

Our BEST messes

“One of the advantages of being disorderly is that one is constantly making exciting discoveries.”

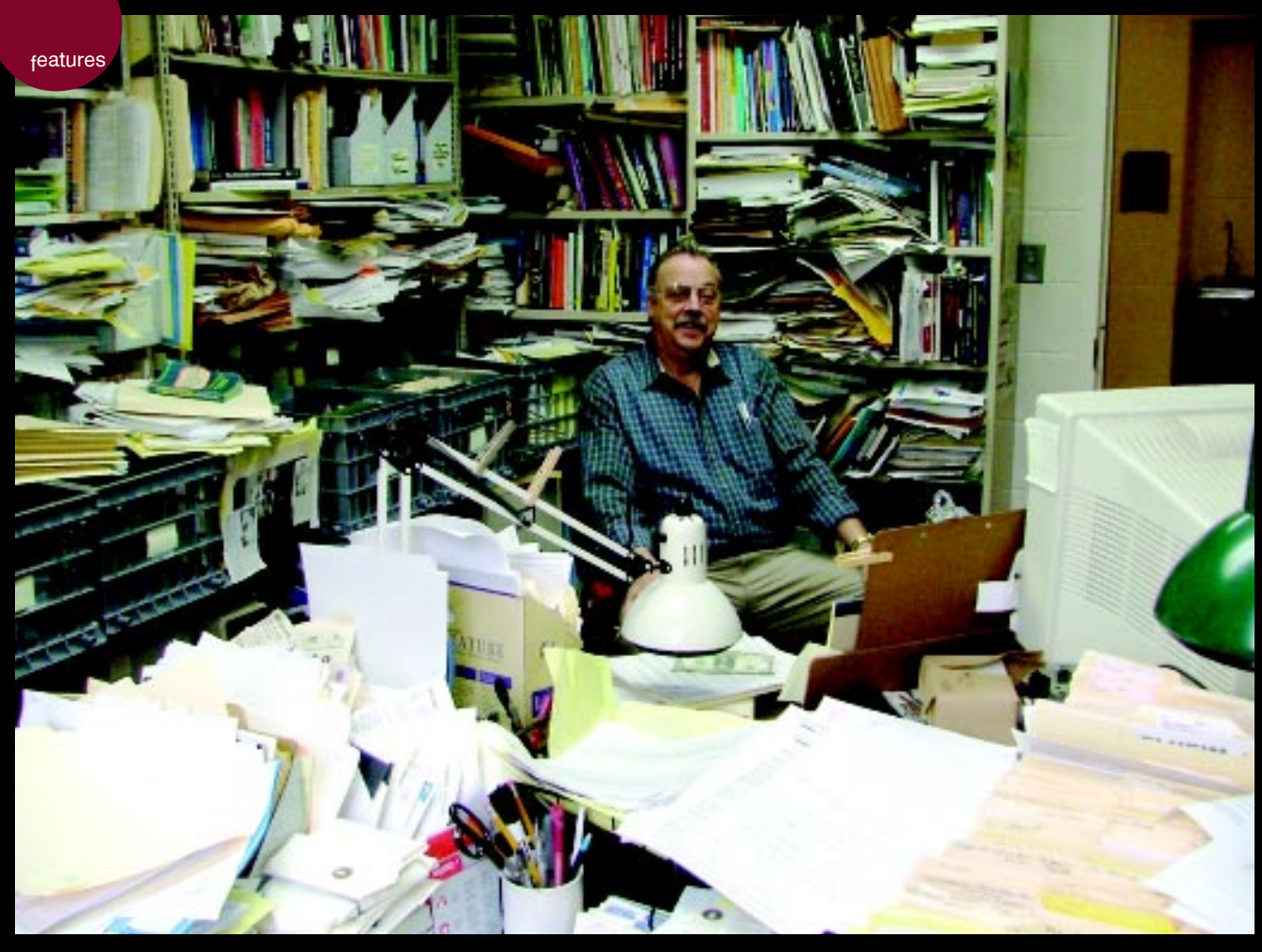
-A.A. Milne

To one person, it’s a disaster; to another, it’s proof of an active mind. To one person, it’s chaos; to the other, it’s a complex set of mental cues.

