

## Information Technology in the News

### ETS ANNOUNCES RESULTS OF INFORMATION LITERACY TEST

■ Results from the Educational Testing Service (ETS) indicate generally poor performance on the organization's new test, the ICT Literacy Assessment Core Level. ETS introduced the test to measure how information-literate and computer-savvy students are. The test was administered to volunteers at 44 institutions, including high schools and two- and four-year colleges. Of the roughly 3,000 college students and 800 high school students who took the test, only 13 percent were deemed information-literate. Officials from ETS noted that because the test is new, the results are not authoritative or thorough but indicate important trends. In general, they said, students could identify relatively credible information from databases and knew that information from .com Web sites is likely to be less reliable than information from a .gov or .edu site. Students generally could not, however, discern bias in online content and were overly willing to trust suspect material. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <<http://chronicle.com/daily/2006/10/2006101701t.htm>> [subscription required])

### COLLEGE BOARD QUESTIONS ONLINE LABS

■ The College Board has begun questioning the use of technology for teaching lab-based science courses. As technology tools have become more sophisticated, even chemistry and biology lab courses have moved entirely online, prompting some university faculty to question whether students are learning enough in those classes. The College Board is soliciting input from a wide range of interested parties on the quality of education in online science courses that bear the Advanced Placement trademark. Trevor

### YALE TO POST VIDEO OF COURSES ONLINE

Yale University has announced plans to begin posting video of course lectures online. The effort is part of a movement in higher education toward open courseware, led in large part by the OpenCourseWare initiative, started at MIT in 2001. For that project, MIT posts course materials online, including syllabi, reading lists, and other resources. Diana E. E. Kleiner, who is leading the new effort at Yale, said the program follows "MIT's footprints" but represents the next step. Under the program, all of the lectures for a given course will be recorded and placed online. Beginning with seven courses, the program is expected to grow quickly in successive years. Kleiner said that Yale officials believe the in-class experience is central to the educational experience. The university is exploring ways to ensure that offering video of lectures online will not encourage Yale students to skip class and simply watch the lectures at their convenience. Also at issue are intellectual property considerations, given that faculty are free to use some copyrighted materials in lectures but that those materials may not be used similarly by the public. (*Inside Higher Ed*, <<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2006/09/20/yale>>)

### BERKELEY PUTS COURSE VIDEO ONLINE

In an arrangement with Google, the University of California–Berkeley will make available online considerable amounts of videotaped course content, including lectures, speeches, special events, and in some cases, entire courses. UC Berkeley is the only institution with its own page on the Google Video Web site, and the course materials are available for public use. Dan Mogulof, director of public affairs at UC Berkeley, said: "We are a public university. We have fabulous faculty and incredible events. We want to share the wealth across the state, country, and world." UC Berkeley is not the first university to post course materials online, but its program is one of the broader initiatives, given the amount of content and the fact that it is open to anyone. Officials from the university said that they expect other institutions will launch similar efforts. (*Mercury News*, <<http://www.mercurynews.com/mld/mercurynews/news/15627859.htm>>)

Packer, the board's executive director for Advanced Placement, said that some faculty are wary about giving credit to students who are entering "second-year college science courses without ever having used a Bunsen burner." Supporters of such online courses said that the College Board's investigation threatened to impede the further development of online education. (*New York Times*, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/10/20/education/20online.html>> [registration required])

### ASU LOOKS TO FUTURE OF FILM-MAKING

■ Arizona State University has debuted an undergraduate certificate program, which organizers hope will become a master's degree, in a field the university is calling EnterTech, referring to the intersection of entertainment and technology. Peter Lehman, director of the film and media studies program, and David Young, vice president and dean of the College of Liberal Arts and Sciences, presented the idea of such a program to Hollywood

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executives and received strong support. The attitude among many in the film industry is that the existing film schools are not producing graduates who can meet the needs that result from the convergence of technology and movies. Lehman said the new ASU program is “creating a new industry job, as it were,” rather than training individuals to work in existing film jobs. Young pointed out that the new program reflects a growing trend of cross-disciplinary work in a number of fields. “If you look at the big issues facing society,” he said, “like curing cancer, it won’t be cured from a one-discipline approach.” (*New York Times*, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/06/movies/06tech.html>> [registration required])

## PENN STATE ADOPTS TEXT MESSAGES TO STUDENTS

■ Pennsylvania State University launched a text-messaging wireless service called PSUTXT as an expansion of Penn State Live, a news service with 360,000 subscribers. The university plans to use the service to send text messages of news alerts to mobile devices. Registered users can sign up for short message service (SMS) text messages on campus emergencies, sports, and concert information. Topics will expand as users indicate an interest in other types of information. PSUTXT targets Penn State students, faculty, and staff, although anyone may subscribe. (*CNET*, <[http://news.com.com/2100-1039\\_3-6106302.html](http://news.com.com/2100-1039_3-6106302.html)>)

## HARVARD OFFERS VIRTUAL CLASS IN *SECOND LIFE*

■ This fall, Harvard Law School Professor Charles Nesson will coteach a course on “argument in cyberspace” with his daughter, Rebecca Nesson, an instructor at Harvard Extension School. The course will take place in the *Second Life* virtual world. In *Second Life*, users create avatars that they control, using the avatars to move around the virtual environment and interact with

