The iSchool at Drexel
Drexel University
**College of Information Science and Technology**
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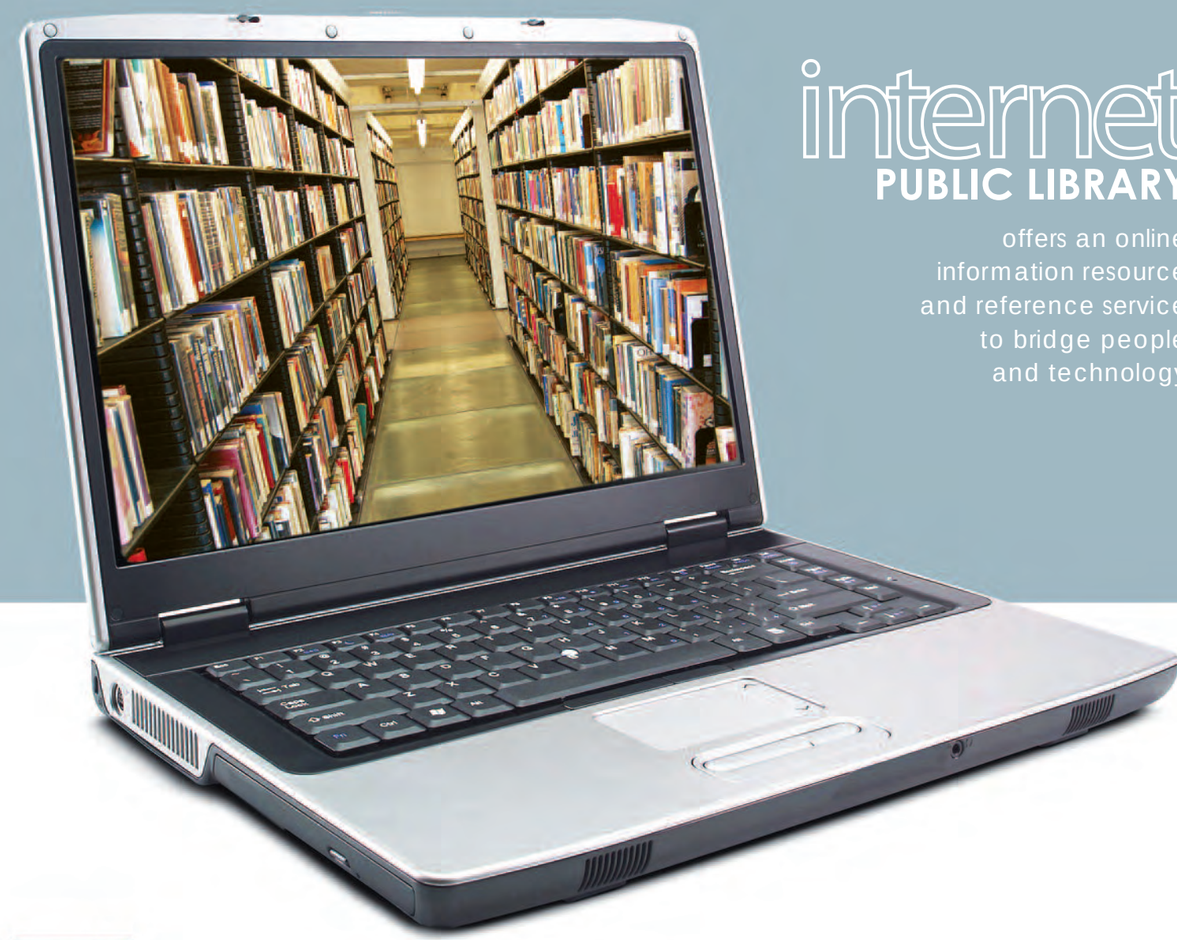

## internet PUBLIC LIBRARY

offers an online information resource and reference service to bridge people and technology

## Our Vision

Empowering society by uniting people, technology, and knowledge through innovative education and research.

Drexel UNIVERSITY

< SECOND LIFE < ALUMNI < PEER MENTORS < TONY HU

The *iSchool* at Drexel 3141 Chestnut Street Philadelphia PA 19104-2875 Phone: 215.895.2474 Fax: 215.895.2494 info@ischool.drexel.edu

## FROM THE DEAN

David E. Fenske, PhD
Isaac L. Auerbach Professor and Dean

The world is changing at a remarkable rate, as technological innovation drives the evolution of communication. The need for quality information professionals has never been greater and will only continue to grow. *iSchool* at Drexel graduates are well equipped to facilitate the exchange of information now and in the future.

As baby boomers begin to retire and the industry grows, more people are needed in the understaffed information professions. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics projects that the field of computer systems design and related services will add almost half a million jobs by 2014, a 40 percent increase compared with 14 percent for the economy overall. Network systems and data communications analyst, systems analyst, systems software engineer and applications engineer were four of CareerBuilder's 15 "Hot Careers for 2007."

