Faculty Spotlight: Robert Nicholls, PhD

Social Science Professor Robert Nicholls has academic experience on three continents, Europe, Africa, and America. This has provided him with a multicultural outlook and interdisciplinary strengths. Dr. Nicholls has an impressive publication record and many of his books, chapters and articles focus on the cultural history of the Caribbean and West Africa. His book The Jumbies’ Playing Ground, published by the University Press of Mississippi, has just gone into paperback. The book looks at Old World contributions to Afro-Creole masquerading in the Eastern Caribbean; a topic dear to Nicholls’ heart. He has interviewed scores of carnival performers, cultural carriers and connoisseurs, many of whom are now deceased. Not restricting his publications to academia, Dr. Nicholls feels it important that local communities can access in-depth expositions of local culture, especially the younger generation who are the future custodians of the heritage.

To this end, since 2000, he has regularly published articles in the Virgin Islands Carnival magazine providing information to local audiences and visitors alike. Topics include Mocko Jumbie stilt dancers, the Tropical Masqueraders, the Bull, the Indians, the Zulus, Carnival Queens, and Bamboula Dancers, as well as interviews with departed luminaries such as Philip Rhymer and Gertrude Melchior Dudley. The 2015 issue of the Carnival Magazine focused on “Opi’a Taino” (spirit of the Taino) a group dedicated to highlighting their Amerindian heritage. Next year, Dr. Nicholls’ hopes to feature the newly-formed Wild Clowns troupe, who have recently added sparkle and vigor to carnival parades.