## e-publishing

### COLLEGE PRESIDENTS EXPRESS SUPPORT FOR OPEN ACCESS

The presidents of fifty-three liberal arts colleges have signed a letter supporting the Federal Public Research Access Act, which would require free and public access to research funded by the federal government. Librarians have for years protested the steeply rising costs of academic journals, noting that each year they can afford fewer of the resources that students and faculty need. Supporters of the legislation argue it would level the playing field for researchers and would appropriately allow public access to publicly funded science. Publishers of academic journals and the scholarly societies they represent lambasted the legislation, saying it would undermine peer review and the quality of the journals. Allan Adler, of the Association of American Publishers, said the legislation is “very short-sighted” and is simply an attempt by librarians to obtain for free what they have always paid for. The academic community, however, seems inclined to disagree. The new letter of support from college presidents follows similar support in July from the provosts of twenty-five research universities. According to the new letter, which was drafted by a library group at Oberlin College, the legislation would “democratize access to research information” and would “benefit education, research, and the general public.” (*Inside Higher Ed*, <<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2006/09/06/access>>)

### PUBLISHERS GIVE COLLEGE STUDENTS FREE ONLINE MAGAZINES

The Magazine Publishers of America is sponsoring a program that will provide free online magazine subscriptions to college students in an effort to draw them into magazine readership. Magazine publishers have long dealt with distribution problems for college students, who typically change addresses frequently. At the same time, publishers are working to understand how digital delivery fits into the larger picture of magazine readership. During the program, students at five institutions will have the option of subscribing to a particular publication, a different one for each school. Students who opt in will receive e-mails with links to the online version of the magazine, which is identical to the printed version, including advertisements. Organizers hope that after students graduate and settle down, they will become subscribers and readers of the magazines’ print version. Nina Link, president and chief executive of the Magazine Publishers of America, stressed that her organization believes that digital and print versions are both viable but in different contexts. Other publishers agreed. Jack Kliger, president and chief executive of Hachette Filipacchi, said that each medium has advantages over the other but that both are important. (*New York Times*, <<http://www.nytimes.com/2006/09/07/business/media/07adco.html>> [registration required])

others and with the virtual physical space. A number of other colleges and universities have used *Second Life* as a component of certain courses. For this new course at Harvard, Nesson and Nesson will teach students—entirely through the virtual environment—how to use blogs, wikis, podcasts, and other electronic tools to make effective arguments. The class, which is

open to the public through the extension school, will take place in an online replica of the university’s Ames Courtroom. Rebecca Nesson will hold office hours in *Second Life*; Charles Nesson’s office hours will be in his actual office. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <<http://chronicle.com/daily/2006/08/2006083001t.htm>> [subscription required])

## STUDENTS SERVE AS COMPUTER CONSULTANTS

■ At a growing number of colleges and universities, students serve as the first line of technical support on campus. The role of the residential computing consultant (RCC) is not new, but it is becoming increasingly common in an institution's approach to dealing with the range of computer problems that students regularly face. At Stanford University, about 100 students serve as RCCs, living in the dorms and responding to service calls from students. They earn about \$180 per week and undergo a four-day training course. Problems range from the mundane to the highly complex, requiring consultation with professional IT staff on campus. Brandon Smith, an RCC at Stanford, noted that most college students are prone to panic when technology doesn't work and that "they're not very patient." Jennifer Ly, manager of Stanford's Residential Computing, said that although many of the RCCs are computer science majors, others are not pursuing technical studies: "We seek someone with an appetite for problem-solving who can provide excellent customer service, and who is willing to learn." (*Silicon Valley*, <<http://www.siliconvalley.com/mld/siliconvalley/15770612.htm>>)

## WIKIPEDIA COFOUNDER LAUNCHES NEW SITE

■ One of the founders of *Wikipedia* has announced a new online encyclopedia that he hopes will embody the foundation of *Wikipedia* while overcoming some of its shortcomings. Larry Sanger's new project, called *Citizendium*, will use a number of tactics to elicit credible, useful content from a community of volunteers while avoiding the kinds of intentional distortions that have been a problem for *Wikipedia*. On *Citizendium*, contributors must register

## Security Matters

### LSU TO PROVIDE IDENTITY-THEFT INSURANCE

Louisiana State University has launched a new program under which it will provide identity-theft insurance to its students, faculty, and staff. Several months ago, LSU reported a minor security breach in which the personal information for about sixty-seven students was compromised, but the new initiative is aimed at possible future problems. Under the terms of the new program, students and faculty and staff members can have one year of credit monitoring and \$2,500 worth of identity-theft insurance. The services are provided through a contract with the credit bureau Equifax, which LSU will pay \$150,000 for one year of the agreement. Brian Voss, CIO at LSU, said the new service might also protect the institution from liability claims in the event that a member of the campus community suffers identity theft due to a breach at the university. (*Chronicle of Higher Education*, <<http://chronicle.com/daily/2006/09/2006091301t.htm>> [subscription required])

with their real names, and a team of editors will enforce a set of community rules. Sanger said that *Wikipedia* is an "amazing" resource, but he believes that "an even better massive encyclopedia" can be produced by overlaying a system of "gentle" controls on how content is developed and edited. *Citizendium* will be created as a "fork" of the existing open-source *Wikipedia* content. All current content from *Wikipedia* will serve as the basis for *Citizendium*. From there, the two collections will evolve and diverge based on their different approaches. (*ZDNet*, <[http://news.zdnet.com/2100-9588\\_22-6126469.html](http://news.zdnet.com/2100-9588_22-6126469.html)>)

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