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'Science' Showcases Research on Forgetting



Michael Anderson

By Pauline Austin

Researchers at the University of Oregon and Stanford University have located a mechanism in the human brain that blocks unwanted memories. This is the first time that anyone has shown a neurobiological basis for memory repression.

The findings, by lead researcher Michael Anderson, Psychology associate professor, and his Stanford colleague,

psychologist John D.E. Gabrieli, were published Jan. 9 in *Science*. Print and broadcast news media across the United States and around the world--from the New York Times, the San Francisco Chronicle, Newsweek, NPR and CNN to the Sydney Morning Herald and the BBC--carried stories of the groundbreaking study.

The research provides compelling evidence that Freud was on to something 100 years ago when he proposed the existence of a voluntary repression mechanism that pushes unwanted memories out of consciousness. Since then the idea of memory repression has been a vague and highly controversial idea, in part because it has been difficult to imagine how such a process could occur in the brain. Yet, the process may be more commonly applied than was

'Bicycle Woman' Talks Local Politics, Advocates Bikes



Photograph by Amber Thomas, Media Relations editorial assistant.

By Danielle Gillespie

Jean Murphy thinks the world would be a better place if everyone rode bikes, and she created her cartoon strip alter ego, "Bicycle Woman," to advocate that people do just that.

"Bicycle Woman" was a superhero of the 1990s with a pet gecko, a Starbucks espresso bra that she used as a weapon, spraying hot jets of steam into villains' eyes, and a bicycle helmet for her safety. "Bicycle Woman" always saved the day with

her cunning and witty comments about local politics.

Murphy, a UO Libraries copy cataloger, brought the cartoon character to life in a strip she drew from 1995 to 2000 for "The Other Paper," a free local progressive political newspaper that stopped printing about two years ago.

"It was fun, and I got to address local political issues, sometimes rather heavy handedly, but I also got to advocate for people riding bikes," says Murphy.

In fact, Murphy rides her bike nearly everywhere and has

previously thought.

"Often in life we encounter reminders of things we'd rather not think about," Anderson explains. "We have all had that experience at some point--the experience of seeing something that reminds us of an unwanted memory, leading us to wince briefly--but just as quickly to put the recollection out of mind. How do human beings do this?"

Anderson says that this process isn't restricted to traumatic experiences, but is applied widely, whenever we are distracted by memories, pleasant or unpleasant.

"This active forgetting process is a basic mechanism we use to exclude any kind of distracting memory so we can concentrate on our tasks at hand."

To mimic the brain's process in the lab, Anderson and Gabrieli tested subjects using a procedure Anderson devised. Subjects first learned pairs of words such as ordeal-roach, steam-train and jaw-gum. Then they were given the first member of each word pair and asked either to think of the second word, or to suppress awareness of the second word.

Subjects performed this task while being scanned in a functional magnetic resonance imaging (fMRI) machine that produces images of brain tissue and function. From these images, researchers can determine which parts of the brain are in use for different tasks.

After this phase was completed, Anderson tested the students' memory for all of the word pairs and confirmed that suppressing awareness of unwanted memories resulted in memory inhibition, replicating a finding he reported earlier in the journal *Nature*.

The fMRI images of the subjects' brain activity during this procedure yielded astonishing results. This study revealed for the first time strong neurobiological evidence for a novel idea about how memory repression occurs that is quite straightforward: unwanted memories can be suppressed with brain areas similar to that used when we try to stop overt physical actions.

Put simply, the brain systems that permit one to stop an arm motion midstream can be recruited to inhibit or stop an unwanted memory retrieval. Instead of inhibiting activity in brain regions having to do with physical action, however, these control processes reduce brain activation in the hippocampus, a structure known to be involved in conscious memories of the past. Crucially, this reduction in hippocampal activity led the subjects to forget the rejected experiences.

Anderson relates the ability to control memory to the ability to control our physical actions, like the time he knocked a plant off his windowsill at home.

commuted to work ever since she and her husband moved to Eugene in 1969. She says she enjoys riding her bike because it's pleasurable, good for the environment and great exercise. Because of her love for riding, Murphy decided to model the character "Bicycle Woman" after herself, but she gave her some superior qualities.

"'Bicycle Woman' is really a computer-oriented person and I am not," Murphy says. "I wanted to make her hipper and younger than I am. Why have a superhero who falls off her bike and can't get her computer to work?"

