ITconnections

Information technology applications at the University of Oregon WINTER 2007

The SSIL distance education team shares a light moment while demonstrating one of their innovative solutions for online testing. Left to right: Cathleen Leué, Garron Hale, and Zack Ham. Story on page 12.

THE INTERACTIVE CLASSROOM

Skipper McFarlane, Digital Arts

Al Stavitsky, Journalism

IT@UO

IT Task Forces

Hershey Tech Award

DISTANCE-LEARNING INITIATIVES

APRU Conference Report

Social Science Instructional Lab

UO Document Imaging Project Wins Award

From the start, it was a broad, campus-wide vision and a firm commitment to cooperation and collaboration that guided the UO's ambitious document imaging project. And, as it turned out, it was these very same qualities that earned an award for the hardworking team of administrators, programmers, and technical consultants from six key university departments who developed the project from its inception to its first launch on October 2, 2006.

To understand the magnitude of their achievement, first imagine the volume of record-keeping that's part of daily life in the Admissions and Registrar's offices. Processing and archiving thousands of student records year after year takes up quite a bit of office real estate. Imagine a phalanx of filing cabinets, IN bins and OUT bins, record folders—all proliferating to contain and organize a formidable paper trail. Think of the time it takes to alphabetize and file these records and find them when they're requested.

Now, after almost three years of work by the core document imaging project team, these records have been digitized and filed electronically for easy desktop access. No more digging through filing cabinets, walking or mailing copies of files to other departments or colleagues, or spending time searching for misplaced record folders. Instead, documents are now scanned, indexed, and entered into a system of online workflows and tasks that staff can process from their desktops. Each workstation is equipped with two flat-screen computers for easy online processing: one screen displays Banner, while the other shows the document image, workflow, and tasks for processing.

Four members of the document imaging project team show off their new trophy. Left to right: Lois Andersen, Jim Bouse, Derek Wormdahl, Travis Shea.

The software package that made all this possible is a Hershey Systems product called Singularity. But Singularity could not do it all. The software had to be tweaked and modified to fit the UO's specific needs—a challenge taken on by Information Services systems analyst and co-project leader Derek Wormdahl, along with colleagues Micah Sardell, Stephany Freeman, James Joule, and the Registrar's imaging and web coordinator, Travis Shea. Together with co-project leader Jim Bouse (Registrar's Office), the team worked closely with a core group of two representatives from each of six departments. Admissions Office IT specialist Lois Andersen and senior associate operations director Kirk Koenig were in the forefront of product testing, as it was their department which first implemented the program last fall. Currently, the new document imaging system has been integrated into the workflows of both Admissions and Registrar's, and the Business and Financial Aid offices are in the pipeline for deployment.

On October 25, Hershey Systems formally recognized the UO team's achievement by giving them its annual Technology Award, noting that "[the University of] Oregon clearly stands out as the leader for 2006." The award is the icing on the cake for Wormdahl, whose favorite aspect of the project was collaborating with others. "The entire team worked together from the beginning. We knew we'd have to involve everyone in the decision-making process and check our egos at the door," he says. Wormdahl is also extremely pleased that the Oregon Hall staff enthusiastically embraced the new software. "No matter how good a system you devise, the end user is *vital* to its success," he says. "Bottom line: Will they take to it? Will they use it?" Admissions Office teammate Lois Andersen agrees. "The staff did a *great* job of retooling," she says. "They embraced the new system just wonderfully."

On Russian Simulation Models, Pacific Rim Grids, and E-Classes That Never End

Our CIO reports on a recent distance learning conference in Tokyo

The 2006 Association of Pacific Rim Universities (APRU) "Distance Learning & the Internet" conference in November offered many opportunities to explore cooperative ventures between leading universities.

I was pleased that Cindy Kieffer joined me at the conference and gave a presentation on the work of the UO's American English Institute, where she serves as director of academic programs and research. Other presentations ranged from an overview of current projects at Stanford's Center for Innovations in Learning and the use of mobile and ubiquitous learning approaches in Japan, Mexico, and Singapore, to better understanding the pedagogical issues of using technology in education. In this article I'll touch on three presentations I attended.

Simulation modeling has been an interest of mine since I was a graduate student. In those days I would build and run economic models from California on the Cornell University mainframe, often working in the middle of the night to get cheaper computer rates. Today modeling is much easier and our friends at Saint Petersburg Polytechnic University have incorporated model building as a major part of their business and engineering curriculum. Students build and run models on everything from medical epidemic simulations to flow studies of the Moscow subway system. One of the primary goals of the activity, according to Dr. Alexander Glebovsky, is to introduce students to the science and art of model building. Since modeling often involves problems that cross international boundaries (e.g., weather simulations or environmental impact of pollution), having international teams of students engaged in model building seems fitting. Dr. Glebovsky is currently looking for international partners to join their efforts in St. Petersburg.

Grid computing involves networking a number of computers together and setting them up to be able to share their compute cycles with each other. Because most computers are never fully utilized, it is possible to "harvest" these unused cycles and create a supercomputer by linking together many less powerful machines, including typical lab workstations.

At the University of Oregon we have excellent examples of computing grids being set up by some of our faculty and graduate students. Some of these even go beyond individual labs and extend to other computers on the campus network and beyond. The presentation from the National University of Singapore took this a step further and posed an interesting question: Could we build a computational grid among Pacific Rim universities to support the work of faculty within those institutions? Making use of existing computing resources and established networks, the University of Singapore team is seeking interested parties to participate in this activity. With APRU member schools spanning 13 time zones, this might be a very interesting way to put some unused computing cycles to work.

"A Pacific Rim E-class Exchange Program" was a presentation given by Hosei University in Tokyo and the University of California at Davis. While this program offers all the basic elements of modern distance learning environments (e.g., video/audio link, synchronized slides, transmission from a tablet PC to video screen, and asynchronous interactions with a learning management system), there were other elements I found interesting. One was their incorporation of an automatic subtitle system that provided English subtitles for Japanese students who may have trouble following the lecture of an English-speaking professor. Utilizing a "repeat talker" who restated the lecture in a monotone voice, the voice recognition system had increased accuracy in providing subtitle text. These universities also made use of their Internet exchanges to facilitate communication between students outside of the defined class times. In one musing about the future they even proposed a never-ending "worldwide e-class exchange," wherein students around the world would hand off discussion from one group to another around the clock. Since we know that, at least in the U.S., college students are nocturnal, perhaps they will be able to converse with their Chinese colleagues in real time.