However you want to describe it, some people are messier than others, and many times professors are the ones raising the bar. With this in mind, we asked ourselves, “What if we tried to capture the messiest offices on campus, and the minds behind them?” (Actually, it was an idea we wrote down a long time ago, but it was lost in the office for a while.)

We sent an email to campus asking for nominations, and they poured in. Then, with no thought for our own health and safety, we ventured forth to pick the best. Here’s what we uncovered.

DISCLAIMER: Neat-freaks are advised that we take no responsibility for the viewing of these images. Loosen up, or look away!



Justice SERVED

Bill Tregea, associate professor of sociology, social work and criminal justice

All 6' 4" of Bill Tregea is pacing off his office, estimating the square feet with his own size 12 shoes.

"This is not a big office. That's one of my problems. Of course, that doesn't explain why others don't have offices like this," he says.

As he talks, he moves around and somehow finds things: a chapter he wrote for a book on convict criminology, his dissertation on work and occupations, a draft of the first of three books he's co-authoring and using in his classes.

Tregea teaches crime and crime prevention at Adrian, drawing from more than 20 years of teaching prison inmates.

"One of the values I have is to try to teach criminal justice classes with real connections to the community," he said.

His classes have a heavy focus on academic service learning, where students learn by actually doing things in the community. Students work with the police and sheriff's departments, help with prison education programs, and work with community groups like the Lenawee Boys & Girls Club (which Tregea helped found). He brings in guest speakers, and he has a good track record with providing dynamic internships that often lead to jobs.

"I try to give the students a sense of moving along, being involved," he said.

In the process of all this, he creates a colossal mess.

"I have a continual struggle to find places to put things... I try different systems. I go with file cabinets, I go with folding files, I go with accordion-type files, I go with plastic box files. I go with just plain piles," he said with a laugh.



Pathological about PLANTS

Janet Salzwedel, associate professor of biology

Ask Janet Salzwedel about *Rhizobium* and she'll have a thing or two to say. For years she's been working with the dirt-dwelling bacteria and its symbiotic relationship with legumes, from new discoveries she made about it during her doctoral work, to collaborative research she's contributed to in more recent years on its role in rice yields in Egypt.

As much as she likes plants and their life processes, though, she likes teaching even more.

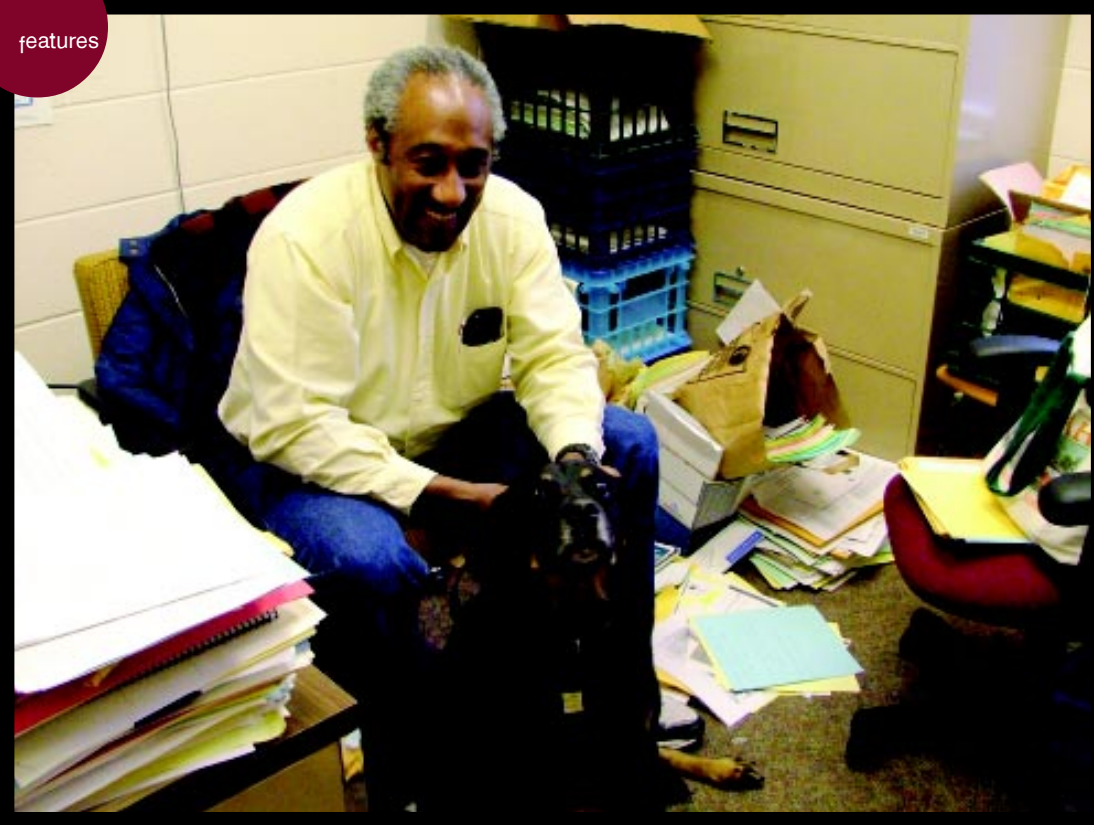
"I like to show connections between disciplines," she says, which for her includes playing music for her microbiologists, and reading poetry for her plant biologists. (One poem about falling Ginkgo leaves has undertones of death. "They think I'm nuts," she says.)