Murphy first became interested in drawing comics in the late 1970s, after she read Raymond Briggs' "Father Christmas." Murphy checked out the book at the library for her children, whom she says loved it, but not as much as she did. After reading it, Murphy decided it would be fun to make cartoon books using a style similar to the one used by Briggs.

Shortly afterwards, Murphy did her first three comic books for family and friends called "Harriet the Housewife." Harriet lived with her husband, George, and their two children in Eugene. The comics illustrated their daily lives and the characters resembled Murphy's own family.

"I found I like to draw and write little stories," Murphy says. "It's low key and people don't take it too seriously."

After creating comic books only for family and friends, Murphy never intended for her creation of "Bicycle Woman" to become such a hit publicly.

The first cartoon strip Murphy drew for "The Other Paper" was intended to be the only one. She drew a political cartoon featuring "Bicycle Woman" which discussed the threatened 1995 Service Employees International Union (SEIU) 503 strike, but the editors liked the comic so much, they asked her to do it monthly.

Murphy says she will probably do more comic strips in the future, but doubts she will continue doing "Bicycle Woman."

"I love 'Bicycle Woman,' but she's on a trip around the world on her bike," she says, laughing.

For anyone interested in viewing Murphy's comics "Bicycle Woman," they are now archived at the UO Knight Library in the Oregon Collection.

"My hope is that someday, 30 years from now, a student will be doing a project about local politics in the 1990s and will use some of my comic strips as illustrations for their project," Murphy says.

Danielle Gillespie, who graduated at the end of fall term, is a former student reporter for Inside Oregon.

"As I saw the plant falling off the sill out of the corner of my eye, I reflexively went to catch it. At the very last second, I stopped myself, midstream when I realized that the plant was a cactus."

Anderson's research indicates that stopping unwanted memory retrievals build on the same brain mechanisms that help us to achieve this control over our overt behavior, providing a very concrete mechanism that may demystify how repression occurs. Intriguingly, Anderson and Gabrieli could predict how much forgetting people in their experiment would experience, simply by examining how active their prefrontal cortex was when attempting to suppress memories.

Anderson and Gabrieli's clear, straightforward neurobiological model for exploring motivated forgetting in the laboratory is a landmark achievement. Until now the idea that unwanted memories can be repressed has been a controversial issue among psychologists.

The UO researcher and his associates have provided a way to scientifically investigate and map the cognitive and brain process in the laboratory. Among the immediate benefits may be the ability to better understand the cognitive and neural mechanisms by which people deal with the memory aftereffects of a traumatic experience, and the breakdown of these mechanisms in post-traumatic stress disorder.

Anderson emphasizes, however, that future research is needed to examine the role of these mechanisms in suppressing emotional experiences, as the current study focused on the suppression of relatively neutral events. Nevertheless, they also provide a well-grounded hypothesis for how some people may come to forget unwanted memories of unpleasant life experiences.

"To me what's most important is achieving a better understanding of how we learn to adapt mental function in response to traumatic life experience," Anderson explains. "Survivors of natural disasters, crime, acts of terror such as 9/11, the loss of someone close all undergo a process that may continue for a very long time--a process of learning to adjust both physically and mentally to those events. Now we have a specific neurobiological model of the mechanisms by which people normally adapt how their memories respond to the environment. My goal is to expand on this model so we can better understand these important experiences."

For more information, visit Anderson's web page, <darkwing.uoregon.edu/~blevy/lab/homepage.htm> or check out Gabrieli's web site, <gablab.Stanford.edu/>.

Pauline Austin is UO Media Relations director.

Experts to Forecast Economic

Our People

IN THE SPOTLIGHT

Cheryl Buhl, Oregon Career Information System director, received the 2003 Distinguished Service Award from the Association of Computer-based Systems for Career Information (ACSCI) during the national professional association's Dec. 9 annual meeting. The award recognizes professional excellence, long-standing contributions to the field of career information, service to the ACSCI and innovations that advance career information delivery. Buhl has directed the Oregon CIS for 20 of the 33 years since it was established as an interagency consortium charged with developing and delivering high-quality occupational and educational information to Oregonians.

Judith Baskin, Knight Professor of Humanities and director of the Harold Schnitzer Family Program in Judaic Studies, has been elected for a three-year term as president of the Association for Jewish Studies, the 1,500-member learned society that promotes and supports academic Jewish studies. She is the third woman to head the organization and only the second president from an institution outside the Northeastern states.