The follow-up from the conference is to explore whether there might be interest in some of the ideas put forth by presenters. If you have read something in this article or see something in the conference proceedings that you would be interested in discussing further, please drop me a line at cio@uoregon.edu. Being a member of APRU is a great benefit for the University of Oregon and we should continue to explore ways we can work more with our colleagues within the Pacific Rim.

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Additional information: To learn more about the ideas presented in this conference, visit the conference website at **http://apru2006.dir.u-tokyo.ac.jp/** Presentation papers are listed in the "Program" menu link.

Engaging Spaces…

Knight Library's Learning Commons and the new Living-Learning Center foster collaboration, sense of community

Joyce Winslow
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Two recent additions to the University of Oregon give new life to an old idea about academia. The first, Knight Library's Learning Commons, reconfigured existing space to meet the growing demand for collaborative learning and teaching environments; and the second, the university's new multipurpose Living-Learning Center, was built from the ground up with a view toward revitalizing core campus residence halls and making them a hub of social and educational activity.

Although these may appear to be somewhat revolutionary concepts, they are in fact modern interpretations of the university-as-learning-community idea more typical in centuries gone by. From the university's living and working spaces to its study halls and classrooms, a concerted effort is now being made to involve students with faculty and each other, and to immerse them in a stimulating, interactive learning environment that is available 24/7.

Students try out the equipment in the Learning Commons' new Presentation Room.

Knight Learning Commons:
Flexible work spaces foster academic collaboration and integrate technology into library research

At first glance, the main floor of Knight Library appears virtually unchanged. But closer inspection reveals an open area east of the reference desk with comfortable seating, four Dell PCs with 24" monitors, and two iMacs with 20" monitors. The furniture in this area may be easily rearranged to accommodate small groups clustered around one computer, facilitating collaboration on group projects or a small class presentation. Each workstation offers a comprehensive suite of software, from graphics and web publishing to graphing and mathematics applications, and several scanners and a color laser printer are also on site.

This is the **Collaborative Workstations** area, one of the three main features of Knight Library's new Learning Commons, the first phase of which was launched last fall.

UO students and faculty with a UO network ID and password may use the workstations on a first-come, first-served basis. Academic users working in groups take precedence, although individuals may also use the workstations when they're not in demand for collaborative work.

Also geared toward academic multiple-use and group conferencing, the **Collaboration Center** (Room 122) to the right of the reference desk is furnished with ten movable tables and chairs and will soon also have chalkboards or whiteboards, a permanent projection screen, and a cart with a computer and projector.

The room is well suited for career counseling and academic advising sessions, as well as other types of small group presentations. Groups of ten or more may reserve the Collaboration Center in advance; otherwise, it's available on a drop-in basis. UO faculty, academic support providers, and student service professionals are given priority over other users.

The Learning Commons space that is generating the most buzz, however, is the **Presentation Room** (Knight 147B). This small room is equipped with a plasma wall display, a control panel for all the electronics, a DVD player and VCR, and a document camera that displays overhead transparencies or opaque materials, including small three-dimensional objects.

The room was designed to give current UO students and faculty the opportunity to practice classroom presentation skills and familiarize themselves with standard presentation equipment. It is furnished with movable tables and chairs to accommodate different configurations, and will soon have a webcam for recording presentations. In the meantime, those wishing to record and review a video of their presentations may check out a digital camcorder and tripod from Media Services.

The Presentation Room may be reserved for up to two hours at a time, and technical support staff are available to help with the equipment.

Complementing the new Learning Commons area are the laptop checkout desk (where 40 wireless-enabled laptop computers are available for checkout for up to four hours at a time, including overnight), the Edmiston Classroom, the Adaptive Technology Lab, and the Map Library and GIS Lab. To accommodate increased demand, wireless connectivity has been improved and expanded throughout the Commons.

JQ Johnson, co-chair of the Learning Commons initiative team and one of its principal architects, is enthused about the Commons' potential to meet educational needs in the twenty-first century. "We hope to make this a place that helps students integrate advanced technology into their library research, and one where they can learn to use technology and specific software packages with an academic focus," he says. "For example, a student might learn how to use GIS tools to manipulate library-provided GIS data and aerial photographs for a term paper that looked at differences between elementary school districts. Or a student might get help creating a bibliography with reference management software like Endnote or Zotero."

Whatever the need, the Knight Learning Commons intends to continue to meet the evolving demands of higher education in the new millennium.

Living-Learning Center:
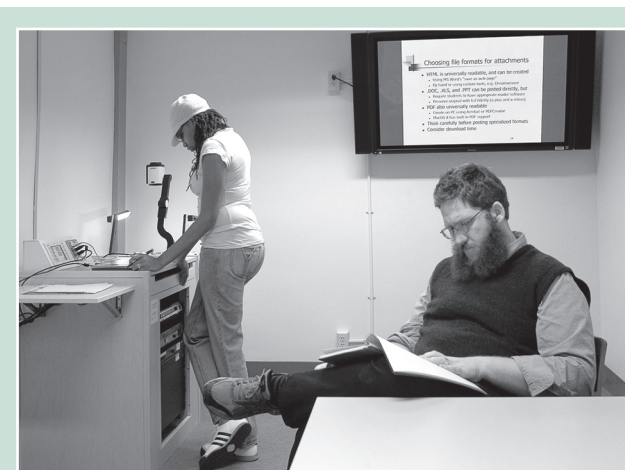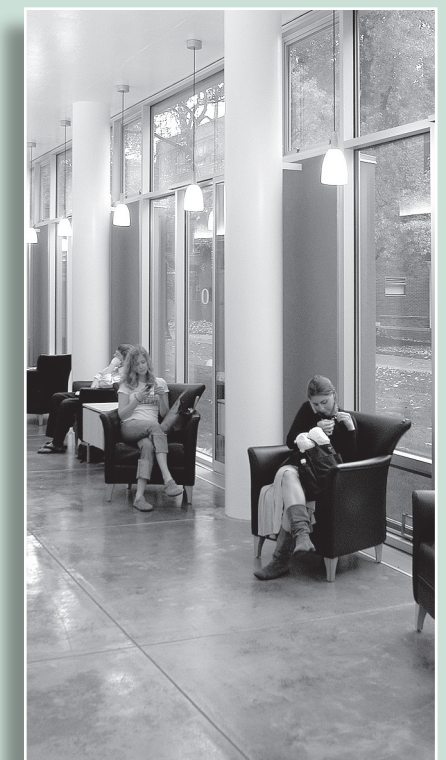**Multiple-use design encourages academic dialogue and nurtures a sense of community**

On the east side of campus a striking new addition to UO residence halls has revitalized dorm

The landscaped courtyard between LLC's North and South Buildings (left) and its numerous study nooks offer an informal atmosphere for socializing and reflection.

