

2003

Perspectives in Leadership

John Leebens
Denison University

Follow this and additional works at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/ephemeris>



Part of the [Ancient Philosophy Commons](#), [History of Art, Architecture, and Archaeology Commons](#), and the [History of Religions of Western Origin Commons](#)

Recommended Citation

Leebens, John (2003) "Perspectives in Leadership," *Ephemeris*: Vol. 4 , Article 5.
Available at: <https://digitalcommons.denison.edu/ephemeris/vol4/iss1/5>

This Article is brought to you for free and open access by the Classical Studies at Denison Digital Commons. It has been accepted for inclusion in Ephemeris by an authorized editor of Denison Digital Commons.

Perspectives in Leadership: Dr. Delyte Morris and Octavius Augustus

By John Leebens

The building of a community takes resources, willpower, and a leader. In ancient Rome that leader was Augustus, the first man to consolidate the powers of the offices and rule Rome as the *princeps*, first among equals. He worked to overcome adversaries that had been friend and foe and through his long reign changed the face of Rome. In Carbondale, Illinois it took a dynamic new president, Dr. Delyte Morris. During his tenure as president of Southern Illinois University starting in 1948 to 1970, when several of his unofficial ways of getting things done caused the Board of Trustees that he created to oust him into president emeritus and then early retirement, Morris turned a small teachers college of 3,000 into one of the most multi-cultural and internationally diverse campuses in the United States with over 35,000 students between the Carbondale and Edwardsville, Illinois, campuses.¹ He made the campus into something that shaped an entire region, much like how "[Augustus] found the city made of brick and left it made of marble."²

However, the point is that while these men came from different time periods and drastically different places they both succeeded in physically changing the face of the area of which they controlled of during their reigns in a dramatic way. The ideas of strong leadership still smack with similarities, but the stories of these two men find very different paths to reach the pinnacle of achievements at their positions. They fascinate the onlooker and show that no matter how much

things change, they will stay the same. We must start from the beginning to see the differences between these two men. From the humble beginnings of Delyte Morris to the splendor of the beginnings of Augustus, their lives will diverge but eventually come to the same position to change what they controlled.³

Dr. Delyte Morris was born April 11th, 1906 in the very poor town of Xenia, Illinois. Born to a telegraph operator for the B&O railroad, Morris did not have indoor plumbing as a child. Though poor, he and his brother were always expected to go to college. He received his undergraduate degree from Park College in Missouri and was successful at several jobs around the country, including building the speech department at Ohio State until his hiring as president at SIU. After he had been passed over because he was not as qualified on paper in 1945 for the Southern Illinois University presidency, he was hired in September of 1948 and installed officially in an inauguration on May 5th, 1949.⁴ From here he would take the university to new heights, but first let us look at the aristocratic advance of Augustus.

Augustus was adopted by Julius Caesar, his great uncle. But his real story begins by his own word at the age of nineteen when, sixteen years before he was legally allowed to, Octavian was placed in the senate. He also raised a

¹ In 1948 Morris was hired as an emergency fill in.

² Suetonius *Augustus* 28.3

³ Pronounced delight from the old Irish spelling from Mitchell Introduction.

⁴ All facts about the life of the university and Morris in particular I found in *Delyte Morris of SIU* by Betty Mitchell and *The University That Shouldn't Have Happened, But Did: Southern Illinois University During the Morris Years 1948-1970* by Robert A. Harper from personal copies signed to my grandmother.

renegade army "at my own expense" to fight "a faction" of the "murderers of my father."⁵ While this was made to sound heroic fifty-eight years after Augustus had conquered, consolidated and then expanded the Roman Empire, he was acting very illegally. There was no way that he should have been given *imperium*, but because of his name and the fact that he was claiming that he was only building an army to revenge his adopted father, the soon to be *Iulius divus*, he was allowed to take his army to Philippi in 42 B.C. at the age of twenty-one. He helped successfully defeated Cassius and Brutus' army and became one of the two major parts of the triumvirate with Mark Antony.⁶ After playing off Mark Antony, Augustus started to accumulate titles, receiving Augustus in 27 B.C. and powers including *imperium consulare*. After a second settlement in 23 B.C. that granted Augustus the *tribunicia potestas* and *maius imperium*, Augustus retreated from every day tedium but held greater power over the entire empire and also contributed to the senate and working of the empire.⁷ Augustus dates his own reign from the second settlement, stating in the *Res Gestae* that "at the time of writing I have been consul thirteen time and am in the thirty-seventh year of tribunician power" which was A.D. 14, the year of his death.⁸