And what about the mess?

"My personal style is to move onto new projects as soon as possible," she said. "If I'm putting something away, I'm not doing something new. I complete projects, but then I literally just throw them aside.

"I think I also overbook myself."

That may be true. Salzwedel is the biology chair, the faculty president, is advisor to pre-med students and an intern, and is supervising independent research, on top of her normal class load. In addition, she teaches Tae Kwon Do one night a week. (She is a black belt in two different styles.)



GOOD Health

Tom Flagg, professor of psychology

It might seem strange that one of the messiest offices at Adrian belongs to the resident expert on healthy living habits.

One of Tom Flagg's main interests is health psychology, the study of behavior as it relates to health. Take the health care system: Why are people so anxious about talking to medical professionals? And why are doctors always cutting people off? (According to one study he knows about, they usually only listen for about 20 seconds.)

Flagg also digs into the psychology behind smoking, eating, exercise and stress management. He loves to challenge his students on these issues.

"I like getting people to look at things from different perspectives," Flagg said. "I'm always trying to relate the material to everyday experiences, so it's not just dry facts."

When it comes to physical fitness, Flagg practices what he preaches, maintaining a regular schedule of stretching, running and weight lifting. When it comes to tidiness, however, Flagg doesn't worry much. Asked to comment on his office organization, his response is, "I'd say haphazard."

And if you're wondering about Cujo, the lab-rottweiler mix is not in the office to do a search and rescue for a lost term paper – Flagg just likes to bring in his dog now and then.

FLASHBACK: Bill Craft, King of Mess

It's hard for anyone today to compete with Bill Craft, professor of chemistry at AC from 1967 to 1994. His office was not only strewn with mounds of paper, but has been described as "smelly and dirty." It was home to such items as old pizza boxes and half-finished cans of pop.

Mike Jacobitz '73 was one of Craft's students and knew him well. He and another student one time filled 20 trash bags when they cleaned Craft's office. The cleanup was done without Craft ever asking, and might have been against his will. Another time, Jacobitz remembers that Campus Safety called Craft at home one night to report that his office had been ransacked.

"When he came in to look, he said, 'This is just the way I left it,'" Jacobitz said.

"But if he had a student come in and ask for an old paper, he'd walk to a pile in the corner, shuffle through it for a minute, and say, 'Here you go.' So he claimed it was organized in his own mind," Jacobitz said.

The old truck that Craft drove was just as messy. Jacobitz remembers hearing about how students once filled the entire cab with popcorn. Craft shoveled out just enough to get in and drove it that way for a couple of weeks. The truck was so rusted out that every time he shifted, popcorn fell out and left a trail all over town.