The industry is changing as it expands. Information management has become an essential part of all organizations, leading to the need for well-rounded professionals with both technical skills and knowledge of human interaction. Our students learn the theory behind information management as well as the foundations of operating in a business environment. They apply this knowledge in real-world positions with our Cooperative Education partners.

It is an exciting, dynamic job market. Our graduates can expect to earn wages that are more than twice the average for the whole economy. The work is personally rewarding as well; information specialists can have impact on all parts of an organization and upward mobility is the norm. New technologies will bring exciting new fields and opportunities as the industry continues to evolve.

It is becoming more and more important that people have access to the data they need. Qualified information professionals are in short supply, so our alumni will be in great demand as they continue to empower society with information.

# bridge

APRIL 2007

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The iSchool at Drexel
College of Information Science and Technology

# Building for the Future

**Change happens quickly in the** Information Age. The *iSchool* at Drexel, College of Information Science and Technology is keeping pace and refurbishing its infrastructure to match the evolution of the industry.

The information needs of both the corporation and the individual are growing rapidly. The results of research in artificial intelligence, data mining, human-computer interaction and other fields are being used by people all over the world. Technologies like mobile communications platforms, search engines and instant messaging are changing the way people use information. Companies ranging from Whole Foods to the corner market employ information specialists and products to help manage databases, networks and data processing. These functions are increasing in importance as well as prevalence, as quality data handling is an important part of successful enterprise. The U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts computer systems design and related fields could add almost 500,000 new jobs by 2014.

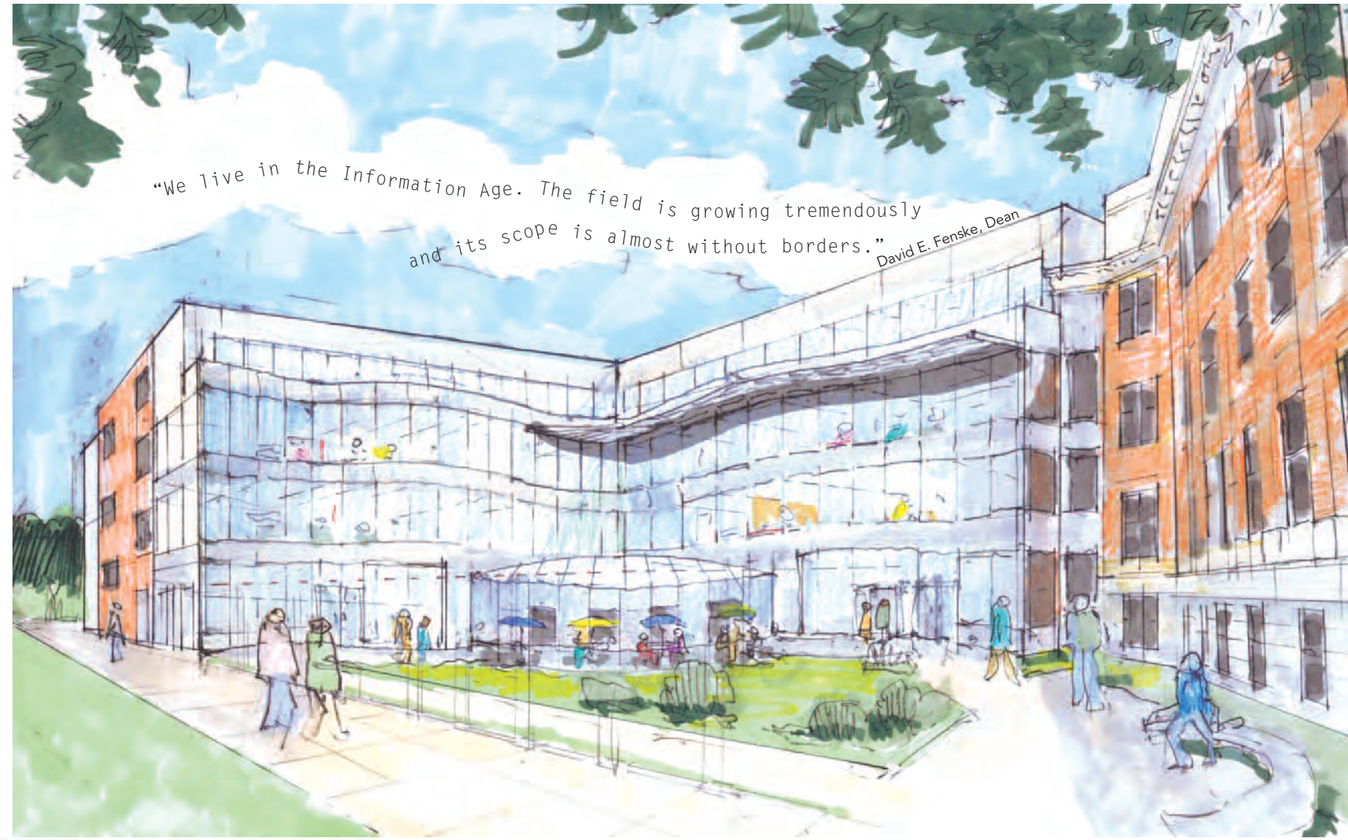
As a great place to learn about the science of information, the *iSchool* has been attracting more students, more faculty and more research dollars over the past decade. The number of graduate students has almost doubled since 2001, from about 500 to nearly 1,100, including a PhD student jump from 19 to over 70. New programs have been introduced to reflect the demands of the market, including the Bachelor of Science in Software Engineering in 2002, the Bachelor of Science in Information Technology in 2004, and the forthcoming Executive Master of Science in Information Technology Leadership, described on page 20. Research funding has increased from the $10,000s at the beginning of the decade to over $3,000,000 this year.

