

Information Technology in the News

Security Matters

UC SYSTEM SIGNS ON TO GOOGLE BOOK SCANNING

■ The University of California will join Oxford University, Harvard University, Stanford University, the University of Michigan, and the New York Public Library in Google's controversial book-scanning project. The UC System comprises more than 100 libraries on 10 campuses, and the deal gives Google access to many millions of volumes housed at those libraries. As with other texts in Google's program, digital copies will be accessible only through its own search engine. Google still faces legal opposition to its program, which scans copyrighted material as well as public-domain texts, though access to protected work is limited. The UC System also participates in the Open Content Alliance (OCA), which takes a different approach to copyrighted works, scanning only those for which copyright owners have provided explicit permission. Although Jennifer Colvin, strategic communications manager at the California Digital Library, rejected the idea that participating in both projects represents a conflict, others disagreed. Brewster Kahle, founder of the Internet Archive, said, "Having a public institution decide to go with Google's restrictions doesn't help the idea of libraries being open in the future." (*CNET*, <http://news.com.com/2100-1025_3-6103540.html>)

PENTAGON ISSUES GUIDELINES FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION

■ The U.S. Department of Defense (DoD) has issued a set of principles addressing distance education. Since the federal government spends around \$100 million each year on distance education for members of the armed forces, the principles—drafted by a panel of school officials and DoD personnel—were released as a "preemptive move" to ensure the quality of education that soldiers

ETHICAL HACKING PROGRAM TO REQUIRE BACKGROUND CHECK

Students who want to take part in an ethical hacking program at the University of Abertay in Scotland will be required to pass a background check to weed out those who might apply the skills learned in the program to malicious ends. University officials will work with the Home Office and a Scottish disclosure service to screen applicants, looking for anyone with a criminal background. The program, "Ethical Hacking and Countermeasures," is a four-year degree intended to teach hacking skills to students who will then work with businesses to prevent hackers from damaging computer systems and data. It is the first program of its kind in the United Kingdom. Responding to concerns that the program will simply create more hackers, Lachlan McKinnon, a professor in the program, said the university will do all that it can to ensure students will use their skills in a positive manner. He added, however, that there are no guarantees. (*The Register*, <http://www.theregister.com/2006/06/19/hackers_background/>)

NEW RESEARCH CENTER WILL STUDY IDENTITY FRAUD

A new research center is being launched at Utica College in New York to study identity fraud and ways to fight the problem. The Center for Identity Management and Information Protection (CIMIP) is being developed by the Secret Service, the FBI, IBM, and LexisNexis. Norm Willox, chief executive of special services at LexisNexis, said that CIMIP will fill a gap in current efforts to understand and address identity fraud. Gary Gordon, professor of economic crime management at Utica College, will direct CIMIP, which will have access to Secret Service files to help researchers see the "big picture" and potentially spot patterns. James Burrus, acting assistant director of the FBI's criminal investigative division, noted that identity fraud also has implications for national security: "The FBI looks forward to the opportunity to apply CIMIP research to more effective law enforcement and protection." (*Wall Street Journal*, <<http://online.wsj.com/article/SB115144422202392266.html>> [subscription required])

receive for this investment. Gary Woods, director of educational opportunities for the DoD, said the principles may serve as the basis for the requirements to be met by any provider wanting to offer distance courses to soldiers. Woods said that as distance education programs evolve, he wants to be sure that the DoD is "out ahead of the curve." Before the draft was released, some institutions were concerned that the principles would eliminate them. However, Susan Aldridge, president of University of Maryland University College and one of the members of the panel that drafted the guidelines, said, "Any university that is serious and

running a rigorous program would be able to meet these standards." (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <<http://chronicle.com/daily/2006/07/2006072501t.htm>> [subscription required])

OPEN SOURCE POPULAR AT U.K. UNIVERSITIES

■ According to a survey by Open Source Software Advisory Service (OSS Watch), open source software on campuses in the United Kingdom has moved out of the shadows and into legitimate contention with proprietary software solutions. Results of the survey indicated that

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although only one-quarter of institutions include open source in their IT policies, 77 percent at least consider open source during procurement. Randy Metcalfe, of OSS Watch, said, "It's not about explaining what open source is any more, but how to compare open source and proprietary software." The increase in the use of Moodle, an open source learning management system, has been especially significant, according to Metcalfe: "To reach 56 percent in two and a half years is amazing." In addition, Firefox, an open source browser, is reportedly available on 68 percent of university computers (all have Internet Explorer). Of concern to some observers, however, is the fact that very few universities share changes they make to open source software. Many universities have policies dictating that developments are the property of the institution; as a result, developments are not submitted to the open source community for broader use. (*The Register*, <http://www.theregister.com/2006/08/04/uk_unis_loving_linux/>)

CANADIAN PROJECT AIMS TO COORDINATE DISPARATE EFFORTS

■ A new initiative called AlouetteCanada is designed to bring together disparate digitization efforts from around Canada into a single online location. Carole Moore, chief librarian of the University of Toronto, one of the universities participating in AlouetteCanada, noted that although many universities and museums in the country maintain small-scale digitization efforts of material relevant to the history and culture of Canada, much of this content is inaccessible to most people. The University of Alberta and the University of Brunswick are also part of the project, and Moore said that hundreds of other organizations could conceivably contribute material. Ernie Ingles, chief librarian at the University

e-publishing

RICE PRESS REBORN AS ONLINE ONLY

Rice University will restart its press, which was closed in 1996, as an online-only operation, publishing peer-reviewed books and monographs. Faced with declining budgets, many libraries buy fewer books, leaving academic publishers unwilling to publish books unless they can justify the printing costs. Rice's model does away with printing, considerably speeding up the publishing process and allowing the press to publish texts that would not be published otherwise. Because texts will be peer-reviewed, organizers hope that the reborn Rice University Press will be as prestigious—and as valid for tenure or promotion—as a traditional press. The press will operate through Connexions, a site that offers course materials free of charge. Separately, Connexions will also begin offering print-on-demand custom textbooks, assembled from individual modules within Connexions. The textbooks are expected to cost significantly less than comparable offerings from traditional textbook publishers. (*Inside Higher Ed*, <<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2006/07/14/rice>>)

of Alberta, noted that AlouetteCanada is, in some ways, the antithesis of Google's book-scanning project. Although Google is making content available publicly, he said, it is making that content available "in a commercial way." And Ingles questioned whether Google would be around forever to continue to make that content available. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <<http://chronicle.com/daily/2006/06/2006062101t.htm>> [subscription required])

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