# tech watch

## Information Technology in the News

### GOOGLE LAUNCHES SERVICE FOR ACADEMICS

■ Google launched a service directed at academics and scientists looking for scholarly material. Google Scholar is the product of cooperation between Google and a number of academic publishers including the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers and the Online Computer Library Center. The service provides access to peer-reviewed papers, books, and technical reports, as well as information about locating scholarly work that is available at libraries but not online. Google's Anurag Acharya, who directed development of the new service, noted that the company benefited from and grew out of an academic environment and said that Google Scholar "is one of the ways we can give back to the community." Acharya said the service would give universal access to academic and scientific literature from around the world. Initially the service will not include text advertisements with search results, though company officials said such ads will likely be added later. (*New York Times*, <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/18/technology/18google.html>)

### NONPROFIT ORGANIZATION TO COLLECT, DISTRIBUTE ONLINE COURSES

■ The Monterey Institute for Technology and Education, a nonprofit organization based in California, will use a $1.5 million grant from the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation to build a collection of online course content called the National Repository of Online Courses. Developing content for online courses can be an expensive undertaking, and some institutions are making their online course materials available for others to use. The Monterey Institute will work to collect such materials, modifying them where necessary and making them avail-

## netnews

### UNC TO PILOT MULTICAMPUS P2P SYSTEM

Higher education officials in North Carolina are beginning a pilot of a multicampus peer-to-peer system for music, movies, and academic file sharing. The system will initially cover four institutions: North Carolina A&T State, Western Carolina, University of North Carolina–Wilmington, and the North Carolina School of the Arts. The University of North Carolina–Chapel Hill and North Carolina State University will be added this spring. If the program goes well, all sixteen of the system's campuses could be included. Providing content for the program are iTunes, Ruckus, Cdigix, and Rhapsody; an unnamed music label is providing funding for the pilot. During the pilot, access to content will be provided free, and each institution will be able to select from among the four content providers based on input from students. Although a number of other colleges and universities have instituted campus-wide services for free delivery of online entertainment, the UNC program is the first to be offered across a system of campuses. (*USA Today*, <http://www.usatoday.com/tech/news/2004-10-16-unc-file-sharing-pilot_x.htm>)

### COLLEGES PRAISED FOR EFFORTS TO LIMIT COPYRIGHT VIOLATIONS

Members of Congress praised the efforts of some in the higher education community to limit the incidence of illegal file trading on campus networks. At a hearing of the Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on Courts, the Internet, and Intellectual Property, witnesses testified about legal online music services on certain campuses and about the University of California at Los Angeles (UCLA) software that automatically handles notices of copyright infringement. The UCLA system disconnects students from the networks and notifies them by e-mail of the offending files. Network access is restored after an individual removes the files in question. Members of the subcommittee applauded UCLA's system, saying the blocking of network access for illegal file traders is an appropriate course of action. James Davis, UCLA's associate vice chancellor for information technology, said that the number of copyright notices received by the institution has fallen since the introduction of the system and that no student has been disconnected more than once. The subcommittee also said it supports the work of the Joint Committee of the Higher Education and Entertainment Communities, which encourages colleges to offer free legal services for students who download music on campus. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <http://chronicle.com/prm/daily/2004/10/2004100604n.htm> [subscription required])

able to higher education as well as to high schools that want to provide online Advanced Placement courses. Institutions that can pay for the content they receive will be asked to contribute to help the institute break even, according to Gary Lopez, executive director, but the prices will be as low as possible. Lopez said that community colleges, which often lack the resources to develop online course content, are likely to be some of the biggest beneficiaries of the program. (*Chronicle of*

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## CAMPUS GROUPS EDUCATE STUDENTS ABOUT COPYRIGHT

■ Students at about a dozen colleges and universities have started organizations called Free Culture groups to educate other students about copyright and to fight what they see as a tilting of the law to favor copyright owners. The first Free Culture group was started by a Swarthmore College student, Nelson Pavlosky, known for his successful legal challenge to Diebold Election Systems' use of the Digital Millennium Copyright Act in trying to suppress leaked company memos. Pavlosky and other Free Culture organizers want college-age people to understand how copyrights have changed in the electronic era, particularly with respect to legislation such as the proposed Induce Act. Pavlosky acknowledged that a danger of the Free Culture groups is that participants will simply be seen as "rich white kids who want free music." Jessica Litman, a law professor at Wayne State University and a speaker at a meeting of the Free Culture groups, noted that copyright law is traditionally written by lobbyists who represent copyright owners and said that consumers should be included in that process. (*Wired News*, ‹http://www.wired.com/news/culture/0,1284,65616,00.html›)

## STANDARDIZED TEST TO MEASURE TECHNOLOGY LITERACY

■ Working with representatives of seven universities, the Educational Testing Service (ETS), which administers the SAT, has developed a new test to measure how well students apply IT skills to solve problems. Students taking the ICT Literacy Assessment exam will be asked to perform tasks such as build a spreadsheet, write an e-mail that summarizes a passage, and evaluate the credibility of online information. Barbara A. O'Connor, a professor of communications at California State University at Sacramento, was involved in the development of the exam and said that organizers wanted to expand the idea of the digital divide. Rather than simply describing the difference between having technology and not, the term should be understood to mean the disparity between how that technology is used and how it is applied to various situations, said O'Connor. The test will be given starting in January 2005, and for the first year, results will be provided in the aggregate only. After ETS has developed a baseline for scoring, test takers will receive individual scores. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, ‹http://chronicle.com/prm/weekly/v51/i12/12a03301.htm› [subscription required])

## Security | Matters

### NSF AWARDS GRANTS FOR INTERNET SECURITY

As part of its Cyber Trust program, the National Science Foundation (NSF) has awarded grants of more than $12 million to fund two research centers that will study ways to deal with malicious code, including viruses and worms. The Center for Internet Epidemiology and Defenses, led by Stefan Savage of the University of California at San Diego and Vern Paxson of the University of California at Berkeley, will receive $6.2 million to study self-replicating computer code and ways to prevent it from spreading. The Security Through Interaction Modeling (STIM) Center, to be led by Mike Reiter of Carnegie Mellon University, will work to draw comparisons between nature and computer networks in an effort to distinguish "unhealthy" network interactions from legitimate ones. The STIM will receive nearly $6.4 million from the NSF. (*CNET*, ‹http://news.com.com/2100-7348_3-5376474.html›)

### FBI TO HAVE ACCESS TO SEVIS AND US-VISIT DATABASES

The Department of Homeland Security (DHS) will give the FBI direct access to databases of both the Student and Exchange Visitor Information System (SEVIS) and the U.S. Visitor and Immigration Status Indication Technology (US-VISIT) system. The decision follows a recommendation from the commission on the September 11 terrorist attacks. Formerly, the FBI was required to go through the DHS to obtain information from either of the databases, which contain data on foreigners in the United States, including students. An FBI spokesperson said the new authority would allow more efficient investigations of suspected terrorists or other criminals. Some expressed concern about the FBI's new access to very sensitive information. Catheryn D. Cotten, director of the international office at Duke University, noted that mistakes in the databases could have significant implications if law enforcement acts on them. Terry W. Hartle, of the American Council on Education, said the decision sends the message that "the United States isn't as welcoming to international visitors as we have been in the past." (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, ‹http://chronicle.com/prm/daily/2004/09/2004091501n.htm› [subscription required])