The College has incorporated new technologies into its everyday functions and surroundings to support the work of *iSchool* students and faculty. In 2005, the Rush Building lobby was remodeled with new interactive alcoves, flexible seating and a touch-screen information console. The renovated Alumni Garden now has wireless networking, power outlets, seating that encourages cooperation, verdant landscaping and a relaxing new fountain. Plans are in the works for a comfortably reworked 4th floor student lounge and user-friendly updates to the Computing Resource Center, including new computers, multipurpose monitors and modular group seating.

The *iSchool* has been so successful in the new millennium that it has outgrown its 100-year-old building. It would greatly benefit from the ability to easily house all its scholars, research and activities in one building and keep the members of its tight-knit community close together.

Dean David E. Fenske hopes to make the Rush Building the perfect home for the *iSchool* with a new west wing that would more than double the current space. Seen here in an artist's rendering, its modern appearance and infrastructure would complement the College's personnel and philosophy. Flexible, advanced classrooms would range from intimate collaborative settings to large learning environments. Adaptable, technologically progressive research spaces would facilitate interdisciplinary cooperation, both within the University and with colleagues at other institutions. A reception area and a café would make the building a comfortable, pleasant place to work and exchange ideas.

The Information Age is an era of change. The *iSchool* at Drexel is growing along with the world in order to continue to attract and produce the kind of exemplary people and cutting-edge knowledge that make it the exciting institution it is today.



# STEVE MELICK

**The past decade has been an exciting time in information** technology – the number of Internet users has increased from 16 million in 1995 to about 1.1 billion in 2006, creating an energetic new market with abundant opportunities. Steve Melick is an *iSchool* at Drexel alumni succeeding at the forefront of IT innovation.

## the business of success

Co-founder, former President and CEO of The Sycamore Group, Steve led the Philadelphia area company to an average annual growth of over 300 percent from 1996 to its sale in 2006. "A lot of people were playing around with Web design and simple one-line forms and transactions. We were the first company in the area to focus on high transaction application servers…the company that you turn to if you need sophisticated Internet-based application development." Sycamore's focus on large, complex, custom applications drew committed employees looking for challenging work and a recognizable client base consisting of companies such as Comcast, the City of Philadelphia, Merck, Verizon and VWR International. One of its more notable contributions to the industry was a global commerce platform delivered in 1999 which today is responsible for handling over $450 million in revenue per year.

Their success did not go unnoticed. In 2001, Steve was a finalist for the Greater Philadelphia Entrepreneur of the Year award and named as one of the Eastern Technology Council's top CEOs Under Age 40.

For several years, Sycamore was listed among Philadelphia's 100 fastest growing companies and consistently ranked by the *Philadelphia Business Journal* as one of the area's largest systems integrators.

In 2006, Steve saw an opportunity to move from the IT service sector to the more scalable software market, so The Sycamore Group was sold. The proceeds were used to found Moda Technology Partners, with Steve as President and COO. Moda – Mobile Data Acquisition Solutions – currently has two products which automate data collection and reporting during pharmaceutical manufacturing. The mobile Field Data Capture (FDC) tool requests, records and outputs FDA compliance and safety information during the manufacturing process. The Visual Intelligence Portal (VIP) reports meaningful data in a spatial and temporal schematic overlay of the factory, as well as in the traditional tabular format. An efficient replacement for a pen and paper, these products reduce departmental manufacturing costs by about 30 percent.

Moda's products are a unique solution that should continue to draw customers away from older, less efficient products. Moda expects to continue to outstrip the competition by expanding its innovative, mobile platform into other industries and global markets.

Following a common path to the *iSchool*, Steve transferred from the Department of Computer Science as a sophomore because Information Systems classes struck him as unusually practical. His classroom experience and his Co-ops at the large insurance firm CIGNA quickly set him on a rare career path. Steve and his full-time coworkers at CIGNA designed, built and implemented an inference-based analytical system that derived qualitative risk assessments of the company's clients. Still just a junior, he traveled to several field offices in support of the massive project, installing the program and training employees. CIGNA was impressed with his performance, and hired him to run part of their Co-op program after he graduated; interviewing, hiring and managing students in positions like the one he had occupied just a year before.

