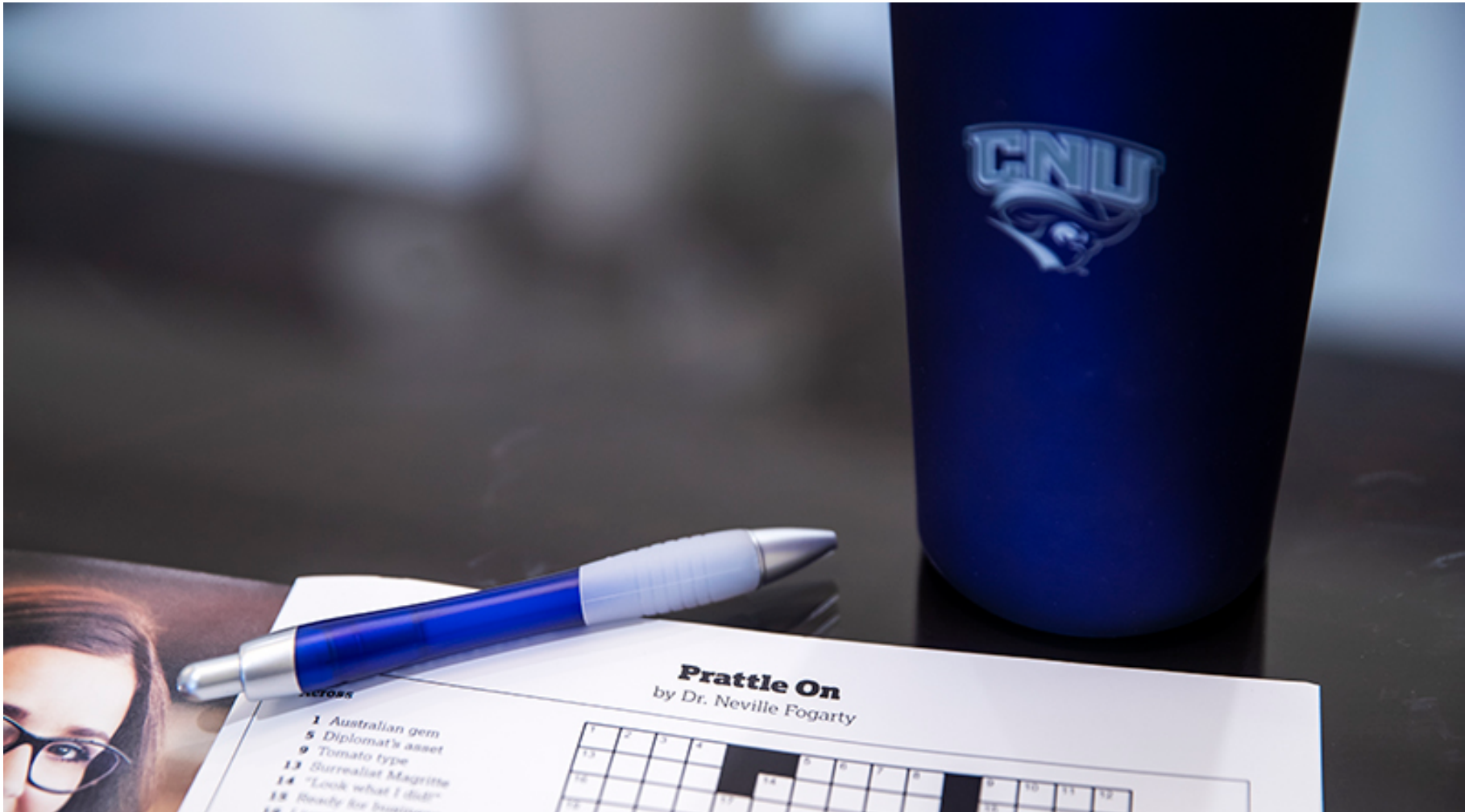


## NEWSROOM

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## MEET CHRISTOPHER NEWPORT'S PUZZLEMASTER

DR. NEVILLE FOGARTY BRINGS CROSSWORD EXPERTISE TO CAMPUS.

by [Jane Heeter](#) | January 20, 2021*Above: The fall 2020 'Voyages' crossword puzzle**Read time: about 2 min*

Thirteen years ago, then-college sophomore Neville Fogarty raced the clock to win \$3,450 and a trip to Antigua in the inaugural episode of the television game show *Merv Griffin's Crosswords*. That show, it turns out, launched the career of one of the nation's crossword puzzle experts. Fogarty's prominence in the crossword puzzle world and his love for making and solving the games has continued to grow.

Now Dr. Fogarty, assistant professor of [mathematics](#), has written hundreds of crosswords and been published in *The New York Times*, the *Los Angeles Times*, BuzzFeed, *The Chronicle of Higher Education* and, now, [Voyages](#). Fogarty was kind enough to create a puzzle just for Christopher Newport (link below).

**How did you get into puzzles and games?**

I started solving crosswords when I was in college. During the summer between my freshman and sophomore years, I wanted to go on a new game show called Merv Griffin's Crosswords, so I spent three weeks solving every crossword I could find and learning the vocabulary of crosswords from my mom. I went on to win the first episode of that show. A year later, I started trying to write my own puzzles, thinking it couldn't be that hard. Well, it was a little tricky, but I managed to sell a puzzle to the Los Angeles Times the very next summer.

**What is the process like when you create a crossword puzzle?**

Most of my puzzles are themed, so I start by coming up with the theme. This means I need to figure out some connection or mechanism for the long answers in the puzzle (or perhaps something more pervasive). Then I

brainstorm theme entries, noting the grid requirements along the way (symmetric placement in the grid, lengths that will fit nicely, etc.). At some point I'll throw these into a grid and try placing black squares where forced. Then more black squares go in to accommodate crossing entries. At that point, I try to fill the rest of the grid in earnest, and after that's done I finish by writing the clues.

**What do you get out of the hobby?**

For me, it's a creative outlet. It's a fun way to interact with language and culture, and a healthy distraction from the pressures of day-to-day life. I've also made some close friends through crossword writing and solving.

**Does your interest in puzzles intersect with your academic interests?**

It hasn't particularly overlapped, but I'd love to one day teach a class on the history and construction of crosswords!

**Do you have any advice for crossword solvers, new or experienced?**

Like so many other skills, solving crossword puzzles is an activity that takes practice to get any good at it. If you're new to puzzles, try starting out with straightforward but well-edited puzzles, like the ones in USA Today (you can solve these for free online). It's not cheating to use the internet to help you out, and when you solve on a computer, you have the option of having wrong letters flagged as you go.

The best strategy, I think, is to try solving with a friend and talk things out. As you solve more puzzles, you'll start to see some words (especially the short ones) show up frequently. Think back to these words often. In a crossword puzzle, a fencing sword is an EPEE much more often than it is a FOIL (SABRE has five letters, but watch out for SABER).

And if you're a puzzle pro, why not add a little challenge to an easy puzzle? See if you can solve it using just the down clues! This may sound impossible, but if your puzzle-solving skills are strong, you should be able to use pattern recognition to take care of the across answers. Ask yourself, "If I were constructing this puzzle, what would I put here?"

[VOYAGES CROSSWORD PUZZLE](#) →

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