Engaging Spaces, continued...

life and drawn new students into an integrated circle of social and academic activity.

The Living Learning Center (LLC), which opened its doors for the first time last fall, is an ambitious architectural concept that embodies both the latest green construction technology and the oldest of academic traditions. Its energy-conserving features, which include solar water-heating panels and innovative ventilation, were designed by renowned UO architecture professor G.Z. "Charlie" Brown, who was also responsible for the sustainable features in the award-winning Lillis Complex.

The LLC comprises two buildings, North and South. In both buildings, public spaces are on the ground floor and student living spaces are on the floors above.

Downstairs in the North Building, the DUX Bistro, flexible faculty office space, and undergraduate classrooms, plus cozy nooks for study and conversation, encourage a sense of community and academic engagement. Upstairs, dorm space is integrated with group study space: inviting soundproofed lounges with blackboards and movable furniture provide a place to curl up and read, socialize, or work on group projects. The entire complex takes full advantage of natural light and arresting views of the campus and surrounding hills. And, of course, it has wireless connectivity throughout.

One vital student-friendly feature of the North Building is the Area Desk on the ground floor adjoining the DUX Bistro. This desk is staffed around the clock to respond to student questions and problems.

A spacious landscaped courtyard with radiating pathways in the center of the LLC integrates the new living-learning complex with surrounding residence halls, including Carson and Earl Halls, the Walton Complex, and International House. The main floor

of the South Building houses a spacious new performance hall facing the courtyard that can double as a lecture hall and event center. For classroom use, the hall is equipped with three overhead projectors and screens, plus a VCR and DVD player. Accessory panels near each projector allow computers or other audio visual equipment to be connected to the system. The setup includes a sound system for PowerPoint and other presentations, as well as good old-fashioned blackboards—the overwhelming preference of UO faculty who gave their input on the project.

The north wall is comprised of glass doors, giving the room an airy indoor-outdoor ambience. And in keeping with the theme of multiple use, these doors open out onto the courtyard, making it possible for outdoor events to be viewed from inside the hall, or vice versa.

Build it, and they will come. The concepts that guided the design of the LLC appear to be working. Mike Eyster, interim VP for student affairs and university housing director, participated in all planning and design phases of the project over the past decade and is very pleased with the result. "The LLC adds vibrancy and vitality to the entire campus," he says. This is evident, even at a relatively quiet time of day, in the level of activity in the DUX Bistro, the relaxed clusters of students chatting and studying in various nooks and crannies throughout both buildings and the courtyard, and the undergraduate classes underway on the ground floor of the North Building. Everywhere, students and faculty are mingling and inhabiting the spaces that were built to invite them in.

"Throughout the design process, we kept in mind that one of the pitfalls of multiple use is that you could conceivably end up with something that's not good for *anything*—we wanted to avoid that!" Eyster says. Fortunately, all indications are that they have, and that the new LLC offers beauty, comfort, *and* functionality.

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usenet news server is no more...

On December 18, the USENET News server was permanently retired.

Although USENET News services continued to be an important resource for some, the overall decline in readership, coupled with the increase in traffic volume, placed unique pressure on the server's ability to deliver a high-quality news service.

Recommended alternatives to USENET News include:
- Google groups: **http://groups.google.com/groups/dir/**
- Supernews: **http://www.supernews.com/indi/**
  Supernews costs approximately $43/year for text group access and $66/year for binaries.

Deptcomp Task Forces Work Toward Better Coordination, Communication

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On a drizzly afternoon last spring, CIO Don Harris handed out a list of task forces at a UO departmental computing group meeting and asked people to volunteer for up to three. The group responded enthusiastically—so enthusiastically, in fact, that some complained they couldn't narrow their choices down to three.

Why were computer support people so ready to add one, two, or three more meetings to their already busy calendars?

"Without such meetings, we IT folks tend to go off and do our own thing," says Tim Miller, network manager in Johnson Hall, who welcomes the opportunity to work with peers in other departments. He sees the task forces as an attractive mechanism to get IT people from across campus together.

The advantages of such interaction and discussion among people on a campus with well over 200 computer support people include better communication, coordination, and the opportunity for cost savings. The task forces cover a range of topics important to the UO IT community, including:

- IT Security
- UO IT Website
- Peer Consulting
- Site Licenses & Volume Purchases
- Web Services & Applications
- Helpdesk Software
- Calendar Software
- Support Services
- Training & Professional Development
- Policies & Procedures

The push toward better communication and coordination informs the work of most of the groups. Scheduling meetings and other events across campus, for instance, would become easier if all participants were using the same calendaring software. Since different departments now use a variety of calendar applications, the calendar software task force is delving into the technological challenges of creating a calendar standard.

Coordination also drives the efforts of the help desk software group, which is searching for a software package to efficiently track users with IT problems or questions no matter where they originate. Two of the key qualities the group wants, according to co-chair Dan Albrich, are the ability to hand off questions to the best source and the ability to ensure resolution—or at least timely response. The ability to create a knowledge base of common problems and solutions is also critical.

Common solutions to common problems could also flow to local offices more smoothly as a result of the efforts of the peer consulting and review

task force. Led by Don Harris, the group is laying the groundwork for the creation of IT teams specializing in areas such as server security that are critical to the campus community. These teams would be available to campus offices that ask for help or consultation in dealing with an IT issue.

Cost savings is a theme shaping the work of some of the task forces. The site license group, for instance, is looking at ways the UO IT community could collaborate on purchases of special equipment or software. On a parallel course, the support services task force is working to improve the services offered by central IT to all departments and asking where the UO's limited resources would best be spent. Among the possibilities are backup servers, videoconferencing, collaborative software, and security measures.

Late fall found the work of many of the task forces beginning to bear fruit, including surveys and initial plans. In November, web services task force chair Mary Harrsch sent out a survey to gather campus opinion on which centrally-provided web-based services are at the head of campus IT support staffers' most–wanted lists. The survey included blogs, wikis, web-based surveys, content management systems, and other services.

The task force on training and professional development has also created a needs assessment tool to gather data on the kind of training IT staff most want and is asking people to circle May 1 on their calendars for a proposed campuswide IT conference.

The policies and procedures task force has been reviewing standard categories of IT-related policy and procedure as identified by EDUCAUSE and other organizations, with the goal of defining a subset shaped to the needs of the UO IT community. Recommendations that result from this work may ultimately touch on a broad range of university issues, including academic freedom, privacy, record retention, accessibility compliance, and others.

With a mission that also touches a multitude of university systems, the security task force has been focusing on topics involving data security and security training and is anticipating putting out a list of recommendations on these issues soon.