Augustus was the aristocrat who had the opportunity to lead handed to him by family association, a huge

fortune, and many clients. This patron/client system was how Augustus helped run the empire through reward and enticement. The controller of power after almost 30 years of constant civil war, Augustus had the resources to take over with military power and then set his reforms after he had brokered his own *pax*. Morris was from a very poor background in a region that was underutilized and unknown; the largest town in the region, extending over thirty-two counties, was Carbondale with a measly 10,000 people, not including the university. He reached through political connections to reform a region and change its face. However, a vision of leadership under their control was the driving goal of both men.

As Augustus and Morris came into power, many able-bodied assistants accompanied them both. Many men led armies under the auspices of Augustus' *imperium* and helped him recreate the culture and life around Rome and the rest of the empire. For Augustus, one man in particular helped Augustus build and reform Rome. Agrippa, his son-in-law, was important in aiding Augustus with military matters and helping Augustus with building programs and other offices. For Morris, there was a veritable team that made the job possible. The most important of these associates were Charles Tenney and John Rendleman. Tenney was the curator of academia; he controlled everything from the curriculum to graduate research. Rendleman was a dynamic man who convinced Morris to hire him as the university's first legal counsel while not even out of law school. Rendleman dealt with land acquisitions and contracts and eventually became the chancellor at the new Edwardsville campus that he helped finance through political

⁵ *Res Gestae Divi Augusti* – 1.1, 1.1, 2.1

⁶ While this was a great victory there was not really any spoils because the opponents were Roman plus "Octavian, who had been little more than an onlooker in that campaign" was in a position that he had to keep Mark Antony around in power. This quote is from *A History of Rome: Down to the Reign of Constantine* by M. Cary and H.H. Scullard p.291.

⁷ Cary and Scullard p. 319.

⁸ *Res Gestae* 4.4.

connections. Several others were also necessary cogs in the workings of the administration. I. Clark Davis and Charles Pulley were the head of student affairs and the university architect, respectively, and they both worked with Morris on a daily basis to make sure that the people and places around the university were all trying to build a better place particularly when it came to the physical nature of Southern Illinois University's campus.⁹

Morris and Augustus, having reached power, now put their plans into work. Augustus was in a position of much greater power and prestige, being the first true leader of the largest empire 2000 years ago. He was working on a nationwide scale that would influence people who spoke many different languages and lived over thousands of miles. He wanted to reconstruct the empire and especially Rome into something that would be great. But for this study, the focus will be on his building and management program of the city of Rome *ipse*. Morris was ready to make Southern Illinois University into something more than what it had been since its founding in 1869. SIU was one of five teachers colleges that the Illinois Teachers Board controlled, and it was made up of only eight buildings and serviced approximately 3,000 students.

Forests and Lakes and Landscape Oh

My!

Morris loved the physical environment around southern Illinois. Rolling hills and densely forested areas

gave a picturesque setting for a college campus carved out of this terrain. Morris did not want to give this up even though SIU needed to build and expand at a swift rate. Temporary buildings were overflowing. But instead of throwing buildings up in no important manner, he forced the architects' office to constantly reevaluate. Morris was interested in each place and environment on campus. He would regularly inspect construction and the development that he was causing in the area around the expanding campus. From the beginning of his tenure, Morris kept track of the different trees on campus and would block parking lots or get angry if a tree was removed without his knowledge during construction. In one memo from 1957 sent to Pulley it asks for additional funds "...to continue the heavy under-planting of trees in Thompson Woods. [Morris] has small trees in mind for this project" which would keep a dense look to the small treed area.¹⁰ One particular incident did get caught in a memo that Pulley put out to the architect's offices, probably after a quick phone call, stating "we are all very much aware of President Morris' desire to complete planning projects with the minimal removal of major trees," and that in two particular places around the president's house and Shryock, the music hall, there were trees that were being unnecessarily destroyed. This resulted in Pulley telling everyone in the department "for tree protection we will develop a detail in our University Architect's Standards that will cover proper protection of trees

⁹ Harper p.63-90 for the descriptions of all of the major players during the Morris years. Davis returned to join the administration in 1950 and Pulley was hired in March of 1951. On a personal note, Charles Pulley was my grandfather and Clark Davis was his best friend. I went to Clark Davis' funeral in November of 2002. My grandfather died in 1993 before I could truly discuss his life work at the university.