A short time later he moved into independent consulting and landed several projects with Independence Blue Cross; designing databases to help the marketing department target customers, track calculated commissions owed, and supporting a sales resource portal for brokers. During this time he and high school friend Michael Goetter founded The Sycamore Group.

Steve believes the foundation the *iSchool* provided helped launch his successful entrepreneurial career. "What you learn are the fundamentals of how to operate in a business environment…you're getting practical, real-world preparation."

Now he's contributing the strategic expertise and experience that made his businesses so successful to the future of the College. He is an important member of the Dean's Circle, the group of highly accomplished professionals and alumni that has traditionally served as the Dean's advisory council. In this time of change and growth at the *iSchool*, however, the expertise and experience of the Circle is a great asset. Steve is leading it through the transformation into a governing board so that Dean David E. Fenske and the College of Information Science and Technology make full use of this valuable resource.

He also advocates for the *iSchool* at open houses and other events, emphasizing to prospective students the head start on a career that Co-op provides. Soon he hopes to manage Co-ops again, this time at his own company. "I would suggest to all alumni that they take a moment to visit the College, participate in some alumni activities, even just visit the website and see some of the good stuff that's going on," he says, "It's truly a different school."

Hard work, good decisions, practical knowledge and a little luck have brought Steve business success. These same qualities make him a valued contributor to the future success of the *iSchool*.

# INSIDE INSIGHT

## the *iSchool*'s Peer Mentors help new students adjust

**The transition to college life can be very** difficult for some students. In the Fall 2006/2007 term, The *iSchool* at Drexel introduced the Peer Mentor program to help undergraduate students support each other during the transition.

The program gives *iSchool* students the opportunity to learn how to help others as well as be helped. Any sophomore, pre-junior, junior or senior in good academic standing can apply to be a Peer Mentor. Each one-year position comes with a $1,000 academic scholarship and a leadership training session, which includes seminars on communication, counseling, leadership, meeting student needs, and campus resources.

Along with a short biography for the *iSchool* Web page to help students get to know them, the Peer Mentors also list their major, year, instant messenger screen name and email address so that students can send in questions anytime. They share their knowledge with freshman and transfer students at orientations and other *iSchool* and Drexel events. Important liaisons with prospective students, the Mentors provide an insider's view at open houses and high school outreach sessions.

This year's six Peer Mentors have many different perspectives on life at the College of Information Science and Technology; there are representatives from IS, IT and SE. One is an accelerated degree BS/MS, one is a community college transfer, and another transferred from Bangalore. Their personal interests range from student government to scuba diving to roller coasters. With experience in almost any challenge an *iSchool* student can face, the Mentors are a great resource for the entire *iSchool* undergraduate community.

Greg Cully, a junior BS/MS in Information Systems, guided several students during the Fall 2006/2007 term, including Anu Singh, who was considering a transfer from the Department of Computer Science to a BS/MS in Information Systems. An *iSchool* Undergraduate Advisor showed her the technical requirements, then directed her to the Peer Mentor site for a candid student assessment of the difficulty of some of the graduate classes. It was Drexel's winter break when Anu emailed Greg from her Co-op, so she didn't expect an answer for at least a couple weeks.

"He replied the very next day," Anu says. "I wrote him point by point questions and he gave specific answers to each of them, which was really great." During the email conversation that followed Greg explained which courses he found most difficult and why. He also described the subject matter of the graduate classes he had taken so that Anu, who doesn't enjoy coding, would know which would be most difficult for her. Aided by Greg's insight, Anu made the informed decision to work towards a BSIS.

The *iSchool* strives to provide a welcoming environment that helps students achieve their goals. A successful asset for students in need of advice, the Peer Mentor program will be expanded to 11 members next year to provide even more resources, and a graduate program is also planned. It is now an important part of the supportive, tight-knit community at the *iSchool*.

INSET: Peer Mentor Jeff Gardosh being interviewed for television program "College Bound."

# Microsoft Success Story

**Last summer, Dennis Mongello was a Drexel** Cooperative Education pioneer. His six months in Redmond, WA made him the first *iSchool* student to co-op at Microsoft.

Students on Co-op get real-world work experience at companies like GlaxoSmithKline, Comcast, and now Microsoft. Dennis' Spring/Summer experience is the start of a productive partnership as well as a good example of the benefits Co-op offers to both students and employers.

A BS/MS student in Information Systems, Dennis was a Project Manager in the Messaging and Collaborative Services department. His job was to integrate new features into clients' current Microsoft communications services. One of his projects was the addition of a new function to Energizer's out-of-office service on Microsoft's email program Outlook. Dennis led a team through the process from start to finish. First, he evaluated the need and proposed a solution. Then he assembled the feature, tested it internally, and guided the client through the installation process. "I think it's a great place to start your career because you get a lot of experience. Even as a Co-op, they just throw you right in the fire and they get you working," he says of the responsibility of his position.

