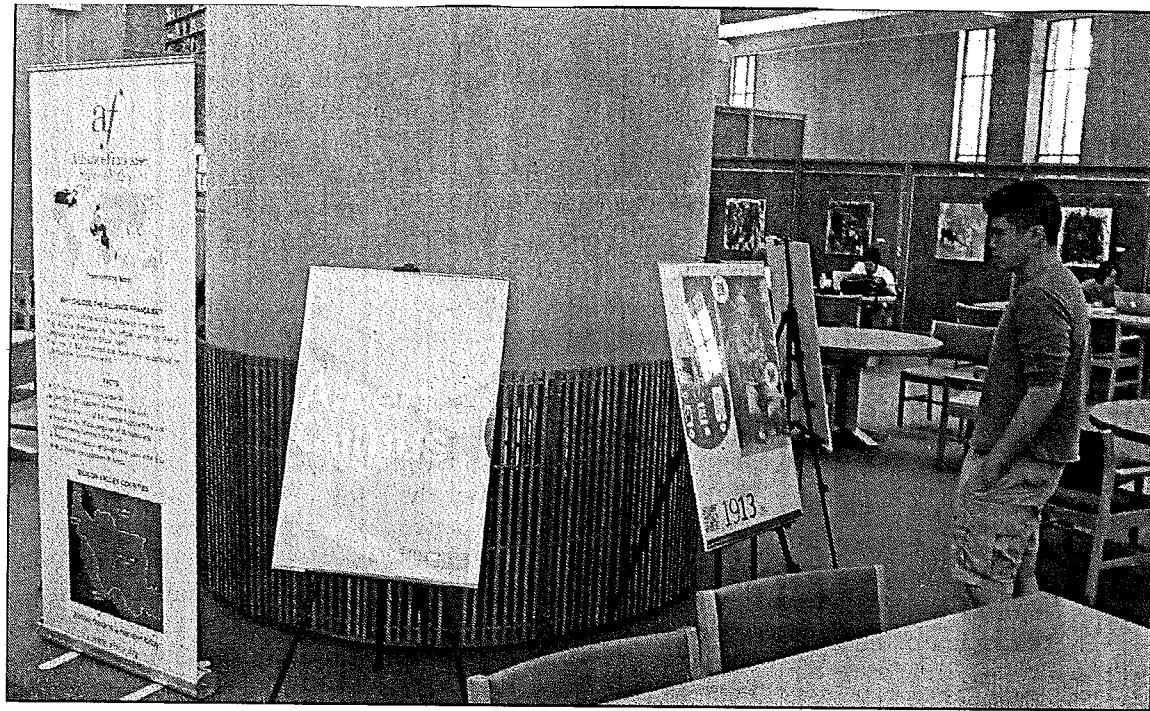
The six-panel fifteen-foot display provides dozens of Quick Response (QR) codes that link directly to multimedia content through the mobile app.

Visitors can engage electronically with various writings, images, videos, and recordings that highlight the strides, struggles, and achievements of Camus's literary, philosophical, and political journey towards social justice.

"It lets you interact with literature, with history, and it incorporates and represents the best of both worlds—the technological and the humanistic," Giachetti said. "It's really at the crossroads of those two."

Albert Camus was born in French Algeria in 1913, hence the centennial of his birth. A descendant of French colonists, Camus was torn between his ancestral ties to colonialism and his physical place in an indigenous Arab land during a time of rebellion, war and terror.

During the 1950's, Camus condemned the Algerian in-



NDNU student admiring the Albert Camus exhibit in the library, which celebrates the legacy and centenary of the French Algerian writer and philosopher.

Taken by Jose Garcia

dependence movements and opposed acts of terrorism and bombings that occurred in his native land.

In the late 1950's, Camus visited Lyon, France for the opening of his play "Requiem For a Nun," which he adapted from William Faulkner. French department chair Hélène Laroche-Davis, an avid reader of both Camus and Faulkner, was a young woman studying in Lyon at the time. She recalls meeting Camus, the man whose name and life's work she would remember for decades to come. She will speak about her experiences at the April 16 panel.

In 1957, Camus was awarded the Nobel Prize in Literature. He was killed in a car crash in 1960.

Camus's works are characterized by their contemplation of various themes on the human condition, ranging from discussions on justice

and injustice in then-present day society to commentaries on survival, existence, life and death, and conflict.

Giachetti, who lectures in the language program and advises for study abroad at NDNU, has studied Camus for the past 15 years. He is currently writing his dissertation on some of the darker elements in Camus's writing, the "other" side of Camus's solar humanism.

"His literature, his philosophy, it raises questions," Giachetti said. "Existence, what does it mean to be in a world? How can we create meaning with no meaning? Is that possible? But also socially and politically, how can we have a just society when good and bad are arbitrary, subjective concepts?"

As war raged across the European continent, spilling out into the Mediterranean, battles crossed shores and entered the deserts of North Africa. As a writer before, during, and after the Second World War, Camus grew concerned about the state of mankind.

A contextual framework had been set forth for one of Camus's most well known works, *The Stranger*. The 1942 novel is often an entry point into Camus's writing for many high school and college students enrolled in

English, French, and philosophy courses.

"What's so timeless about *The Stranger* is that it describes the experience of strangeness. Of being in the world, but being disconnected from it. That's something that young people are especially perceptive to, feeling like you don't quite belong or wondering what is my place in the world," Giachetti said.

The novel follows the monotony of a young man's strange indifference towards love and passion, life and death, and crime and punishment. One day the young man murders another man and is sentenced to a public execution.

"I think the message of that book is that we don't really learn how to appreciate our lives until we have an imminent awareness of death," Giachetti said. "It's very easy to live our lives not knowing that it's going to be taken away from us one of these days.

"This exhibit revolves around technology. We've never been so connected, but we've also never been so disconnected from human contact, from interacting with people. There's a great distance between us. That is Camus's strangeness," said Giachetti.