

Information Technology in the News

campus infrastructure

GOOGLE PARTNERS WITH LIBRARIES TO DIGITIZE CONTENT

■ Google has announced agreements with major libraries to digitize books in their collections and make them available online. Google is funding the project, which is said to have strong support from founders Larry Page and Sergey Brin, who said that such dissemination of information has always been one of their goals. Under the arrangements, Google reportedly will scan all of the eight million books at Stanford University's library and all of the University of Michigan's seven million texts. For the others involved in the project—Harvard University, Oxford University, and the New York Public Library—only portions of the collections will be scanned. For books whose copyright remains in effect, Google will scan the entire text, but only selected portions will be available online. Books whose copyright has run out will be available in their entirety. The announcement follows similar programs from the Library of Congress and Amazon.com to digitize content of books. (*New York Times*, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/14/technology/14cnd-goog.html>> [registration required])

WELSH UNIVERSITY ANNOUNCES SUPERCOMPUTER PLANS

■ The Welsh Assembly Government announced plans to build one of the world's fastest supercomputers at Swansea University. The tennis-court-sized machine will be developed with funding from the government and with support from IBM. The supercomputer, to be built at Swansea's new clinical college, will be used for biology research, including studies of disease prevention. The project is part of technology efforts by the government of Wales to strengthen the country's economy by

USF TAKES HALF-STEP TOWARD VOIP

In upgrading its aging phone system, the University of San Francisco (USF) has opted for a system that offers traditional telephony technology as well as Voice-over Internet Protocol (VoIP) service. The decision allows the university to provide traditional phone service in a predictable manner, moving to VoIP only as administrators are comfortable with the technology. Tracy Schroeder, CIO at USF, said that although her staff was excited about the possibility of moving to an entirely VoIP system, the more cautious approach has given them time to perform due diligence and business analysis, thereby avoiding the risk of "a failed VoIP implementation." Schroeder said the university will benefit from having a much more reliable, modern system with needed redundancy. Initially, two new buildings on campus will feature VoIP phone service. In the future, however, as university officials gain confidence in the system, USF can migrate to a converged data and voice system "in areas where it makes sense and when it feels that the technology is fully mature," according to Schroeder. "We want to be at the middle of the pack," Schroeder said, "with mature, widely deployed technologies." (*Computerworld*, <<http://www.computerworld.com.au/index.php/id;1122505324;fp;16;fpid;0>>)

HIGH-DEFINITION RADIO AT MICHIGAN STATE

The campus radio station at Michigan State University now broadcasts digital, high-definition signals, making it one of the first university stations to use the emerging technology. Currently there are about 200 primarily commercial stations around the United States broadcasting high-definition signals, which are much clearer than analog signals. High-definition receivers are finding their way into homes and cars, and major broadcasting companies are reportedly considering upgrading another 1,500 stations to use digital transmitters. Digital transmissions also add a data component that can include information such as song title or cover art from a song's album. Gary A. Reid, general manager of Michigan State's station, said he looks forward to experimenting with the data signal to learn what uses might be appropriate or valuable to the community, such as campus news, sports scores, or weather. Michigan State bought the digital transmitter when its analog transmitter was failing, and Reid said the digital transmitter, which cost \$90,000, cost only about \$20,000 more than a comparable analog unit. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <<http://chronicle.com/prm/weekly/v51/i15/15a03102.htm>> [subscription required])

2010. Another initiative aims to make broadband access available throughout Wales. Organizers hope the project will lead to the creation of spin-off companies, attracting even more jobs to the area. (*BBC*, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/uk_news/wales/4150285.stm>)

