

Information Technology in the News

TRIBES IN OREGON PLAN VIRTUAL COLLEGE

■ Native American tribes in Oregon are working on plans to establish an entirely online college to serve the state's nine reservations. The Oregon Virtual Tribal College would develop an infrastructure to allow students on all nine reservations to interact with each other and instructors. All of the instruction would take place online. Responsibility for the various parts of the curriculum would be spread across Oregon's Native American tribes, and other higher education institutions in the state would provide course content and instructors. Organizers of the project believe it will cost less than a physical institution and hope to fund the virtual college with state and federal grants. Wendell Jim, who is heading the project, said he expects the program to begin with about one hundred students and to become an accredited, degree-granting institution. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <<http://chronicle.com/prm/weekly/v50/i18/18a03701.htm>> [subscription required])

TIGHTER RULES FOR E-RATE PROGRAM

■ The Federal Communications Commission (FCC) has released new rules governing the E-Rate program in response to allegations of rampant errors and fraud in the system. The program was launched in 1997 to provide financial resources to help schools and libraries gain Internet access, but a variety of reports and internal audits on the program led FCC commissioners to launch an investigation. The new rules are intended "to simplify fund administration, [to] ensure the equitable distribution of monetary support, and to protect against waste, fraud, and abuse," according to FCC Chairman Michael Powell. With the change in rules, organizations that receive funding through the program are prohibited from transferring equipment

COLLEGE CONSIDERS STRICTER COPYRIGHT RULES FOR COURSEPACKS

Officials at Ithaca College are considering implementing a new copyright policy covering materials included in coursepacks, which are used to complement or, in some cases, replace other texts in many courses. The policy would require faculty to obtain permission from copyright holders for any material they include in coursepacks and would limit the amount of any single work that could be included in a coursepack. According to Nancy Pringle, vice-president and college counsel, the goal of the policy, a final version of which is expected by fall of 2004, is to educate faculty, staff, and students about copyright and ensure that the campus operates "within the parameters of the law." Some faculty noted that fair use provisions of copyright law already permit using small portions of copyrighted work for academic, noncommercial uses without obtaining prior approval from copyright holders. Concerns have also been raised over the time required of faculty to obtain such permissions and the potential that fees paid to the copyright holders could drive up the cost of coursepacks. (*The Ithacan*, <http://www.ithaca.edu/ithacan/articles/0312/11/news/1college_to_a.htm>)



REPORT SAYS CAN-SPAM ACT NOT EFFECTIVE

A report from California-based e-mail filtering company Postini seems to indicate little immediate change in the volume of spam as a result of the CAN-SPAM Act, signed into law by President Bush in December. At that time, spam accounted for 80 percent of all e-mail, according to Postini. One month later, that figure remained at 79 percent. Critics of the bill had argued that it would do little to stem the flow of spam, saying that the bill simply outlined steps that spammers must take for their e-mail to be "legitimate." Critics also noted that many spammers operate outside the United States, beyond the jurisdiction of the law. Postini's Andrew Lochart said spam can be effectively controlled only through a combination of technology and legislation. (*BBC News*, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/3465307.stm>>)

bought with E-Rate funds to other locations for three years and may not continue to receive funds year after year. (*Internet News*, <<http://www.internetnews.com/xSP/article.php/3290731>>)

OPEN-SOURCE COURSEWARE PROJECT

■ Four universities announced collaboration on the Sakai Project, designed to create open-source courseware tools and related software. Access to the software will be through an enhanced version of uPortal. Sakai will also use the Open

Knowledge Initiative, a collaboration among colleges and universities to support educational software. The University of Michigan at Ann Arbor will lead the Sakai effort, along with the Indiana University system, the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and Stanford University. The Andrew W. Mellon Foundation provided \$2.4 million for the project, and each of the four partners is providing services worth about \$1 million over two years. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <<http://chronicle.com/prm/daily/2004/01/2004012204n.htm>> [subscription required])