¹⁰ George Hand, President's assistant, to Pulley October 23, 1957 *Tree Planting*. Morris was a nature fanatic. He started a fish hatchery on Little Grassy Lake, about ten miles from campus, and also had a national tree service station on campus which turned into a forestry department that now offers degrees.

in and around building sites" so that this would not occur again. This memo was just representative even towards the end of Morris' tenure in June of 1969. Change was quick. In the new edition of the University Architect's Standards manual that appeared that month there was this:

Precaution should be taken to preserve as many existing trees as practical. Common native trees such as pine, ailanthus, locust or even short-lived trees such as popular, willow and silver maple are worth saving, if no great expense is incurred or the design injured. To save these trees gains much in time for needed immediate effect.

When Morris wanted something done, it got done in a hurry and to the letter.¹¹

Another consideration for the landscape was the fact that John Lonergan was brought in within the first two years of Morris' tenure and helped design what the campus would look like years in advance. He was integral in surveying the land around the small central campus. Lonergan came up with a plan involving saving Thompson Woods and the Thompson Lake next to it. "Morris enthusiastically endorsed ... Lonergan's plan to give the campus an informal, natural appearance" which would blend in with the surrounding area and natural look of southern Illinois.¹² This was a big decision because Thompson Woods abutted the starting central campus area of twenty-four acres and was the prime

expansion ground. It remains to this day untouched and without landscaping except for three or four two-person wide concrete paths running through the woods.

The Romans felt differently. They lived in a pre-modern society that was very vulnerable to the wild and all of its dangers. The Romans placed wild places inside their houses and villas. *Hotori* was always enclosed by some type of structure to show the dominance over nature that came harder than conquering peoples in some instances. Augustus in particular sanctioned landscaping. But this type of landscaping was involved in ornamental projects like greenery in the Apollo complex, Augustus' mausoleum, and the Porticus Livae.¹³ So Augustus, it seems, was actually interested in green areas or at least their value. The idea of immediate impact from greenery being so controlled in such an urban setting would have had the same effect as impressive columns because of the care and knowledge needed to care for the plants.

And the Building Goes on with Some Hard Work by the Architect's Office

The architect's office was inundated with requests to make repairs and formalize ideas. Pulley, William Hart, who would become the Carbondale campus architect when Edwardsville was advanced, and Lonergan were constantly working behind schedule. In February of 1957, after several of the most important buildings had been built, a priority list for the drafting room included forty-five different projects with *many* having multiple issues that needed to be dealt with. These jobs were as varied as the number of people and buildings the

¹¹ Charles Pulley, June 2, 1969 memo. Also University Architect's Standards updated 5th edition from June 1969.

¹² Harper p. 44. This was one of the first major planning decisions involving the expansion of the Carbondale campus. The lake is now called Lake on the Campus. It was also drained in 1952 under the auspices of Pulley so that surveying and a new dam could be put in.

¹³ Favro p. 178. She makes some statements based on Livy about how Augustus started topiary. I have to wonder about that.

architects were trying to deal with at the time. The number one priority was to overhaul the design of Altgeld Hall, which at the time was over sixty-years old, from a teaching building to a music building. Number four was to make designs for the tower needed by the new FM radio station. Number twenty-six was to create an inter-campus communication system for the Carbondale campus. Number forty-four was to design areas for campus bulletin boards. It was a never-ending project.¹⁴ Another document from mid-1956 shows the sort of work that Pulley did for the university. In response to Morris' request to "prepare an agenda for a meeting of the University Council on Campus Development" he put together a collection of points about three specific items: Architects fees for projects, another restudy of the master plan, and topics about the new University Center.¹⁵ There were over 620 repair jobs designed by the architects office in 1967-8.¹⁶