He learned to manage projects, clients and fellow employees. He prioritized, scheduled and gathered the pieces of his solutions from full-time employees. He was the primary contact for clients throughout the evaluation and implementation process. "Being a Project Manager is more business oriented than technical...I developed most in both soft skills and people skills."

Dennis also got experience in the informal side of business, networking with like-minded people. "The best part was being able to meet all these other students from Boston, Austin, New York City…now I know people all over the country."

Co-ops outside the region provide great opportunities for students to try living in different places as well as to try different responsible positions. Microsoft paid for Dennis' round-trip ticket to Redmond, found and subsidized his apartment, and gave him the option of a rental car or a bike and a bus pass for transportation. "I was impressed by how much Microsoft helped Co-ops, not just with work, but with moving their lives to Redmond for six months." He explored Seattle and experienced life in the Pacific Northwest.

Now Dennis is back in Philadelphia completing his master's degree, and his work on the West Coast has paved the way for more College of Information Science and Technology students – there are currently eight on a Fall/Winter Co-op in Redmond. Cooperative Education Coordinator Maureen Beatty looks forward to continuing the productive partnership. "I would say that Microsoft has been very, very pleased with all the Drexel students that have been out there…it seems to be a win-win situation."

Type "library" into Google and the top return is the Internet Public Library **(IPL, www.ipl.org)**, the first, largest & most recognized free online collection and reference service, available to anyone in the world with an Internet connection. The new evolution of digital librarianship is hosted by The *iSchool* at Drexel as of January 1, 2007.

# internet public library

**Founded by Dr. Joseph Janes and his students in a 1995 University of Michigan** School of Information graduate seminar, the IPL received 10,000 hits in its first week of existence. Now it averages 1,000,000 a week, attracting patrons from Honolulu to London to Beijing. Drs. Eileen Abels and Denise Agosto, the *iSchool* Faculty Coordinators for the IPL, estimate that 40 percent of the traffic is from students looking for help with their homework, while the remaining visitors are people of all kinds just looking for information.

The IPL has two main purposes and two major components that combine to form the most comprehensive free information gateway on the Internet. The two purposes are to educate library and information science students in digital librarianship and to provide an important public resource. The two main components that accomplish these goals are the collections and the reference service.

Collection development specialists expand a library's resources by acquiring new material based on the needs of the community. For the IPL, this process takes place in the special graduate seminar dedicated to the site's collections and reference

CONTINUED

administration needs. In fall 2007 this class will move to the *iSchool* from its current home at Michigan, and online students will be included for the first time. The collection development part of the seminar is dedicated to evaluating user suggestions, researching and adding new material, and checking and updating the site to ensure its accuracy and relevance.

In the reference administration part of the IPL seminar, students process the nearly 400 reference queries received every week through the "Ask a Question" service. The IPL gets questions like "Why does my stomach growl?" and "What is an authentic recipe for Paella Valencia?" and usually sends a detailed, thoroughly researched answer within three days. Not every question is accepted; some questioners are directed to the prepared responses on the Frequently Asked Reference Questions page or the Pathfinders page, which outlines common research trails. The IPL cannot give medical, legal, tax, or personal advice.

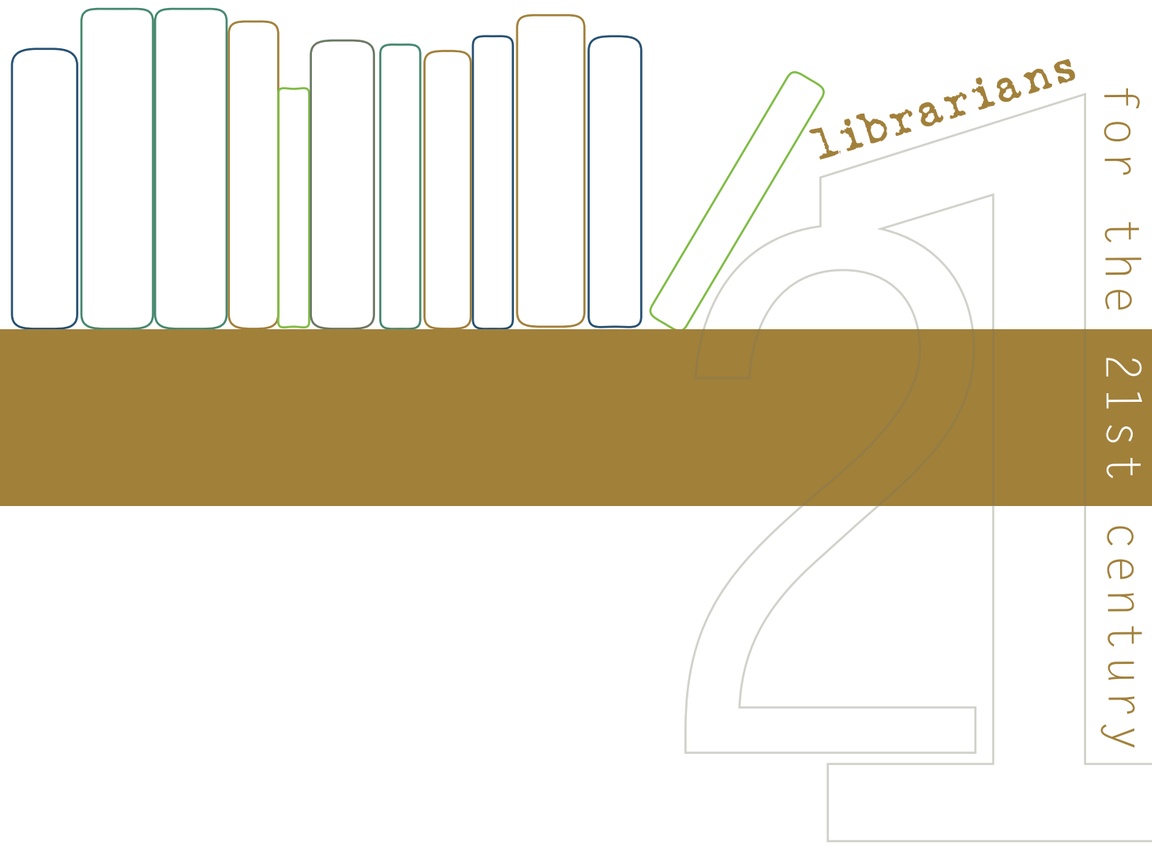
Accepted questions are sent to and answered by the more than 500 digital reference graduate students gaining real experience and serving the public simultaneously through the IPL. At many colleges around the country, students are rigorously trained and tested in IPL policy and encouraged to research their responses using only freely available resources to any patron. Over 60,000 questions have been answered over the last 12 years.