ON THE MOVE

Two faculty members have been tapped to serve part-time in Academic Affairs as vice provosts. **Terri Warpinski**, Art, assumed her responsibilities for academic programs and curricular and instructional areas at 0.20 FTE during Fall Term, is working at 0.30 FTE this winter and will move to 0.40 FTE in the spring. Associate dean of Architecture and Allied Arts for the past six years, she will begin spending two-thirds of her time as vice provost on July 1. **Russ Tomlin**, Linguistics, will participate in several academic affairs projects during the 2003-04 academic year before assuming his 0.67 FTE appointment July 1. Previously associate dean of humanities in Arts and Sciences, he will focus on faculty development, promotion/tenure and other personnel matters as vice provost.

IN PRINT/ON DISPLAY

Richard Bear, UO Libraries, has published Sir Philip Sidney's *The Countesse of Pembroke's Arcadia* (1590) at Renaissance Editions, <darkwing.uoregon.edu/~rbear/>.

Announcements and Briefs...

Banner Mentor Group Begins Jan. 28

A noontime mentor group for Banner users of all skill and experience levels will get underway Wednesday, Jan. 28, in Room 302 of the UO Training Center, 720 E. 13th Ave. (next to Dairy Queen).

Future

By Kathy Madison

Two University of Oregon researchers will be among industry and economic experts who will discuss what lies ahead for Lane County and Oregon at Economic Forum 2004.

The event, set from 2-4 p.m. on Wednesday, Jan. 21, at the Eugene Hilton, 66 E. 6th Ave., is co-produced by the Eugene Area Chamber of Commerce and The Register-Guard, in cooperation with University of Oregon.

Bill MacKenzie, Intel communications manager, will present a keynote address on "High Tech--High Expectations: Will They Power Oregon's Economic Recovery?" A panel of experts, including Richard Linton, UO vice president for research and dean of the Graduate School, will discuss the economic future of the higher education, real estate, health care, utilities and tourism industrial sectors.

As part of the event, five area economists will project the 2004 economy of Lane County and Oregon. They will include Ed Whitelaw, a UO economics professor and consultant; Tom Potiowsky, state economist; John Mitchell, regional economist for US Bank; Brian Rooney, Oregon Employment Department economist for Lane County; and Bill Conerly, economist and financial consultant.

In addition to Linton, industry panel members are John Brown of Duncan and Brown Real Estate Analysis, Inc.; Kenneth Provencher of PacificSource Health Plans; Randy Berggren of Eugene Water and Electric Board; and Kari Westlund of the Convention and Visitors Association of Lane County.

Economic Forum 2004 is sponsored by NW Natural, KVAL-TV and the Eugene Hilton and Conference Center.

Cost of the event ranges from \$28 to \$42, depending on Chamber membership and date of registration. For more information, go to <www.eugenechamber.com> or call 484-1314.

Kathy Madison is a UO communications officer.

Campus Cooperation Helps Keep UO Open

By Kaya Hardin

Set from noon to 1 p.m. on the second and fourth Wednesdays each month through June, the group is one of many similar groups organized by the Classified Staff Training and Development Advisory Committee (CSTDAC). Meant to be a self-help drop-in session, it will encompass all aspects of the Banner Financial Information System (FIS).

Bruce Abrahamson, Business Affairs accountant who teaches five different courses about Banner FIS and uses Banner in his other work, will facilitate the group.

"We will explore any area of Banner that people are having trouble with or have the need for a quick review," he says. "We'll welcome any helpful hints that people want to share. If I don't know the answer to someone's question, and nobody else attending the group that day does either, then I'll make sure that I find the answer and get it to those who raised the question."

For information and to sign up for the Banner Mentor Group, contact Abrahamson, 6-3032, <babraham@uoregon.edu>.

For a description of all the mentor groups, visit the CSTDAC Connections web page, <www.uoregon.edu/~cstdac/mentoring/connect.html>.

'UO Today' Includes Interviews of Writers, Living Historian

For an inside look at the scholarly and creative activities of University of Oregon faculty members and visitors, watch "UO Today," a production of the Oregon Humanities Center. Center Director Steve Shankman, English, interviews faculty, staff and visiting lecturers about their research and professional interests for the 30-minute show.

In the Eugene-Springfield area, "UO Today" airs on cable channels 12/23 at 8 p.m. Wednesdays. It also is broadcast four times each week on cable channels 22/29--at 6:30 p.m. on Mondays and Tuesdays and at 8:30 p.m. on Thursdays and Fridays.

For air times and channels outside Eugene, check online listings at <darkwing.uoregon.edu/~humanctr/uotoday/channels.html> or call 6-3934.