Massive changes to standing buildings also altered the state of the new buildings. They needed to be open and to accommodate change. Because of the crush for science classes, both Life Science I & II have open classrooms and can quickly be changed to meet the needs of different sciences. Morris Library has little or no partitioning,

walls, or supports in the interior of the space. The floors could be completely changed or altered within a week's time depending on which sections were growing or which study areas required enlargement. Besides having open interior spaces ready for quick transformation, the walls and exteriors used massive glass panels and vista windows to open the building further. The engineering building complex has several buildings where the exterior is almost completely glass. Another technique that was used was a curving walkway around the carapace of the building, which acts as a continual transition and a major thoroughfare. Lawson Hall for lower math and science holds multiple hundred-seat auditoriums. But it is surrounded by green spaces and courtyards, has many glass windows, the main thoroughfare curves around the exterior, and the auditoriums are kept to the interior. This way, the student could be dreading his boring lecture class, but on his way to class he is constantly looking outside to nice surroundings, and if things get too horrible, he is able to slip quickly outside for five minutes to get a drink or smoke in one of the plentiful exterior niches.¹⁷

As if the requirements for expanding the Carbondale campus were not bad enough, Morris decided that it would be good for the university to expand to the Metro East area on the Illinois side of the Mississippi River. Morris wanted to help all of southern Illinois, and this area was the hardest off. The idea crystallized in 1956 and by 1960 had received \$25 million in bonds from the federal and state legislatures to start production. Pulley and the

¹⁴ Priority List for Drafting Room, February 5, 1957. Altgeld is still the music building, but during the last school year has undergone its first renovation since this changeover. The FM radio station was the first and only of its kind in southern Illinois until the early 70s. There is an intercom system in all the buildings. And there are numerous bulletin board areas, with especially large ones inside the doors of each building that is designated for classes.

¹⁵ Pulley to Morris, May 21, 1956 *Re: University Council on Campus Development*.

¹⁶ From the 67-8 President's Report to the Board of Trustees.

¹⁷ I love Lawson. Niches are outside on all sides in courtyards. Everything around it is green and it sits close to Thompson Woods, about a three-minute walk behind the building.

architects had to take on two campuses at once. Pulley put together a plan to get the new campus off the ground; it was a memo to Morris that was three pages long and included several major points: select a city planner, get an engineering firm, and find an architectural firm to help with the master plan.¹⁸ A Saint Louis firm was found for the master plan and opening ceremonies were held in 1965.

The Romans were the masters of enclosed exterior space and opening vistas. The *basilica* was a way to shade and enclose massive spaces while still giving easy access to the outdoors. Augustus built one of the greatest of these of the time the Basilica Julia. He also built his own forum in a manner that enclosed space would also be controlled so that business and meetings could be held in the Forum Augustum, but it could also be used to hold religious ceremonies in association with the temple of Mars Ultor and audiences with the senate. Also within the roofed walkways that enclosed his forum were statues of the Julian *gens* from Aeneas and the great men of Rome from Romulus. These legitimized him through association with all the great men of Rome's past. Another type of enclosed open air space was the theater/amphitheater. SIU has an amphitheater connected to the Student Center allowing open-air events with some privacy. Augustus used his Theater of Marcellus to show his splendor and beat Pompey the Great's complex, serving both purposes well.¹⁹

¹⁸ Pulley to Morris, January 21, 1960
Recommendations for procedure on development of Southern Illinois University campus, Edwardsville, Illinois. Edwardsville became a major extension to keep good students in the Metro East area. It is now under consideration to separate SIU-E from SIU-C.

¹⁹ Gary and Scullard p. 323-4. Mars Ultor in the Forum Augustum was consecrated in B.C. 2.

Master planning and Augustus Reshapes Rome: the same?

Master plans blanketed Morris' home drafting table. A new master plan for the Carbondale campus appeared almost every year between 1950 and 1960. Dorms and buildings were moved and altered on a constant basis.²⁰ Besides continually reevaluating the situation on campus, the drafts helped reassess enrollment, policy, and educational requirements by allowing a minute look into the situation on campus as it changed yearly. A booklet was put together, assumedly upon Morris' retirement, which had most of the master plans and diagrams produced during his era as president. There are thirty-six pictures. The last two are the beginning and the end, 1948 and 1969, which are on the same scale: the 1948 plan is almost invisible in the same size legend.

