My name is Paul Michael Lützeler in the German department. I'm called Mike, and I came to Washington University in 1973, a long time ago, as a beginning assistant professor. I'm now the Rosa May Distinguished University Professor in the Humanities and, among other things, the Director of the Max Kade Center for Contemporary German Literature which I founded 26 years ago.

The Max Kade Center is totally unique in the field of German studies, and I don't think that we have something similar elsewhere in the world. It has several components, the Collection, and this Collection is now more than a quarter of a century old.

The other second most important component with which we started out already at that time, is inviting a critic and a writer every year to teach a course on contemporary German literature, a graduate course for graduate students in the PhD program. You get to know the writers who produce that literature themselves and, off and on, I had students — in the case of Yoko Tawada or, for example, of Uwe Timm that comes to mind — where students then decided to write dissertations on the writers that they got to know while they were here.

I might also mention that this German department organizes, on a regular basis, symposium on contemporary German literature. It is extremely important for the graduate students, not only that they get to know leading critics and leading writers from Germany, but they can develop a special expertise in that field because they can take that course every year. And they have the Collection to work with, so it's something that for students interested in the contemporary scene, there is no better place than here to go to.