The next six weeks of programming includes the following:

Airing the Week of:	Guests and Area of Focus:
Jan. 12	Carol Ann Bassett , Journalism and Communication; Ted Toadvine , Environmental Studies and Philosophy
Jan. 19	Scott Pratt , Philosophy
Jan. 26	Giuseppe Mazzotta , Medieval scholar from Yale University where he is Sterling Professor Italian

By the time the rest of us made it to campus--by walking, driving, riding a bus or other means--and were gingerly navigating to our warm classrooms and offices, Facilities Services employees already had been braving 18-degree temperatures and falling ice to help keep the university's doors open and campus walkways traversable during last week's cold weather.

In a collective effort, grounds crews have been working outside--some nearly nonstop throughout their work shifts--since New Year's morning. Some arrived on campus as early as 4 a.m. each day to make sure that the campus was running and functional in the aftermath of the Willamette Valley's first significant snowstorm since 1996.

"What has been wonderful is the cooperation and team work shown by all of the maintenance crews that allowed us to respond to emergency situations," says Greta Pressman, Facilities Services campus relations manager. "Their hard work and hang-in-there attitude have been awesome. Spending 8 to 10 hours in below-freezing temperatures is very hard work!"

Jim Fleck's recycling crew, Brian Kimball's moving crew, Tim King's exterior maintenance team and Roger Kerrigan's grounds crew worked together to keep the campus running. They collected refuse and recycling materials, plowed the streets and sanded sidewalks, shoveled snow, kept the roofs clear, trimmed branches and cut up fallen trees, and did whatever else was necessary to keep the campus safe for returning faculty, staff and students.

"I'm pretty proud of our crews," says King. "They did a good job and anytime we had a problem that one of us couldn't get to right away, there were others standing by to take over."

A significant number of custodians were unable to travel to campus for their nighttime shifts, according to Pressman.

"We thank you for your understanding and ask for your patience over the next few days as we catch up with the work load," she says. "In the meantime, if restrooms need to be restocked, you or your building manager can contact the Customer Service Center at 6-2319 between 7:30 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. weekdays"

The recent bad weather put campus recycling services and pick-ups behind schedule, too.

"We were able to send out very few crews," says Fleck, noting that those few that did go out have necessarily been devoted to the most critical areas of campus--mostly the residential areas. "Once the weather began to improve, we were out in force starting with those buildings we knew were most in need of services."

Even though the nasty weather slowed the recycling crews' work, Karyn Kaplan, Recycling Program manager, lauds UO employees' patience and initiative in taking care of their own departments.

Feb. 2	Richard Falk , Morse Distinguished Speaker
Feb. 9	Katy Lederer , guest author, Creative Writing
	Deborah Green , Judaic Studies
Feb. 16	Daniel Slosberg , fiddler, living historian and Clark Lecturer

This week at the University of Oregon...

Highlights of the many public events and activities on campus are:

- Kathy Cashman, Geological Sciences, delivers her 2003-2004 **College of Arts and Sciences Distinguished Professorship Lecture**, "Some Like It Hot: Chasing Lava in Hawai'i," at 4 p.m. on Wednesday, **Jan. 14**, in the Gerlinger Alumni Lounge. One of the world's leading volcanologists, Cashman will discuss her 10 years' experience with Hawai'iian volcanoes, focusing primarily on Kilauea's ongoing eruption since 1983 but also offering perspectives provided by other historic eruptions in Hawai'i as well as similar eruptions of Mt. Etna in Italy. For information, call 6-3950. A reception follows the talk.
- Melissa Fay Greene, an award-winning journalist and author, delivers the annual **Johnston Lecture**, "A Writer Bearing Witness: AIDS Orphans in Africa," at 4 p.m. Thursday, **Jan. 15**, in the Knight Library Browsing Room. A writer for *The New Yorker*, *Life*, *The New York Times* and *The Washington Post*, Greene has written three books, including *Last Man Out: The Story of the Springhill Mine Disaster* and *Praying for Sheetrock*, named one of the top 100 works of journalism of the 20th century. For information, visit jcomm.uoregon.edu/ or call 6-3819. In addition to delivering this lecture, she will spend three days on campus leading a writing workshop for the school's literary nonfiction graduate program.
- Neil Smith, geographer, anthropologist and holder of the 2004 Wayne Morse Chair of Law and Politics, delivers a **Morse Chair Lecture** on "Lost Geographies and Failed Globalizations: From Versailles to Iraq" at 7:30 p.m. on Thursday, **Jan. 15**, at the Eugene Conference Center, Two Eugene Centre. Smith is a Distinguished Professor of Anthropology and Geography at the City University of New York Graduate Center as well as the author of many books and articles. He says Americans have a responsibility to challenge the new and dangerous American imperialism of the early 21st century. For information, go to www.morsechair.uoregon.edu or call 6-3700. Besides his lecture, Smith is teaching a geography course and leading a roundtable for activists on Jan. 22. His lecture is part of a two-year Morse Center series on "The Changing Geopolitical Order."
- Acclaimed jazz violinist Diane Monroe joins the award-winning Oregon Jazz Ensemble for a **Guest Artist Recital** during her weeklong residency as Robert M.