Finally, the new UO IT website, recently launched by Dave Ragsdale, chair of the UO IT homepage task force, is now linked to the main UO website. In addition to serving as a front door to IT services at UO schools, colleges, and other entities that provide IT support, the site provides quick links to wireless, lab, and network status information and announcements of IT-related news and events.

Many of the task forces have created public wikis and websites. If you are interested in learning more about their work, see **http://it.uoregon.edu/news/it_taskforce.shtml**

New Ways of Teaching: Skip McFarlane

Digital Arts professor blazes trails by testing web-based teaching tools

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Skip McFarlane assists a student with a Flash exercise.

The first thing you notice about Skip McFarlane's tiny office tucked away in an obscure corner of Millrace I is that toy superheroes are lined up on his bookshelf. Many of these, it turns out, were made by Skip as part of his 1998 UO MFA project. The protagonist in this tableau is "The Designer," a four-inch-tall replica of Skip himself, dressed in a blue smock, pointing the way forward with an extended paintbrush.

Now that Skip's real-life role is serving as technical coordinator for Distance and Continuing Education, it seems fitting that his early persona was a far-seeing trailblazer. As technical coordinator, Skip is charged with exploring new technologies and tools for education, as well as providing assistance to other faculty who want to incorporate some of these tools in their own classrooms.

Fortunately, he is uniquely suited to take on this daunting task. Thanks to a deep background in digital arts, he knows his way around the rapidly changing world of multimedia. And, being the son of an electrical engineer, he grew up surrounded by electronics and has no qualms about tinkering with computers.

Last summer, fired up by Scott Huette's Teaching Effectiveness Program presentation on teaching with technology, Skip took the plunge and introduced wikis into his curriculum. Before he could launch the new teaching tool, however, Skip decided he needed to build his own server to run the wiki software—a step many faculty would doubtless rather avoid. But Skip likes to explore and figure things out for himself. "I'm kind of stubborn that way," he admits. "As my wife says, I'm just 'nerdy enough' to tackle this kind of project."

So he set about upgrading an old G4 and, after a bit of research, opted to install MediaWiki (www.mediawiki.org), the free wiki software that runs Wikipedia. Although downloading the software and building his trial wiki took only about five minutes after his server was functional, Skip subsequently had to spend several days troubleshooting and upgrading various software packages to get it all to work. His early misadventures included getting hacked by Romanian spammers and having his server balk when numerous students tried to log on simultaneously. Fortunately, other tech support staff on campus were ready and willing to help him troubleshoot. Chris Wiesemann (Architecture and Allied Arts) and Ryan Stasel (Journalism) both came to his aid when the going got rough. "We have a nice community of tech support on campus," Skip says gratefully. "It's a great resource."

Aside from the satisfaction of meeting the technical challenge, Skip was most enthused about finding new ways to engage his students, get them involved, "let them have some say in what they're learning." His teaching philosophy is to provide direction, not micromanage, and the wiki format provided an ideal opening for students to participate in their own education.

For those unfamiliar with wikis, they are often described as a combination website and Word document. After logging in to a class wiki with their user ID and password, students can contribute to the class website without having any special skills other than being able to type on a computer keyboard. Using wikis enables students to learn basic web publishing, engage in collaborative work, and learn from each other while editing each other's work throughout the term.

When used to post reading lists and other class resources, wikis can also free up some lecture time, leaving more class time available for discussion. This proved to be the case in Skip's Dreamweaver, Flash, InDesign, and Photoshop workshops, which were offered through a collaboration between the UO's Continuing Education and Fine Arts departments last fall. Skip used a wiki in these classes to post resources for reading and further study, and invited students to contribute their own list of resources and to update the list's URLs as needed. This eliminated the need for printing and distributing resource lists in class, expanded the scope of the resource material, and ensured that the list was current (no broken links!). In addition, involving the students in creating the course list gave them a vital sense of ownership of the material.

In his summer 2006 Digital Illustration Class, which is part of the A&AA Digital Arts program, and his Information Design Trends class (part of the Applied Information Management master's degree program), Skip used the wiki tool to foster collaborative work among students and to solicit feedback on the class.

Two of McFarlane's students ponder a Flash scripting sequence displayed on the projection screen.

This term, for his Digital Letterform class, he is looking to expand the wiki's role to include group design projects and critical peer review sessions.

Do you have to be a superhero to try a new teaching tool? Skip doesn't think so. "You just have to be willing to put yourself in a position where its not about succeeding or failing, but learning—and see what happens," he says. However, he cautions that anyone testing a new technology for the classroom must initially invest extra time figuring out how best to use it, as well as working out the inevitable start-up glitches—usually with the help of technical support staff. In addition, faculty must be prepared to sell students on the idea of using the new tool and find ways to entice them to participate, at least in the beginning. Despite their familiarity with the Internet and all manner of cutting-edge technologies, not all students immediately jump at the chance to use a classroom wiki, blog, or podcast without some incentives.

Caveats aside, web-based teaching tools have the potential to add an exciting new dimension to classes and engage students in a stimulating dialog with their instructors and each other that extends beyond formal class time.

Wiki Resources

Learn More About Wikis

Entertaining web video demonstrating the evolution of a wiki by Jon Udell:
http://weblog.infoworld.com/udell/gems/umlaut.html

Play with Wikis

1. TEP trial wiki, developed by Robert Voelker-Morris and Skip McFarlane:
   http://d154-218.uoregon.edu/teptrialwiki/index.php/Main_Page
   Log in information:
   Username = workshop
   Password = 20tep06

2. TEP "Wiki Sandbox" (play area for testing the software):
   http://d154-218.uoregon.edu/teptrialwiki/index.php/Sandbox

Get Technical Help

Center for Educational Technology (CIT):
http://libweb.uoregon.edu/cet/

Some UO Wiki Pioneers

These people have direct experience using wikis and/or have a good knowledge of wiki resources:

Mark Blaine (Instructor, School of Journalism):
   mblaine@uoregon.edu

Andre Chinn (Coordinator of Instructional Technology, School of Journalism):
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Scott Huette (Adjunct Faculty, Arts Administration Program):
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Skipper McFarlane (Technical Coordinator for Distance Ed/Continuing Ed):
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Ed Parker (Web Applications Developer, School of Architecture and Allied Arts)
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Robert Voelker-Morris (IT Faculty Consultant, Academic Learning Services):
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The Al Pod from Amsterdam

'P-Daddy' Al Stavitsky takes his Journalism 201 students on an e-tour of Amsterdam's international media conference

Joyce Winslow
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When UO School of Journalism professor and associate dean Al Stavitsky decided to try podcasting his J201 class from an international media conference in Amsterdam, he thought of it as "kind of a crazy experiment." But anyone familiar with Stavitsky, the voluble, kinetic "Podfather of the School of Journalism," could have predicted its success.