WIRELESS HIGH-SPEED ACCESS FOR DETROIT'S POOR AREAS

■ The University of Michigan at Ann Arbor is working on a project to bring wireless high-speed Internet access to residents of poor areas in Detroit. Commercial ISPs often bypass less-affluent urban areas due to an expected lack of return on the investment required to establish the necessary infrastructure. Working with nonprofits and religious institutions in the area, the Center for Urban Innovation at the university's School of Social Work hopes to bring wireless access to Detroit's poor communities for as little as \$100 per year, per customer. In addition to high-speed access, residents will also be able to take computer-training courses. The project involves setting up several large antennae as well as smaller repeaters to cover currently unserved areas. According to Larry M. Gant, director of the project, wireless was chosen because of its relatively low cost. Gant also defended the technology as being fairly simple to secure, as long as people take the time to lock down their systems. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <<http://chronicle.com/prm/weekly/v50/i20/20a03401.htm>> [subscription required])

IRAQI ACADEMICS STAY CONNECTED WITH TECHNOLOGY

■ After years of suppression under Saddam Hussein's regime, some Iraqi academics are using the Internet to reconnect with colleagues now scattered around the world and to rebuild the country's largely crippled education system. Iraqi scientist Abduljabbar al-Wahedi has set up a Web site where academics can connect with each other and with universities and students in Iraq. According to al-Wahedi, members of the Web group who left the country are encouraged at least to travel back to Iraq and lecture at the universities, and some have decided to move back to Iraq permanently. Some universities in the country

net news

SURA AND AT&T SIGN HIGH-SPEED DEAL

The Southeastern Universities Research Association (SURA) has announced a ten-year deal with AT&T in which the company will provide fiber-optic network access to SURA's more than sixty member institutions. The network will consist of 8,000 miles of fiber, connecting western Texas with Florida and Virginia and points in between. The fiber is already in place but lacks final components to be operational. The institutions that will have access will pay for the final work to make the network live. The network will provide vastly faster connections among the institutions than is available on the commercial Internet. Andrew A. Sorensen, president of the University of South Carolina at Columbia and one of the key figures in brokering the deal, said SURA institutions plan to use the new network for projects involving grid computing. AT&T expects to benefit from the arrangement by being part of work done to optimize the performance of such a network and by having early access to developments for it. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <<http://chronicle.com/prm/daily/2003/12/2003121701n.htm>> [subscription required])

still lack e-mail access, but al-Wahedi said his group hopes to connect all of Iraq's universities by the end of the year. (*BBC News*, <<http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/technology/3410923.stm>>)

UNIVERSITIES TEST FILE-SHARING PILOT

■ Four universities are piloting a file-sharing tool that gives students online access to video files. Yale University, Duke University, Wake Forest University, and the University of Colorado at Boulder are testing the application from Cflix, which sets up a network on each campus for the transfer of video and—as of March—audio files. Those involved in the pilot projects have two goals: easier access to video clips that are part of course curricula; and a reduction in illegal trading of music and movie files. Using the Cflix network, students can see video clips without having to go to a screening room at a particular time. Students can also use the network to download movies, at a cost of between \$1.95 and \$3.95. Prices for online music have not been released. Graham B. Spanier, president of Pennsylvania State

University, said that even if the project fails to decrease illegal file sharing among students, it is important to start using peer-to-peer networks for educational purposes. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <<http://chronicle.com/prm/daily/2004/01/2004012606n.htm>> [subscription required])

MICROSOFT STRATEGIES TO LIMIT SPAM

■ Microsoft is working on programs designed to place a significant burden on those who want to send vast amounts of unsolicited e-mail. Under an initiative called "Penny Black," computers that send e-mail would be required to spend several seconds solving a complex math problem. Such a scenario would cause virtually no slowdown for average users, but spammers trying to send millions of e-mails would be faced with an enormous computational demand. Microsoft officials noted that the company is working on several other anti-spam programs as well. (*Washington Post*, <<http://www.washingtonpost.com/wp-dyn/articles/A16272-2004Feb5.html>> [registration required])

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