Behind the screens, many dedicated people contribute to the IPL. Its two full-time staff, Cathay Crosby and Mike Galloway, oversee user services, collections, and everyday operations. The *iSchool*'s technology team, Bill Doran and Jim Cahill, keep the site running day and night. Faculty Coordinators Dr. Lorri Mon at Florida State University and Dr. Maurita Holland at the University of Michigan, partner colleges with the *iSchool* in the IPL management team, are longtime supporters and advocates. Since classes are not always in session, the more than 60 volunteer librarians who often answer the questions are an integral part of the service. One volunteer is a professor in Germany who uses the IPL to teach her library and information science class, which also adds material to the Germany collection.

As a free Web-based library resource, the IPL can be invaluable to schools, local libraries and people all over the world. Libraries without the funds for an email reference service can use the IPL service instead. With options ranging from audio and ebook Mother Goose stories for young children, to a step-by-step guide to writing a research paper, to links to online news papers and magazines from places like Senegal, Macedonia and Antarctica, the IPL's wealth of information makes it an excellent teaching aid. People everywhere can easily find and use the Virtual Pediatric Hospital, Dr. Jungle's Animal-World, the Global Legal Information Network, or just submit a question and find an answer in their in-box a few days later.

As the IPL's collections and reference service continue to grow, it also works to fulfill other library functions, like socialization and entertainment. The first step toward a thriving virtual community is the new poetry wiki (www.ipl.org/div/teenpoet), where teenagers anonymously post and discuss original poetry. The wiki also includes personal pages, an interactive Dadaist parlor game, recommendations, inspirations and poetry exercises.

Like the *iSchool*, the Internet Public Library is always growing and changing, adapting to new technology and the needs of the community. Now the two will evolve as partners in the quest to connect people and knowledge more effectively.




# librarians for the 21st century

## *iSchool* doctoral students study under an Institute of Museum and Library Services grant

The library and the printed book are adapting and evolving... Our information-driven society needs professionals who can likewise adapt.

**The Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) has a** mission: "to grow and sustain a 'nation of learners.'" This ethos is the backbone of the Institute, the principal federal supporter of our nation's libraries and museums.

A nation of learners needs many teachers. Funded by a grant from the IMLS *Librarians for the 21st Century* program, *iSchool* PhD candidates Joan E. Beaudoin, Yen Bui, Jennifer Burke, Andrea Japzon and Tony Moore are learning today to be the teachers and leaders of tomorrow.

The $411,000 grant covers class and living expenses as the fellows complete their degree. Entitled "Preparing Faculty in the Management of Digital Information," it was developed by the *iSchool*'s Dr. Xia Lin, Principal Investigator (PI), and Co-PIs Drs. Michael Atwood, Katherine McCain, and former professor Sandra Hughes-Hassell. The student requirements are rigorous. To maintain their funding, the fellows are required to perform at least 20 hours of research work a week and maintain a 3.0 average in up to 6 credits of coursework per term, all while they continue work on their theses.

The grant also requires that the fellows pursue a teaching career in Information or Library Science or work as a management-level library professional. This stipulation is not much of a constraint to a group of individuals whose goals already lay in that direction. As Jennifer says, "This opportunity to pursue a doctorate in my areas of interest, and be funded, was too good of a chance to pass up."

