

VOICES

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The Newsletter for the Community Informatics Initiative at the University of Illinois

Community Inquiry Labs Back in Action

Community Inquiry Labs (CILabs), the web-based tool that supports community inquiry and collaboration, is available online again after being redesigned to fix a security breach that was discovered in fall 2008.



Cycle of inquiry based learning

Community Informatics Professor Bertram “Chip” Bruce, as well as Ryan Thomas and John Barclay in the College of Education, worked with many others in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS) and Campus Information Technologies and Educational Services (CITES) to make CILabs available to the public again. Especially involved were Claudia Serbanuta of GSLIS and Alan Bilansky and Julieanne Chapman of CITES.

According to Bilansky, a Training Specialist at CITES, there are three particularly exciting facets of the new CILabs. The first is that CILabs is a bottom-up design, conceptualized based on the needs of researchers in the field. The second is the “cloning” feature that allows users to copy material with Creative Commons Licensing and use it in their own CILabs within the site, and the third is the inclusion of inquiry units, which help participants outline the details of their problem solving process.

“It’s a full-featured set of collaborative and authoring features that is unlike anything else you’ll find on the Web,” Bilansky stated.

Possibly confused with Dr. Kate Williams’ Community Informatics Lab (CI Lab), which works with large data sets related to community technology use, CILabs (plural) is based on the work of American scholar, philosopher and experiential learning pioneer John Dewey. The group support site allows users from all over the world to participate in cooperative virtual discussions on a variety of topics and was designed to support peoples’ natural curiosity about the world. CILabs’ structure allows participants to use their questions to guide the development of investigations and discussions about topics like helping at-risk youth succeed or using technology to foster democracy, which in turn lead to new questions, and the cycle of inquiry continues.

Visitors to the site can create a free secure log-in to access shared material and create new topics and content. This platform is intended for the larger community as well as University-affiliated members, although new users must provide a valid email address and then access CILabs from a link that is sent to their email accounts. To receive a free login for CILabs, visit <https://cilabs.illinois.edu/>

Combined Cloud
Administrator Adult art Arts At-risk Learning Babop Blog Child class College
College community community journalism Community Member
Computers course democracy Descripción Dewey digital literacy editing
education Elementary environment Formal General geocoding geography
GIS GPS Health High School high school hip hop history IBI ICT iLabs
Informal information information literacy inquiry inquiry-based
learning inquiry unit Kids and Teens learning Librarian literacy longitude
map mapping measurement Middle Moldova Music Parent participatory design place
name position pragmatism preservice teachers race readings Recreation
Reference Researcher Russell Science Senior situation Society Student
Teacher teaching technology test testing Twitter urban video visualization
Vocational Education welcome Words youth yuja

Metatags used to categorize CILabs

eBlack Studies Conference 2009



During the summer of 2009, a dozen participants met at the Savannah State campus in Georgia to discover what was happening locally in terms of digital life studies, or the study of technology such as wireless, broadband and online video as they are used in daily life. Abdul Alkalimat, a professor of the Library and Information Science and African American Studies programs at the University of Illinois, and Ron Bailey, a visiting professor in Africana Studies in the College of Liberal Arts and Social Sciences at Savannah State University, organized and facilitated the event.

Attendees toured several sites, including The Beach Institute, the first African American school in Savannah, and First African Baptist church, the oldest black church in North America. The group later learned about several useful online resources in a workshop. While Savannah State provided some funding, the participants paid for their own travel and lodging.

Charles Ransom, Multicultural Librarian at the University of Michigan's Harlan Hatcher Graduate Library, attended the workshop.

"The things from many of the historical sites visited need to be preserved," said Ransom, who has been selecting materials for multicultural studies collections since he arrived at the University of Michigan in the early 1990s as the Diversity Librarian. Ransom also said that the church really needs to talk to someone about preserving their historical documents which date back to the 18th century. The associate director of Atlanta University Library also talked about a program with Cornell University that digitizes the historic documents of some of the Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCU's) during the workshop. According to the director, the program provides scanners and trains staff at HBCU libraries to preserve and share primary source materials. All sessions were podcast and placed on Facebook by one of the attendees.

