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Inside Information Spring 2011

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inside information

INFORMATION SERVICES @ CONNECTICUT COLLEGE

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Shain Library and Tempel Green during the winter of 2011

Upcoming technology workshops and events for faculty

Over the spring semester and into the summer, the Instructional Technology team will be offering a series of workshops on using technology in teaching. Upcoming topics include "Moodle for Grades and Quizzing," to be held on April 1 (noon-2 p.m.), and "Videoconferencing: Invite an Expert

Videoconferencing

into your Classroom," to be held on April 22 (noon-2 p.m.). Lunch will be provided at both. These workshops will offer hands-on experience using

NERALLT

the technology; participants will also have the opportunity to discuss how the technology can be used to support teaching and enhance student learning. Faculty already using the technology will share their experiences. For more information on these, please contact Diane Creede (diane.creede@conncoll.edu), Instructional Designer/Developer.

Also this spring, Connecticut College will host the NERALLT (New England Regional Association for Language Learning Technology) Conference on March 25. The theme for the conference is "Pedagogy and Technology: Collaboration between

Language Faculty and Instructional Technologists in the 21st Century." More information on the conference can be found at http://www.nerallt.org, or by contacting Edie Furniss (edie.furniss@conncoll.edu) at the Language and Culture Center.

Looking ahead to summer, Information Services will be taking part in the Center for Teaching & Learning's Camp Teach & Learn. We welcome ideas for topics! Please send any sug-

Tempel Summer Institute

gestions to Chris Penniman (chris.penniman@conncoll.edu), Director of Instructional Technology.

Finally, the 12th Annual Tempel Summer Institute will be held from June 20 through June 24, 2011. The Institute will focus on a pedagogical approach

Moodle

to incorporating technology into the curriculum. A variety of technology topics will be covered, including Moodle, blogs, wikis, Google Apps, audio, video, videoconferencing and more. Each faculty participant will receive a stipend. Look for a call for proposals for participation in March.

Message from the VP

More than ever, information technology is a campus-wide resource. Making the IT environment successful is a community effort, although the IS department leads that work. A recent series of events served to drive home just how interconnected we all are. A couple of weeks ago, staff started seeing unusual problems with the campus network. Wireless access points were going down; switches were randomly failing and our diagnostics couldn't pinpoint the problem. Students and faculty were reporting glitches, but there seemed to be no pattern to the problems. Systems staff were flummoxed, so we called in engineers from Cisco, the company that makes our switches, to determine the source of the failures. Over several days, during which some staff were up all night talking to Cisco engineers in India (we have very dedicated staff!), the engineers tested devices throughout the network and determined that our core router was failing. It needed to be replaced as soon as possible, before it failed completely. The loss of the core router is no small matter—it's the heart of the college network, and without it, connection to the internet and the Web, as well as all internal network activity, stops. No home page, no email, no Moodle, no nuttin'!

We got the news on a Wednesday, and a new router was overnighted and arrived by Thursday afternoon. The Board meeting was scheduled for the following Thursday. We had to decide when to take down the network for as many as four hours to replace the technology. One option was that Friday night; the other was to wait until after the Board meeting and do it on a Sunday morning. But to wait meant the network would remain less than stable, and could even fail completely. We decided to try to make the change on Friday.

That decision was not final, however—and this is the point of the story, because we didn't know if any campus departments absolutely had to have live access to the internet or to campus network resources that Friday night. Technical Support staff and I started calling every department across the college to make sure we could take down the network. Calls went out to Dining Services, to the Oasis Snack Shop, to the Power House and Physical Plant. We had to make sure the ATM in Cro would continue to work. We called the Deans' and other Senior Administrators' offices, and the President's Office, of course. We checked with Events and there were no activities that night that required the internet. We talked to staff about the David Dorfman Prophets of Funk performance scheduled for that night and, thankfully, they didn't need an internet feed. Someone reminded us about the door entry system for the residence halls; fortunately, there's a 12-hour battery backup for just this kind of emergency. In any case, after some two dozen calls over a three-hour period, we knew we were clear to move forward. Staff took the system down about 6:30 and we were back online in only 90 minutes. Whew.

These events, for me, are a reminder of just how interconnected we all are and just how broad a cross-section of campus life depends on IT services. We really are a community, all working together, when it comes to IT success.