According to the most recent report by the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics, 60 percent of current librarians are eligible for retirement in the next 10 years. This decline in numbers was one of the factors that led the IMLS to create its *Librarians for the 21st Century* grant program. The shortage of librarians is great news for those seeking a job in the field – the U.S. Bureau of Labor Statistics reports that employment opportunities will be "very good" over the next decade.

Though the importance of libraries has remained unchanged for more than 230 years, the way they fulfill their role has recently seen remarkable evolution. Adjusting to and incorporating new technologies will be a continuing challenge to librarians in the years ahead, a fact that the IMLS grant program attempts to address.

"I see a shift in libraries toward more of an 'information commons,' where creating connections between patrons and a vast array of information experiences can take place," says Tony. "It's not something that can happen easily though. It requires new training, renovated facilities, funding, and understanding the nature of libraries."

With the help of the *Librarians for the 21st Century* program and Drexel's College of Information Science and Technology, PhD candidates Joan E. Beaudoin, Yen Bui, Jennifer Burke, Andrea Japzon and Tony Moore are doing their part to sustain a nation of learners. "The library and the printed book are adapting and evolving," says Jennifer. "Our information-driven society needs professionals who can likewise adapt, evolve and move forward with technological changes. And they need educators who can prepare those information professionals."

“With research we need to consider how we can improve society’s quality of life”

# APPLIED SCIENCE

**Dr. Xiaohua “Tony” Hu’s approach to research reflects one** of the *iSchool*’s central tenets – empowering the public with information. “With research we need to consider how we can improve society’s quality of life,” he says. Appropriately, his specialty is data mining, the discipline of extracting usable information from vast amounts of data.

Dr. Hu arrived at The *iSchool* at Drexel in 2002 with years of research and development experience in the private sector, several degrees, and happy to be part of the cooperative intellectual environment provided by Drexel’s College of Information Science and Technology. Since then he has published more than 140 peer-reviewed papers, received the 2005 National Science Foundation (NSF) Career Award, and founded the *International Journal of Data Mining and Bioinformatics* and the Data Mining and Bioinformatics Laboratory. He teaches database administration to undergraduates, helps PhD students with their dissertations, and continues the groundbreaking research that has defined his career.

His current research is concentrated on three timely areas: bioinformatics, text mining and Web mining.

The field of bioinformatics is growing at an incredible rate. The booming healthcare industry generates masses of data on widely varied subjects, and bioinformatics is the key to making sure the important information is where it should be. One of Dr. Hu’s several bioinformatics projects is a joint venture with faculty at the College of Medicine and the School of Biomedical Engineering, Science and Health Systems intended to develop an integrated computational model of breast cancer progression. They hope that one of the outcomes of their research will help doctors accurately diagnose the disease at an early stage. Dr. Hu’s data mining tools remove the irrelevant information, leaving only the biomarker data that might be related to the genomic instability that indicates breast cancer.

In a related text mining project funded by NSF, Dr. Hu is taking a step back to look at how healthcare data management as a whole can be made more efficient. By examining the entire process of retrieving, extracting and analyzing data he is making each aspect more efficient. “The thing that makes it unique is we really treat these three, independent components as one whole system,” he says.

NSF is also supporting Dr. Hu’s continued work with rough set theory, which he was the first to apply to data mining. Rough set theory helps analyze incomplete or imprecise data, which makes it a perfect tool for building the next generation of Internet search engines. Google and other keyword searches produce results based only on how closely they match the entered term. Dr. Hu’s new smart Web mining engine generates returns based on remembered search histories, prior returns actually used, and other context-sensitive information. For example, a smart search for “chip” by Bill Gates would return computer chip and not potato chip results.

Born and raised in the Hunan province in China, where his parents were teachers, Dr. Hu earned degrees from Wuhan University and the Institute of Computing Technology at the Chinese Academy of Science before moving to Canada. There he received another degree from Simon Fraser University and a PhD from the University of Regina.

After receiving his doctorate, Dr. Hu brought his expertise to the private sector. He worked on real-time data management systems for Nortel, then moved to the data mining research group at GTE (now Verizon) Laboratories. There his work on the CHAMP (CHurn Analysis, Modeling and Prediction) project won him the nomination for GTE’s highest technical achievement award in 1997. The program, which is still in use, analyzes contract applications to identify “churners” – customers who take serial advantage of introductory offers. After helping start-ups Knowledge-Stream Partners and Blue Martini Software create systems like a real-time fraud detection program for Chase Manhattan, he founded his own company, Data Mining Warehouse.

“To do research you need to have vision to see what problems are important,” Dr. Hu says, “you need to consider the broader impact.” The rare academic whose work often affects everyday life, Dr. Hu’s current research could be part of tomorrow’s society.

>> the *iSchool* enters Second Life

# VIRTUAL revolution

**SECOND LIFE (SL) has attracted** a lot of attention recently. The virtual world has been the subject of features by CNN, NBC News and most other major news providers. It was a *Business Week* cover story. *The New York Times* ran an SL story on the first page of its Travel section. Reuters recently assigned a beat reporter to Second Life – the first full-time virtual reporter ever. As the numbers of users grow, The *iSchool* at Drexel explores the advantages of the latest evolution in virtual reality.