Visit <http://www.eblackstudies.org/> for more information.

iSchools coming to Urbana-Champaign



The Fifth Annual iSchools Conference will take place February 3-6, 2010 at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. The theme of the 2010 conference is iMPACTS, focusing on the impact of the iSchool movement both within the iSchools themselves and in the larger community, including the fields of education and scientific research. The conference is an opportunity for students, scholars and professionals around the country (and the globe) to come together to share information about teaching, service and research and learn from one another.

Multiple facets of the iSchool movement will be represented in the sessions and presentations, including topics on information behavior, organization and management; eGovernment; IT infrastructure and development and diversity in iSociety. Plan to join us! Please visit <http://www.ischools.org/iConference10/2010index/> for more information.

University Engagement in São Tomé Summer 2009



Community informatics staff members Martin Wolske, senior research scientist, and Paul Adams, director of community networking, took trips to São Tomé, West Africa last summer to start new projects that would complement the work they did on the island in past trips. In one project, Wolske along with Damon McGhee, Jeanie Austin and Sara Jackman, current GSLIS students, trained teachers on networking, Linux and servers at the Non-Governmental Organization (NGO) STeP UP, which, among other things, runs a São Toméan technical school that teaches courses on computer hardware, Microsoft Applications and operating systems.

"We're hoping to establish a formal relationship between the island and the university to further such work," said Wolske, who believes that São Tomé would be a good environment to explore some issues on knowledge and information sharing.

Other projects included furthering Professor Jon Gant's research on participatory GIS, starting a digital storytelling project and working closely with several One Laptop Per Child interns to try to create a sustainability plan for the XO laptops that were distributed.

"I think São Tomé is a great place for research of various kinds," said Damon McGhee, who went on the trip to complete a service-learning project for Wolske's Introduction to Network Systems class. "The research that comes out of São Tomé would be so unique in comparison to research in other countries."

The São Tomé Project started in 2006 when GSLIS alum George Coehlo contacted Adams to tell him about the similarities between São Tomé and the East St. Louis Action Research Project (ESLARP), a site where Community Informatics (CI) service learning projects are conducted as part of a campus-wide community development initiative. Coehlo, a São Toméan who came to the University of Illinois on a Fulbright Scholarship and worked as a technology consultant for ESLARP, indicated that the model used to carry out projects in ESLARP could be adapted to São Tomé, an underdeveloped country that could benefit from CI-related activities and research.

So far, Adams and Wolske have coordinated groups to São Tomé over the last three summers and are currently planning trips for Winter Break 2009 and Summer 2010. Future activities in São Tomé may include additional service learning courses, informal research projects and an interdisciplinary studio course.

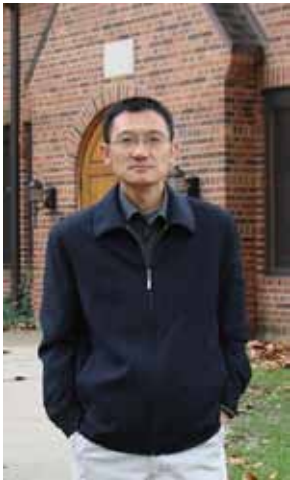
To learn more about the São Tomé Project and how to get involved, visit <http://saotomeproject.prairienet.org/>.



Community Health Informatics Update

A collaborative and sustainable community health informatics project is being developed in two parts: a short-term practice project and a long-term inter-campus research project. The year-long practice project is the re-development of an on-line health database for the Champaign-Urbana Public Health Department, a partnership between the health department and the new Master of Public Health program in the College of Applied Health Sciences. New data will be added and important data already there will be updated. The research project includes 1) the development of enhanced surveillance of physical activity using new media (iPhones, GIS mapping) in partnership with the Illinois Department of Public Health and Illinois Public Health Institute's Illinois Health Data Dissemination Initiative; 2) development of health informatics technology including health-promoting applications for mobile devices and 3) describing the distribution of community assets critical to achieving local priority health objectives using spatial data and computational resources of the University of Illinois, Champaign-Urbana. The project development team is currently looking at several funding opportunities to start the projects.