MIT UNVEILS REVAMPED TECHNOLOGY REVIEW

■ The Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT) is revamping its publication *Technology Review*, according to Jason Pontin, its new editor, to reflect more accurately the current landscape of

tech watch

technology. Gone are what Pontin, the former editor of *Red Herring*, refers to as “gee-whiz” coverage of technology. “We want,” he said, “to levelly and intelligently analyze today’s and tomorrow’s technology.” *Technology Review*, which was introduced in 1899, has followed technology developments through the 20th century and remained viable while other publications, such as *Red Herring* and *The Industry Standard* ceased publication. Under Pontin, *Technology Review* will expand from ten issues a year to twelve and will broaden the scope of its coverage, including reviews of scientific articles and innovations. MIT continues to subsidize the magazine, and the changes to *Technology Review* are intended to increase readership and advertising revenue. According to R. Bruce Journey, the chief executive of Technology Review Inc., the MIT-owned nonprofit company that publishes the magazine, the organization is working to reach the breakeven point. (*New York Times*, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/13/business/media/13mit.html>> [registration required])

COLLEGES EXPAND RECRUITING TECHNOLOGY

■ As the effectiveness of e-mail as an admissions tool declines, colleges and universities are beginning to explore alternative recruitment Internet strategies. At the top of the list for many institutions are streaming videos of campus, either on the school’s Web page or in the form of video magazines, or Vmags. Saint Mary’s College in Notre Dame began testing a Vmag two years ago, sending it to students who had been accepted but had not yet decided to enroll. Saint Mary’s Vmag includes four videos, each between one and two minutes, showing various activities on campus. Users who have downloaded the Vmag are prompted when new versions are avail-

able. Many believe video is able to persuade in ways that fixed images are not. Westminster College in Salt Lake City has added 136 video clips to its Web site in an effort to appeal to prospective students. Joel Bauman, vice president for enrollment at Westminster, said the videos are fairly inexpensive to produce. Karen Giannino, senior associate dean of admission at Colgate University in Hamilton, N.Y., said the videos added to her institution’s Web site help “tell our story in a compelling way” and “differentiate Colgate” from similar schools. (*New York Times*, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/12/30/technology/circuits/30coll.html>> [subscription required])

MAKING EVERY WORD A LINK

■ A researcher at University College London wants to change the basic functioning of the Web, allowing readers of Web pages to change those pages—similar to wikis—and making every word a “hyperword.” The Liquid Information project is the brainchild of Frode Hegland, who is collaborating with Doug Engelbart, inventor of the computer mouse. Hegland’s vision of the Web is one in which consumers of content can also be producers of content. Users would be able to make connections, add links, and change the way information is presented. On an example page, Hegland has modified a CNN Web page such that users can hover over any word to display a menu of choices, including getting a definition of the word, performing a Google search for the word, and highlighting instances of the word in various colors. Hegland said that we need to replace the current Web, which consists of “handmade, one-way links” with what he calls “deep legibility” so that users can “make connections, explicit or otherwise.” Hegland conceded that a Web like the one he envisions



IT DOLLARS

CU RECEIVES GRANT TO SUPPORT WOMEN IN IT

The National Science Foundation (NSF) has awarded a four-year, \$3.25 million grant to the University of Colorado Boulder (CU-Boulder) to support the development of a National Center for Women and Information Technology. The grant represents the largest workforce grant ever awarded by the NSF’s Computer and Information Science and Engineering directorate. Current data indicate that women represent just one-quarter of IT professionals and that the number of women pursuing IT degrees continues to decline. The goal of the new center, according to CU-Boulder Chancellor Richard Byyny, is “to achieve workforce parity within 20 years, by making a concerted national effort that connects primary and higher education with careers in the IT industry and academia.” The center will be located primarily at CU-Boulder’s new Alliance for Technology, Learning, and Society (ATLAS) building and will work to bring together universities, industry, government, and non-profit organizations. (*Colorado Daily*, <<http://www.coloradodaily.com/articles/2004/10/18/news/news03.txt>>)

would require smart users. But, he added, “people are pretty smart. The days of baby steps when everything is shown to users are over.” (*Wired News*, <<http://www.wired.com/news/culture/0,1284,66382,00.html>>)

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