Prospective students from all over the globe will be able to immerse themselves in the *iSchool* atmosphere, learning about the experience and advantages in an environment created by their peers.

Second Life is the product of the real-world company Linden Labs, and was first made available to the public in 2003. Since then, it has gathered over 4 million users, up from around 300,000 in October of 2006. Unlike other online environments, SL is a free customizable platform rather than a prefabricated world. Users, known as residents, make and personalize a virtual representative called an avatar to navigate the three-dimensional online space. Residents can dance at a virtual club, attend a "live" concert or speech, or check out *Ivanhoe* at the SLibrary.

It is user ownership that makes Second Life revolutionary. Creators retain intellectual property rights for the objects they create, which means virtual products are sold for real profit in Lindens, the SL currency worth about 1/250th of a dollar. Avatar customizations like clothes and wings are the most common purchases, but everything from motorcycles to palatial estates are on the market. A resident can easily raise enough Lindens selling in-world goods to buy an island – virtual land is the only product for which Linden Lab charges. The top ten earners in SL make over $200,000 U.S. per year.

Large organizations are beginning to experiment with the novel social networking aspects of SL. NBC holds concerts and other events at its virtual headquarters, and avatars can dance to the latest music and videos on Sony BMG's island. W Hotels recently tested a prototype of their new Aloft brand in SL. IBM's campus includes an Executive Briefing Center for employee meetings, a Recruitment Center and experimental in-world Circuit City. One Harvard Law professor teaches part of a class and holds office hours in SL.

The College's first venture into Second Life was Scholars' Day, when accepted scholarship students came to campus to learn more about the *iSchool*. Students were provided an avatar that they customized before the in-world information session. With Undergraduate Advisors and Peer Mentors, they got to know each other and the *iSchool* in an SL chat, discussing majors, Co-ops and the future of the College and SL. "It was a great way to learn more about the students, especially the shy ones," said Advisor Jenn Matthews.

The big step is the upcoming debut of the *iSchool* in Teen Second Life. Teen SL is limited to users aged 13-17 and does not allow mature content. To benefit current as well as prospective students, a team of undergraduates will learn about SL design as they build The *iSchool* at Drexel island. Teen visitors to the island will be able to hang out at a copy of the Rush Building containing information, activities, avatar gear and games. Prospective students from all over the globe will be able to immerse themselves in the *iSchool* atmosphere, learning about the experience and advantages of the College in an environment created by their peers.

With its entry into Second Life, the College of Information Science and Technology is joining the dynamic future of virtual socialization. Expected to reach 9 million residents by July 2007, SL could spark the virtual revolution that makes the Internet 3-D. The same prospective students visiting the Teen SL Rush Building this year could become *iSchool* undergraduates attending in-world study groups and lectures just a few years later.

# msitl executive

## master of science in information technology leadership

"IT leadership encompasses more than new technologies," says Mario De Marco, Executive Director of the *iSchool*'s new Executive Master of Science in Information Technology Leadership (Executive MSITL) program. "It's about managing and directing change within an organization, understanding technology and why it's important to the business, and stewarding the enterprise through realization of the ascribed value."

Launching in September of 2007, the Executive MSITL can propel businesses' best and brightest to an understanding of the role IT should play and how to ensure that it creates value. "The program focuses on the intersection of technical, business, and leadership issues, and how to best integrate them in an organization," Mr. De Marco says. The curriculum incorporates case-based examples, lectures, current research reports, and invited industry speakers.

To help build lifelong professional support networks, cohorts of about 25 executives complete the course together over an 18-month period. Small teams are formed for the duration of the cohort to foster cooperation and teamwork, simulating the business environment. Case-based analysis and problem-centered learning drawn from current IT challenges are extensively utilized. Students learn to apply IT practices to real-world business challenges. They develop business and strategic leadership skills that turn IT into a positive business tool that can help any company compete more effectively.

Candidates for the program have been marked for potential advancement within their respective organizations, and typically have at least eight years of industry experience. The admissions committee considers current position, career development, academic background and commitment to the program. Executive MSITL principal Dr. Peter Grillo, who has taught in other executive programs, says "Executive students bring real experience to the program, generating a very interactive and dynamic environment."

Business leaders will help guide the program along with *iSchool* faculty, bringing real-world experience to the classroom. Dr. Grillo has extensive background in IT consulting as well as stretches at IBM and Unisys. Mr. De Marco had a long career at IBM, and was chosen as one of their first IT consultants. He was a co-founder and COO of a consulting firm that attained recognition in the Inc. 500.

"The *iSchool* at Drexel has the opportunity to define what IT leadership is," says Dr. Grillo. The Executive MSITL will provide business' next generation of technology leaders with the knowledge and executive relationships necessary to transform IT for a better bottom line.