Stavitsky seems born to broadcast. In fact, before coming to the University of Oregon, he spent eight years as a radio and TV journalist. As he says, "Just put a mic in front of me, give me a cue—and I *go*!"

Spurred by the explosion in the popularity of iPods, Stavitsky first integrated podcasting technology into his Mass Media and Society course in the fall of 2005. His goal in using the medium was to "add value to the class, instead of merely recording lectures."

Stavitsky encouraged student participation by keeping the podcasts short (15 minutes or less), entertaining, and useful. He often embedded enticements, such as information that was important for upcoming tests, and soon listening to the "Al Pods," as students dubbed them, became cool. Word-of-mouth and peer pressure among students did the rest. Some students really got involved, dreaming up the nicknames "P-Daddy" and "Podfather" for their mentor and creating the catchy rap theme song for his broadcasts.

But the Amsterdam project was more ambitious. For one thing, it was his first videocast, requiring some technical expertise in recording and editing. Then there was the time difference (nine hours), and the worry of uploading and transmitting extremely large files successfully from an unfamiliar location in time for his Wednesday class.

Fortunately, Stavitsky was able to enlist expert help from GTF Michael Huntsberger, who accompanied him on the trip. Huntsberger took over the chores of recording, editing, and transmitting the videocast segments, while Stavitsky

School of Journalism and Communications professor and associate dean Al Stavitsky addresses his students outside his hotel in Amsterdam.

focused on introducing his students to some of the salient differences between European and American media, interspersing tidbits of Dutch history, travelog, and interviews with conference attendees.

Back in Eugene in time for class the following Monday, Stavitsky and Huntsberger shared their post mortem of the Amsterdam videocasting experience with students. Both were impressed with how today's technology has contributed to what they call the "democratization of media": the ability for almost anyone to record and post a file on the Internet, dramatically changing the way we get—and produce—news.

Just ten years ago, putting together the Amsterdam Al Pod—which was essentially a TV broadcast—would have involved huge expense. But instead of having to employ massive cameras, sound crews, special lighting, and videotape editing facilities, the Al Pod duo were able to produce and transmit a fairly sophisticated broadcast using an inexpensive hand-held digital video camera with a microphone connection, a laptop, iMovie (included with Mac OS X), and a hotel wireless connection.

Over the past year, student reactions to the Al Pod component of Stavitsky's Mass Media and Society course have been overwhelmingly favorable. "Students *love* this class!" exclaims Huntsberger, citing a Blackboard survey in which 221 out of 240 students responded positively. All said the podcasts were valuable, and some even preferred them to textbooks.

Reactions to the Amsterdam podcasts are not yet documented, but it appears that the experiment was an unqualified success. Alina Padilla-Miller, one of the GTFs who monitored the class during the

videocast and closely observed students' reactions, thought they were thoroughly engrossed. "The first video Al Pod was new, exciting, informative and humorous," she reports. "The students were amused and surprisingly engaged. I would scan the room to see if continued interest during the twenty-minute videocast was still noticeable. I found that the majority of the class was indeed still watching with little to no side conversation. The second videocast was also exciting, informative, and humorous. The difference here was that there was a bit more information in a shorter time slot. Students were taking notes while they intently listened and watched the videocast... What this told me was that even though Professor Stavitsky was physically not in the classroom, his dynamic presence was. The videocast Al Pods had many of the same components that make Al's lectures so interesting and engaging, with the added bonus of visual surprise. However, had the students not first met Al, I don't think the

interest would have been the same. I believe that it felt more personalized coming from their own professor rather than some random guy with a microphone."

It seems safe to say the Al Pod is here to stay, evolving and adapting to technological advances. Stay tuned.

Stavitsky's students are not the only ones privileged to tune in to the Al Pod. Thanks to the work of instructional technology coordinator Andre Chinn, anyone can access the Al Pods by going to **http://jcomm.uoregon.edu/weblog/ags/** *Click the link "Al Stavitsky's Blog." To view the Amsterdam Al Pods, click on the podcast links for Al Pods 8 and 9.*

If you're interested in learning more about podcasting in education, look for Huntsberger's and Stavitsky's article, "The New Podagogy: Incorporating Podcasting in the Journalism Curriculum," in the winter 2007 issue of Journalism and Mass Communication Educator.
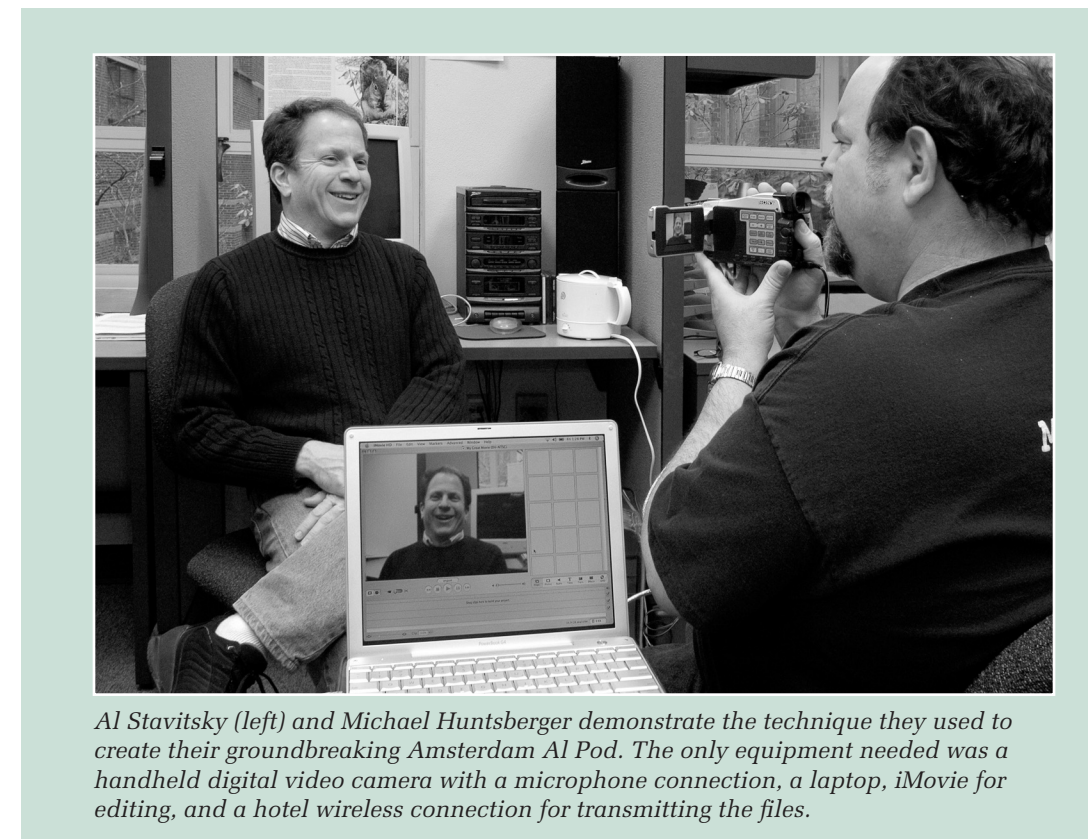
Al Stavitsky (left) and Michael Huntsberger demonstrate the technique they used to create their groundbreaking Amsterdam Al Pod. The only equipment needed was a handheld digital video camera with a microphone connection, a laptop, iMovie for editing, and a hotel wireless connection for transmitting the files.