W. Lee Hisle

W. Lee Hisle, Ph.D.

*Vice President for Information Services
and Librarian of the College*

Memories of the winter of 2011

January and February of 2011 brought a new snowstorm practically every week. IS staff kept the libraries open and the information technology infrastructure going through it all. As this issue goes to press, we're all looking forward to spring!

Student worker profile: Rebecca Reel '11

Rebecca checking out books at the Circulation Desk

My name is Rebecca Reel and I am a member of the class of 2011. I am majoring in history, minoring in English, and earning my Museum Studies Certificate. I love the interdisciplinary nature of the courses I have taken here at Connecticut College and how my academic interests have coalesced throughout my time here. Outside of my classes, I am a copy editor for the *College Voice* and I am on the History Department's Student Advisory Board. Last spring I studied away at the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia to focus on early American history. I was fortunate to intern at the American Indian Initiative at Colonial Williamsburg during my semester there.

I have worked at the Circulation Desk since my freshman year and have truly enjoyed the experience. Through my job at the Circulation Desk, I have gained new skills and come to realize new things about myself. My research skills have improved and I have learned about a variety of aspects of working in a library, from shelving to customer service. I have also come to discover that I enjoy interacting with people and answering their questions. My experiences working at the Circulation Desk greatly contributed to my decision to apply to several graduate programs in library science, and I hope to be entering graduate school next fall. I would ultimately like to work as a reference librarian or in a corporate library. I am so grateful for all of the advice that the library staff has given me about going into the library science field. I am especially grateful for all of the help and support that Ben Peck and Carol Strang have given me throughout my time working at the library—particularly this past year while I've been applying to graduate school. Working at the Circulation Desk has been an invaluable experience for me: it has shaped me as a person and has guided my career path.

Rebecca with Access Services Librarian Ben Peck and Reserve Supervisor Carol Strang

Student worker profile: Phil Fritzsche '11

Phil on the phone answering tech support questions.

Hi! I'm Phil Fritzsche, a Computer Science major, a Math minor, and a member of the class of 2011. I concentrate on artificial intelligence and software engineering on the Computer Science side and statistics for my Math minor. I'm a photographer in my spare time, love to attend the gaming club events on campus, and am always happy to have people over to cook at my apartment at 360. I've been working at the Help Desk in Shain Library since the first semester of my sophomore year. It's an amazing place to work, in large part due to my boss, the awesome Ruth Seeley. I get to interact with a wide variety of students, staff, faculty, and administrators and I feel like I'm doing something useful in the process.

Thanks to the time I've spent at the help desk, I feel like my ability to work efficiently on a number of problems at the same time has gone up exponentially. Whenever I come into work, the kinds of problems I encounter are always different and interesting, and keep me well on my toes. It's given me a lot of insight into running large-scale networks and all of the problems associated with that. In addition, I've been able to better understand exactly how much stress the IT department deals with, and how to cope with that while still resolving the issues.

Outside of my work at the help desk, I'm writing a thesis on the work I've done with Professor Gary Parker in artificial and computational intelligence. We're developing effective methods for learning video game agent controllers in real-time in the XPilot game environment. It may sound a bit boring, but it's actually really cool, especially when the results of my work are capable of beating me pretty handily whenever I play against them! I've also been developing games for the Android mobile platform with a friend from high school in my spare time. Just the other day we released a game called Whacky Moles, which is kind of like Whac-A-Mole, but poke-a-mole instead. When I graduate in May, I'll be moving out to Seattle (exciting!) to begin work as a full time software engineer at Amazon.

Phil with Help Desk and Training Manager Mike Dreimiller.

The Last Picture Show

For 35 years, at the end of either every fall or every spring semester, a facsimile band of art students has kept vigil beside the main entrance to Shain Library. Surely you recall them, and perhaps you have wondered: Are they there to urge you to return your overdue books? Or to remind you to wrap your scarf before going outdoors (if in December), or to don your sun-hat (if in May)? Or to bid you farewell and invite you back soon? Actually, you should have been bidding them farewell, as most of them were seniors. And now their professor is retiring, so the most recent display in December 2010 served as her farewell too. In the 2010 photo (opposite), you can view her center stage among her students.