Morris meant to change southern Illinois and the university that rose as its heart. He planned ahead. He wanted to know what the region needed. He conceived a team of local born compatriots that would aspire to make the "new" university great.²¹ Morris carried a ten-year plan in his pocket that he wrote out in 1952. It included a section for university improvements and one for area improvements. Among these were creating a doctoral program, getting several buildings approved, including education and engineering, developing several area lakes, and

²⁰ Thompson Point was moved across the lake to "the Point." Several ideas of the campus loop road also changed.

²¹ Rendleman was from the Metro East area. Pulley was originally from Marion, about fifteen miles from campus. Davis was a Harrisburg native, about forty-five minutes from campus. Morris himself was a southern Illinois native.

getting a main highway east/west and north/south.²²

He made his subordinates believe in this plan, too. At an enrollment of around 5,000 in 1952, Pulley put out requirements for the dormitory program. This took into consideration that there would be at least 9,000 students, and that these units must be adjustable to future co-ed enrollment situations. By 1959 Pulley mentions to the Board that there will probably be 15,000-19,000.²³

Housing at the time was ramshackle, shoddy, and sparse. The idea of a major unit of dormitories came into focus in early 1952. Now Thompson Point, the project started as an idea for a small community of freshmen men that would have eating and some educational facilities on site. Morris wanted ideas for a living community that would bring the freshmen away from their rural living that many southern Illinoisans would have experienced into a more institutional setting. One noteworthy meeting in October of 1952 started the idea of the structure and framework. Pulley started the basic ideas off by stating, "We are starting a men's residence program." From this starting point, sizes and divisions within the housing units and community blocks were discussed. Morris spoke briefly for the first half of the meeting. The second half of the meeting, after the main ideas had been brought to the table, turned into a conversation

between Morris, Pulley, and a representative from the Chicago architectural firm that was consulting on the project. Morris had set ideas and sent the architects off to draw up plans after making sure of cost efficiency and flexibility.²⁴ This shows how Morris listened but made all the final decisions in his building program. Morris controlled this program though Pulley, who had the job of presenting the changes and budgets to the master plan to the board.²⁵

Augustus used Agrippa to build public works and other monuments. He made Agrippa the *curator aquarum* so that the water supply would be updated after years of negligence. Agrippa proceeded to build the Aqua Virgo, one of the major aqueducts of the city, and the first baths, the 'Thermae.' Agrippa also built the first Pantheon and a large *hotori* in the Campus Martius.²⁶ Also soon after his first settlement with the senate, he began a program to refurbish distraught temples. After years of inattention Augustus quickly "restored the Capitol and sacred buildings to the number of eighty-two, theater of Pompey, the aqueducts and the Via Flaminia."²⁷ This showed Augustus' intent to make the city worthy of the great power and influence it exercised. But some would argue that this was not a building program. I see it as a building program along the same lines

²² See attached photocopy. The doctoral program development through a distinguished professors program that brought in older teachers to fill departmental needs. The two main highways are US 51 and Illinois 13. The lake areas never really amounted to much except for conservation purposes.

²³ Pulley *Requirements for Dormitory Program Southern Illinois University* December 3, 1952. And Pulley to Board report April 1, 1959.

²⁴ *Minutes of Meeting on Men's Dormitory* October 28, 1952. This document is twelve pages of shorthand. It shows the formation of Thompson Point as is.

²⁵ There are numbers of meetings with the board and other people. Pulley had a several thousand dollar traveling budget so that he could put ideas to other colleges and gain ideas from other campuses that were expanding.

²⁶ Gary and Scullard p. 325. Agrippa also apparently sailed up the Cloaca Maxia. That would have been horrendous.

²⁷ Res Gestae Appendix 3.

as what Morris did at SIU. Morris and Augustus did not start new. There was a foundation that each built on. But the idea was to build spaces and the overall area up into something greater than it had previously been. Augustus concentrated on the Capitoline and the Campus Martius. In the Campus Martius his Ara Pacis, obelisk, mausoleum, and a large portico, with its great paved area, created a node or area that was strictly Augustan. The Pantheon and *hotori* that Agrippa built aided this situation and caused the Via Flaminia to be a triumphant processional. The Capitol Hill was also fashioned in a similar manner. By finishing the projects of Caesar to honor himself and buying massive amounts of land to build the Forum Augusti, he set himself up as the focal point. He rebuilt the senate house itself, fashioned a massive temple to Mars Ultor in the middle of his Forum Augusti, and rebuilt the Capitoline triad and Jupiter Maximus.²⁸ The middle of the city and the entrance of the most important road were programmatically built to emphasize the mighty *princeps*. While Augustus did not completely remake Rome in a master plan or official stated program, he changed the face of the most important sectors and where he was incapable of helping or remaking the city he set up policing forces, fire brigades, and urban prefects that could help reform and build up sections of Rome. He succeeded in creating a dominant name and image that no one else had and Caesar had not finished. Another point is that it would have been unwise to proclaim a master building program. One of the ways aristocrats expressed and increased their influence and prestige was through building. While proclaiming he was restoring the