New Podcasting Interest Group on Campus

The recently formed Podcasting Interest Group is exploring the future of podcasting at the University of Oregon, with a particular focus on understanding infrastructure needs, coordinating the wide range of departmental initiatives, and supporting podcasting course sessions.

If you're interested in podcasting at the UO, you're invited to join the new listserv for podcasting discussion, **podcasting@lists.uoregon.edu** (send email subscription requests to **majordomo@lists**). The podcasting group wiki is available at **http://libweb.uoregon.edu/tools/wikis/podcasting/**

Talented SSIL Team Delivers for Distance Ed

Cathleen Leué and her crew use creativity to solve problems for virtual classrooms

Joyce Winslow
jwins@uoregon.edu

The SSIL distance ed team gathers to discuss their next multimedia instructional project. Left to right: Zack Ham, Cathleen Leué, Garron Hale.

Ten years ago, Social Sciences Instructional Lab (SSIL) director and economics professor Cathleen Leué saw a growing need that promised to revolutionize the mission of computer labs. The demand for web-based teaching was increasing, and many students craved the flexibility of fulfilling course requirements online. In Leué's own department of economics, students often had difficulty fitting core curriculum undergraduate courses into their schedules in time for graduation—especially if they lived far from campus.

The challenge was to design courses that could be effectively taught and graded entirely online. Leué and her programming team began by helping the economics and political science departments build websites and set up and test online courses for select introductory classes. Initially, SSIL specialized in designing online testing, developing tests in either multiple choice or true-false formats. In 2002, however, a linguistics professor presented them with what Leué calls "our first really complex project," and the SSIL team had to dig a bit deeper into their bag of programming tricks. This particular project required designing an online exam that had matching component, short-answer, and fill-in-the-blank questions. "What impressed me about this project was the interaction between the programming team and the faculty member," Leué recalls. "The programming team was able to quickly envision what the faculty member wanted and delivered it in a way that was completely satisfying to her."

This linguistics project marked the beginning of an increasingly innovative and creative period for Leué and her team, which by this time included assistant director Garron Hale, who came on board in fall 2000, and a student programmer who has since graduated (beginning in 2004, distance education administrator Zack Ham has filled the student programmer position). In the past four years, they have completed a wide variety of individualized projects, including online placement tests for math and Spanish, a web-based master's level training course in geography, web resources for high school geography teachers based on the Atlas of Oregon materials, a Canadian studies website, and dynamic online graphic homework and grading models for Leué's Economics 202 course that features a toolbox of drag-and-drop shapes for drawing graphs electronically.

Increasingly, the projects reflect both the evolution of web technology and the artistic talent of Garron Hale, a graphic artist and designer who is webmaster for some twenty different websites both on and off-campus. Aside from aesthetic appeal, most strikingly demonstrated in the interactive educational CD "Colorful Lanterns at Shangyuan" (**http://ssil.uoregon.edu/lanterns/**), Hale's work makes a very practical contribution to pedagogy. Most recently, this was evidenced in the multimedia components of the distance ed economics course he designed in collaboration with instructor Leué and student programmer Ham, a project funded by UO Ed Tech fees.

Weekly homework for this course required students to draw graphs charting economic trends. Using Flash, Hale created drag-and-drop shapes that could be individually placed on a grid to produce a finished graph electronically. With Ham's collaboration, Hale's work also streamlined the grading process, because the instructor—also working online—could easily overlay students' graphs onto the master graphs, quickly revealing any errors.

Another handy feature SSIL's course sites provide for distance ed instructors is a statistics package that shows a percentage breakdown of students' answers to each question, allowing faculty to analyze student performance on midterms. The statistical data is also designed to allow diagnostics after the test is administered. "We also offer the instructor summary statistics for each test, including the average score, the minimum and maximum score, and the average, minimum, and maximum amount of time it takes a student to complete each test," Leué explains. "The instructor also has, for each student, the amount of time it took for that student to complete the exam, a time and date stamp for each test, and the name of the exam proctor."
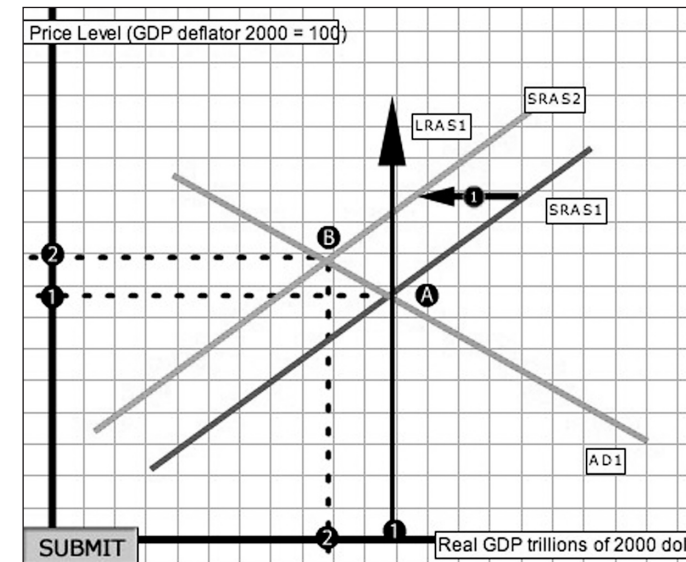
Sample graph for Economics 202. The graph is composed of drag-and-drop shapes, and it can easily be modified by selecting individual components and rearranging them as desired.

Devising a system for proctoring the online exams is another service SSIL pioneered for distance ed instructors. Exams are held in the SSIL lab on the fourth floor of McKenzie Hall, and a student proctor is always present to monitor the proceedings. Each student receives exam questions in a slightly different order, making it difficult for students to cheat by copying what they see on a neighbor's computer screen.