Those life-size self-portraits served as the final assignment every year in Professor Maureen McCabe's ART 315 Advanced Drawing course. Artists have been enthralled with self-por-traiture for centuries, in part because no model is more willing or more affordable than the one lurking in the mirror. In 1975, in an effort to add

Portraits from 2007

Portraits from 1975

a new dimension to a dusty old art form, Professor McCabe assigned her very first drawing class at Connecticut College not just to draw self-portraits, but also to cut them out and mount them on white foam core board.

That first class posed for a group photo while paired with their self-portraits. Among them, on the floor and again center stage, sits a very youthful Maureen McCabe. The 1975 photo was shot in Cummings Arts Center, and the students' self-portraits then resided in its lobby. But other students, attempting to pry off the clothing, defaced the artworks. So the next year and thereafter, the display

Portraits from 1995

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moved to the entrance of Shain Library, where sentries at the Circulation Desk assured that the artworks were safe from exploratory fingers.

Over the course of the next 35 years, the self-portraits exhibited in Shain have served as a chronicle of evolving hairstyles and clothing fashions of students, as well as of trends in interior decoration of libraries. (Just look at the red carpet in the 1995 photo!) You have one remaining opportunity to view the 2010 self-portrait finale. Alongside a retrospective of Professor McCabe's own works, the cutouts are exhibited in the Manwaring Gallery in Cummings until March 4, 2011.

Portraits from 2010

Archives meet the stage in collaborative freshman seminar

When you think of theater, you probably don't think of historic documents sitting quietly in archival folders. But for the students in Leah Lowe's fall 2010 Freshman Seminar, "Making Theater: Process to Performance," learning about theater meant making those documents speak and bringing them to life in front of an audience.

The course, which focused on "the process of creating a theatrical performance from the perspectives of the different artists involved," required the students to create and perform a series of scenes addressing some aspect of the

history of Connecticut College. Professor Lowe, who first taught this seminar in 2009, decided to include an archival research component in this year's version of the course. "I wanted to connect the idea of research and creative activity," she explained—a connection that she likes to make with other students she advises. During the third week of the semester, the students visited Shain Library, where research and instruction librarian Amanda Watson talked to them about library resources and archivist Nova Seals gave them an orientation to the Lear Center for Special Collections and Archives.
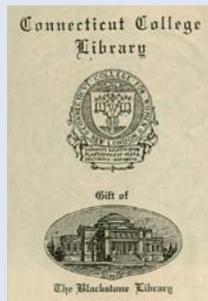
Exhibits and Events

The following public exhibitions will take place in Shain Library during the spring semester:

Exhibitions:

"Creating a New Library: The First Books at Connecticut College." In the display cases on the main floor of Shain Library. January 18 to March 18. This is the first in a series of centennial exhibits celebrating the history of Connecticut College. In the months leading up to the opening of Connecticut College in 1915, the Board of Trustees formed a library committee to start the difficult work of building a library from scratch. Their work would have amounted to very little, however, without the generous contributions of institutions and individuals from across Connecticut, some with close connections to the new college and some with no connection at all.

The first donation of approximately 200 books was from the Blackstone Library of Branford, Connecticut. This was soon followed by the library of Thomas Harland of Norwich, Connecticut, which consisted of about 2,000 books and was described at the time as "the backbone of the library." Over the course of the 1915-1916 academic year, a total of 5,000 books were added to the collection, most by donation. These books formed the core of the College's teaching and research collection for the following decades and illustrate what happens when you found a library on the kindness of strangers.

"Connecticut College and Women's Education." In the display cases on the main floor of Shain Library. March 28 to May 18. This exhibit will look at women's higher education and Connecticut College's place in that history.

Archives meet the stage in collaborative freshman seminar

After their first visit, the students returned to the archives to explore the primary sources of College history, reading journals, looking at historic photographs, and examining correspondence. One group's performance dealt with the evolution of the Connecticut College seal. Another group delved into stories of ghosts and hauntings on campus. A third group explored the history of the camel mascot, and another staged a dialogue between a "21st-century dude" and a "book spirit" who expounded on Connecticut College history. The semester culminated in the students' performance of the fruits of their weeks of research.

All of the students in the class were conducting archival research for the very first time, and they responded enthusiastically to the assignment. One group's scene even included the character of "Super Nova, the Super Friendly Super Archivist," complete with a superhero cape. It's not every day that IS staff get to be superheroes—and it's not every day that archival research gets to play such a starring role!

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