Republic, to take away one of the main competitive arenas would have hurt or hindered his image as the benevolent *princeps*.

Morris was a proponent of this nodal importance. He planned to keep the old original campus in place and to separate the new buildings with Thompson Woods or large green spaces. This is why the Agriculture, Communications, and Theater buildings were separated on the west side of Thompson Woods. The Student Center, Engineering, Arena, and Physical Plant were placed south of a large campus common green that extended from the old campus area. Another large green with soccer fields and walkways divides the administration in Pulliam Hall away from the old campus structures. Morris had the architects set up convenient areas that would serve a single purpose, but were in quick walking distance of the other sections of campus.²⁹

Augustus and Dr. Delyte Morris physically changed the face of their respective areas. They were in different situations and time periods. They went about renovations differently and Morris obviously did not have the power to reshape by only his directive and monies. However, their vision and power in guiding where buildings would be placed, obtaining and using funds to build and expand, and addressing how the place would be viewed were similar and unmatched by predecessors. The ability of one man to help change the face of an area is great. These two men exemplify that trait and how much can be done. Augustus was able to make Rome into a capital city that was large and splendid in its public areas. Dr. Morris helped build an institution that is the largest employer in

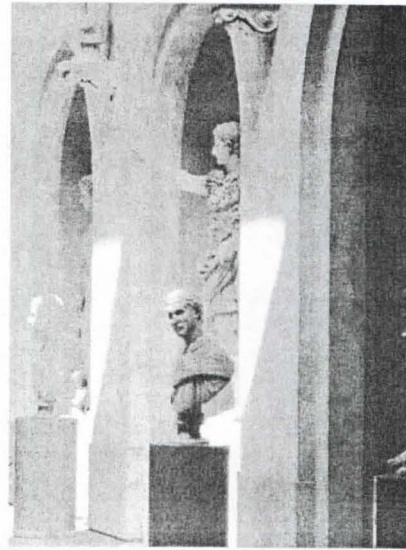
²⁸ Gary and Scullard p. 323-324. Also Res Gestae 19,20, & 21.

²⁹ This is from Harper p. 93-119.

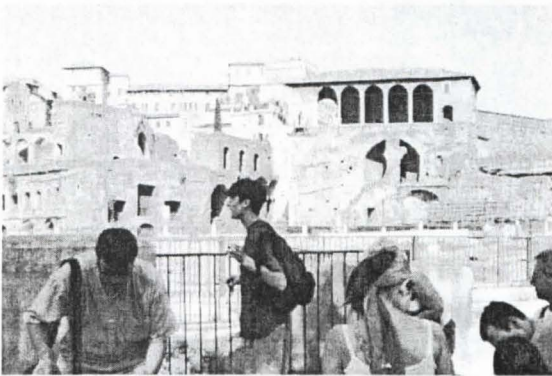
the bottom half of the state of Illinois.³⁰ Augustus' legacy changed the course of western civilization. Morris changed the direction and shape of a region of Illinois. Both men will be remembered for the deeds that they did. The idea of the *pater patriae* rings through this statement by Dick Gregory, a Southern graduate from the 1950s.

He was not just the head of the university, he was the father. SIU is the great university it is today because he was a leader of men. To Dr. Morris' spirit, and to his family, I and countless thousands pay tribute to the memory of this great man.³¹

This last statement rings of the imperial cult of Augustus. To see the homage paid in so similar a way, and how their monuments live on, is fitting.



The Augustus Prima Porta



The Loca Antiqua group in the Forum of Augustus

³⁰ From SIU website, www.siu.edu. Accessed April 12, 2003

³¹ Foreword by Dick Gregory from Betty Mitchell's *Delyte Morris of SIU*.



The Colosseum in Rome