"If you find that your building or office is badly in need of a recycling service, don't hesitate to call me at 6-0961," Kaplan says.

Adds Fleck, "We ask for your patience and understanding, but we'll do all we can to get you taken care of as soon as it is safe and practicable."

Kaya Hardin is a student reporter for Inside Oregon.

Neutral Observer Recruitment Continues

Annie Bentz is looking for 9-10 faculty, staff and students to volunteer their time as neutral observers, one of the free services provided by Conflict Resolution Services (CRS) that allow individuals and groups of faculty, staff and students to work through conflict in a well-informed, safe and creative environment.

"The Neutral Observer Program provides trained observers at demonstrations, protests and other events that take place on campus," explains the CRS director. "The presence of trained observers allows for the availability of unbiased witnesses should there be any form of escalation."

Observers remain uninvolved with incidents, but observe and note significant activity of all parties. Other campuses report a "calming effect" resulting from the presence of neutral observers.

Other CRS services include mediation, group facilitation and individual coaching as well as workshops on conflict resolution and communication.

For more information about the Neutral Observer Program and an application, contact Bentz, 6-0617, or send e-mail to <annhb@uoregon.edu>.

Project Saferide Evolves, Gets New Name

By Kaya Hardin

Two of the three shuttle services that serve students as well as faculty and staff at the University of Oregon have merged to form one all-inclusive program that operates under the new moniker, the Assault Prevention Shuttle (APS).

Trotter Visiting Professor at the School of Music. Her performance will be at 8 p.m. on Friday, **Jan. 16**, in Beall Concert Hall. Currently a faculty member at Temple University and Swarthmore College, Monroe is a violinist whose versatility and expressive artistry range from classical repertoire to traditional jazz and her own original music. For ticket prices and other information, visit <music.uoregon.edu> or call 6-5678.

- Monday, **Jan. 19**, is **MARTIN LUTHER KING JR. HOLIDAY**. No classes meet and most offices are closed on this holiday for UO classified employees represented by SEIU 503/OPEU, officers of administration and faculty. Employees represented by GCIU should check their collective bargaining agreement for holiday provisions. For information, browse <hr.uoregon.edu/policy/> or call 6-3159.

For more about University events, visit the [Calendar of Events](#).

Project Saferide, a sexual assault prevention shuttle service set up by ASUO in 1985-86 exclusively for UO women, has merged with Night Ride, a shuttle that provided a free service to individuals who would otherwise walk alone at night and risk assault. The third campus shuttle service, the Designated Driver Shuttle, is a free shuttle service offered by ASUO to UO students who are too intoxicated to drive.

The merger, which took effect this fall, came about after the federal Office of Civil Rights found Project Saferide to be non-compliant with Title IX of the Civil Rights Act. Title IX prohibits the exclusion of anyone, on the basis of sex, from participation in any educational programs or activities receiving federal financial assistance.

"There weren't really any other options than to merge," says Sarah Wells, Project Saferide co-director. "Saferide would have been shut down otherwise, and Night Ride would have stayed a small organization."

APS, the newly merged shuttle, offers its services to both men and women from the UO student body as well as to faculty and staff of both genders. The service is funded by incidental fees and is free to those affiliated with the University of Oregon.

Serving both men and women concerns some female Saferide users, but APS staff have instituted several measures that they believe will help to address that issue for women riders.

"With APS, we realize that we have to be very careful about who we let in our vans, so we have started doing criminal background checks on all volunteers and staff members as well as increased driver training," Wells says. "We encourage women to let us know what makes them feel safe and what we can do to make them feel safer."

Wells admits that it was disappointing to be forced into the merger.

"However, I feel that expanding our services to accommodate other at-risk populations on campus can create a stronger community concerned with assault prevention," she says.