Other notable customized courses the SSIL team helped develop include two geography courses, Geography 607 (Preparing to Teach Advanced Placement Geography) and Geography 410 (Historic Geography of the U.S.). The 607 course, which was funded by the National Geographic Society, is taught by Susan Hardwick, who recently won highest honors from the Association of American Geographers for her work. "We worked collaboratively with Susan," Leué says. "Susan began developing a pilot last summer (2005) and then began offering the course (in the summer of 2006) to teachers across the U.S. Susan used the SSIL lab for the pilot workshop, and Garron helped develop the first website and revised it for the 2006 class. So we provided a meeting place for the summer workshop, and the web development for the site."

The other course, Geography 410, is taught by Don Holtgrieve. Working with Holtgrieve, "we designed an entirely new structure for Geography 410," Leué says. "Garron designed the look of the course website and helped plan the structure of the site. We worked with Don to create a modular structure for presenting course materials, helping him build a large gallery of maps and photos from the content Don provided. Students could upload papers, take quizzes, and engage in threaded discussions from this website."

SSIL currently serves more than 1000 distance ed students per quarter. Its reputation as a distance ed facilitator has ensured it a steady stream of requests from UO faculty. Each new project brings with it a special challenge, and the SSIL team seems energized by the variety. "The aspect of my job that I love the most is tackling new, more challenging projects and working with my team to find solutions," Leué says. "The increasing level of challenge makes the job fresh and exciting."

Some Notable SSIL Projects…

Center for Asian and Pacific Studies: http://ssil.uoregon.edu/caps/

Asian Studies at the University of Oregon: http://asianstudies.uoregon.edu/

Preparing to Teach Advanced Placement Human Geography: http://ssil.uoregon.edu/geog610/

Historical Geography of the U.S. http://ssil.uoregon.edu/geog410new/

Foundations of East Asian Civilization: http://ssil.uoregon.edu/hist190/

Colorful Lanterns at Shangyuan (interactive CD project): http://ssil.uoregon.edu/lanterns/

- see following page for a sample from the Colorful Lanterns CD

A sample section from the Colorful Lanterns at Shangyuan, *an interactive instructional CD created in collaboration with Ina Asim (UO Department of History). Aside from SSIL staff, other contributors to the project included Jeff Hsu (the scroll's owner, Taiwan), Brian Floyd (UO School of Architecture & Allied Arts), Jacob Bartruff (UO Department of Geography) Su-chen Chang and Brian Hebb (UO Department of History), Yu Müller-Chiu (Würzburg University), Erik Talbert (UO School of Journalism), Chris George (KWVA 88.1 FM, UO), Maram Epstein (UO Department of East Asian Languages & Literatures), Ellen Laing (University of Michigan), illustrator Eric Hale, and Brian Smith (UO Office of Technology Transfer). Mousing over the scroll calls up information about each detail (upper right).*

STAT CORNER

Get Acquainted with PROC GENMOD

Robin High
Statistical Programmer and Consultant
robinh@uoregon.edu

Extracting information contained in the data is one important component of a branch of statistics called "Generalized Linear Models," which includes a wide variety of statistical models. The choices are flexible enough to allow the type of data to define what particular model should be chosen for analysis (in contrast to attempting to apply one model to analyze many types of data). These range from familiar regression techniques to relatively unknown methods for categorical data expressed as counts. All of these models contain a variance/covariance matrix of the parameters, which indicates how good information (that is, the amount and quality of data) produces good estimates of the population parameters.

Many books and journal articles have been written on the broad topic encompassing the SAS procedure called GENMOD (among others). To find out more about how PROC GENMOD works and to see examples of the wide variety of models available within it, go to **http://www.uoregon.edu/~robinh/genmod_sas.html**

•edu Tech Roundup

Vickie Nelson

University of Richmond Spotlights Student Research

The University of Richmond is shining a spotlight on original student research with a web page of short video clips. Go to **http://research.richmond.edu/students/research.htm** to watch students describe projects covering a broad range of topics, including graffiti art, Caribbean literature, carbon dioxide hyper-sensitivity among smokers in withdrawal, and attraction and dating in visually impaired communities.

Take a UC Berkeley Course on Google Video

UC Berkeley has the honor of being the first university to have its own page on Google Video. Six complete courses in subjects including physics, biology, and chemistry are now available to the public at no cost, along with a selection of conferences and symposia totalling over 250 hours. Attend a video lecture at **http://video.google.com/ucberkeley.html**

University of Wisconsin Offers Podcasting Plus Awards

The University Wisconsin at Madison has begun offering $800 Podcasting Plus awards to its instructors as an incentive to enhance their classes with video, graphics, and audio during the spring and summer of 2007. The grants are part of the Engage Program and come with as many as 12 hours of help. See **http://engage.doit.wisc.edu/workWithUs/adaptation.html** for more information.

Arizona State Launches Entertainment and Technology Program

Needed: Skilled techies with knowledge of entertainment industry. To help meet this need, Arizona State University has designed a new course called Entertainment and Technology, with input from a board of entertainment professionals. The new course is part of a cross-disciplinary program called EnterTech, which prepares students for work in the entertainment industry and can lead to an undergraduate certificate and eventually to a master's degree. Check out the new program at **http://www.asu.edu/clas/fms/EnterTechEntertainmentandTechnology.htm**

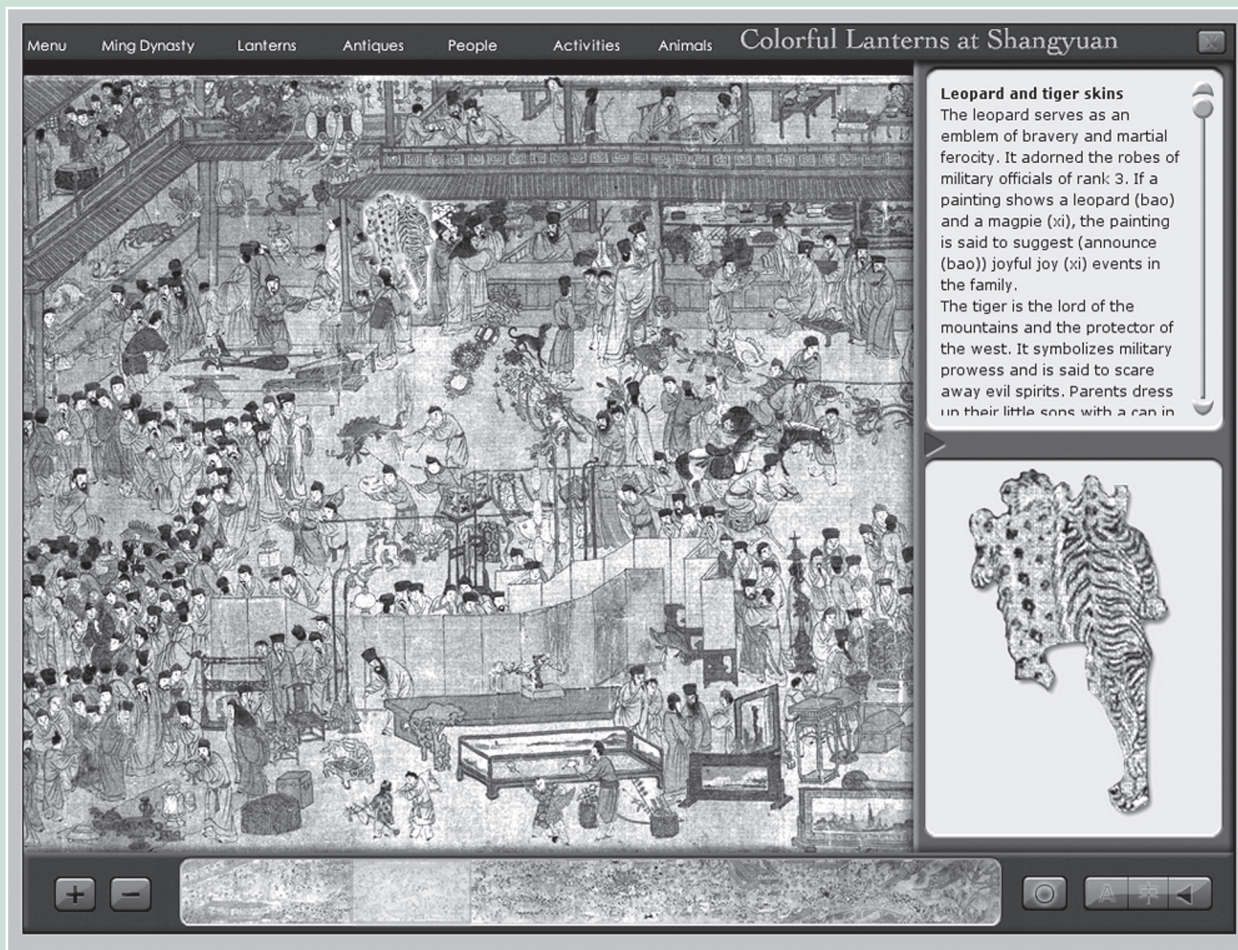## University of Georgia Initiates Global Text Project

The University of Georgia Terry College of Business is heading up the Global Text Project, which aims to produce 1000 online textbooks especially for use in developing countries. Covering topics typically studied by undergraduates during their first two years of college, the online texts are the brainchild of UGA's Rick Watson. When Watson couldn't find a suitable textbook on XML, he asked his class to write one using a type of wiki software. Watson told a friend at Denver University how each class that used the text improved it, and the Global Text program was born. Read more at **http://www.uga.edu/news/artman/publish/060901_GlobalTextProject.shtml**

Catch Up with EDUCAUSE

If you're feeling the need to catch up on some of ways other educators are making use of their students' passion for technologies and social applications such as instant messaging and video blogging, check out the EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative's (ELI's) "7 Things You Should Know About..." series. In short, clearly written reports, ELI gives the basics of each technology and tells you how educators are using it in their classrooms. You'll find the brief reports in PDFs at **http://www.educause.edu/content.asp?page_id=7495&bhcp=1**

Stanford's On-Call Student Consultants Save the Day

It's 2 a.m. and you're in your dorm putting the finishing touches on your big video-editing project due in just hours. Suddenly, your computer freezes. Now it's panic time—unless your dorm happens to be on a campus such as Stanford, where the university has hired technically savvy student consultants to live in the dorm and respond to computer crises night and day. Trained in psychology and technology, the on-call student consultants work for about the cost of their dorm—and the occasional batch of brownies. Read more at **http://www.siliconvalley.com/mld/siliconvalley/15770612.htm**

Information Services Guide

UO Website
http://www.uoregon.edu/

IT Website
http://it.uoregon.edu/

Campus Modem Number
225-2200

Microcomputer Services
(151 McKenzie Hall)
http://micro.uoregon.edu/
346-4412
microhelp@lists.uoregon.edu

- microcomputer technical support
- help with computing accounts, passwords
- help with damaged disks, files
- system software help
- Internet connections, file transfers
- public domain software, virus protection
- software repair

McKenzie Annex (IT Help, E-Shop)

Computing Center Bldg.
(Administrative Services)

Lillis Business Complex

UO Bookstore

Kincaid Street

13th Avenue

EMU
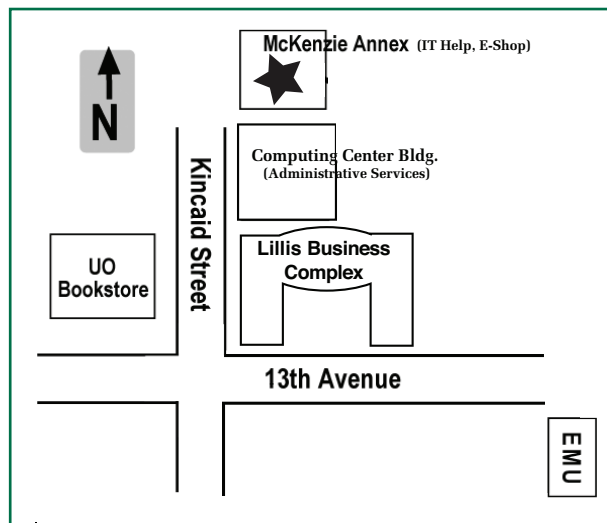
McKenzie Building Hours

Mon - Thu	7:30 A.M. - 11:30 P.M.
Friday	7:30 A.M. - 7:30 P.M.
Saturday	9 A.M. - 9:30 P.M.
Sunday	9 A.M. - 9:30 P.M.

Computing Center Building Hours

Mon - Fri	7:30 A.M. - 5:00 P.M.

Note: These are *building* access hours; hours for individual facilities may vary.

Electronics Shop
 (151 McKenzie Hall)
http://cc.uoregon.edu/e_shop.html
346-3548
hardwarehelp@uoregon.edu
Computer hardware repair, upgrades

Network Services
http://ns.uoregon.edu/
346-4395
nethelp@ns.uoregon.edu
Central data communication and network services

Telecommunications Services
http://telcom.uoregon.edu/
346-3198
Local and long distance phone service for UO campus

Administrative Services
http://ccadmin.uoregon.edu/
346-1725
Programming support for campus administrative computing

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