For information, send e-mail to Wells at <swells@gladstone>. To make an APS reservation, call 346-RIDE (6-7433).

Kaya Hardin is a student reporter for Inside Oregon.

Each issue of Inside Oregon is archived on the web at <http://comm.uoregon.edu/inside/archive.php> . If this issue displays improperly, please go there for the correct version.

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Dates of upcoming issues, with copy and calendar deadlines, are posted at [IO Deadlines](#).

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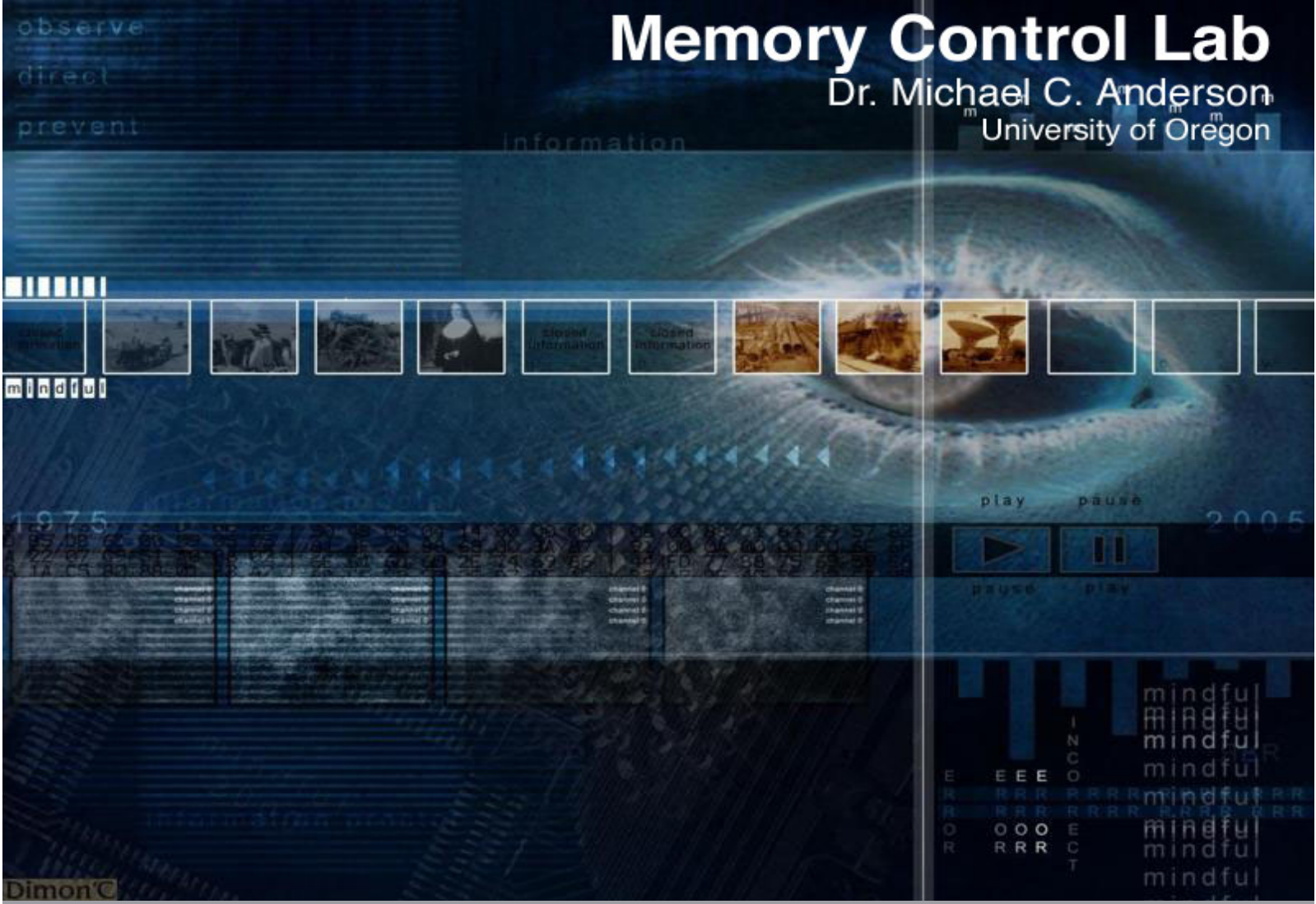
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The University of Oregon is an equal-opportunity, affirmative-action institution committed to cultural diversity and compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act.

Memory Control Lab

Dr. Michael C. Anderson
University of Oregon



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