Welcome to Dr. Xu, Scholar-in-Residence



The Community Informatics Initiative would like to extend a warm welcome to Dr. XiaoXiong Xu, a new Scholar-in-Residence here at the Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS)! His six-month visit is sponsored by the K.C. Wong Education Foundation, and he comes to us from Ningbo University in China, where he is an associate professor at the College of Teacher Education.

Dr. Xu is interested in the topics of instructional system design and the use of new technologies for effective teaching and learning. Xu's current research focuses on actions to enhance students' learning environments by combining Web 2.0 tools, such as blogs, wikis, RSS feeds, podcasts and mind mapping software, with new approaches to education. He explains that the traditional Chinese educational system revolves around the one-way communication of knowledge from the teacher to the students through lectures, but he feels that excluding classroom discussion is a shortcoming of this model. In contrast, the American educational model enables two-way communication between the teacher and the students, as well as between students and their peers. With everyone interested and working together in this format, Xu feels that implementing similar activities in Chinese classrooms could be very beneficial. Adding Web 2.0 technology to foster those discussions can then bolster students' learning even more, as well as help students enjoy learning.

In addition to using technology in educational contexts, however, he is also interested in fostering the development of collaborative skills among students through group work. Some of his previous research involved learning technologies and learning sciences, focusing on university freshman working together in small groups.

Fostering teamwork in effective teaching models is important, Xu says, because such practical skills will improve students' chances of getting a good job in the future. He explains that in many cases Chinese students are expected to work well individually but not to collaborate with other students, and Xu feels that all students need teamwork skills for future employment.

By implementing Web 2.0 technologies in educational contexts, especially when used in alongside inquiry-based learning models (in which the students investigate topics based on their own curiosity), Xu feels that he can support the growth of an information society in his home country, as well as eventually connecting American students and Chinese students to improve cross-cultural communication via Internet technologies. While here at GSLIS, Xu especially looks forward to working with Dr. Bertram "Chip" Bruce and following his projects, especially Youth Community Informatics (YCI).

IMLS Community Informatics Corps Fellows 2009-2010

Through funding from the U.S. Institute of Museum and Library Services the Community Informatics Initiative is pleased to announce its fellowship recipients for the 2009-2010 school year as follows:



Imani Bazzell



Camille Chesley



Marcela Peres



Sorrel Goodwin



Aisha Haykal



Brent Walton



Meadow Jones



Licia Knight



Suzanne Im

Fellows are awarded partial to full tuition waivers and a stipend in the Graduate School of Library and Information Science. Congratulations to this year's students!

New at GSLIS: Certificate in Community Informatics

GSLIS now offers a certificate for students who study community informatics (CI). One student received the certificate in August and two others will receive it at the December graduation. While the certificate won't appear on transcripts, it will indicate to employers a familiarity with this emerging field. Students are required to take 3 courses, including the CI core course LIS 518. Those pursuing the certificate may select additional courses from the GSLIS Web site. Courses may be taken in any order and the credits count toward the master's degree in library science.

Students can participate in the CI program on either a full- or part-time basis, as an on-campus, in-Chicago or LEEP (online) student. All CI classes are also available to students not working towards the CI certificate.

With this foundation, recipients of LIS degrees with a CI certificate may work in a variety of settings such as public and school libraries, non-profit organizations, cultural heritage groups and municipal governments as librarians, youth media instructors, and researchers, for example. Providing community information and referral is another job option. We especially encourage access to and participation in careers in library and information science for students traditionally underrepresented in graduate study and research.

For more information and to apply on-line visit: <http://www.lis.illinois.edu/programs/ms/cic.html>

Call for Proposals: Public Engagement

The UI Office of the Vice Chancellor for Public Engagement is seeking grant proposals from faculty, students, and staff for community-related projects, scholarly work, creative endeavors, course development and other activities related to public engagement. Up to \$20,000 will be made available on a competitive basis, with a submission deadline of Monday, November 2, 2009.

For complete information contact Nathaniel Banks at 333-9525
Or visit: <http://engagement.illinois.edu/rfp.html>

Check out the CII Calendar of events

CIRN 2009: Empowering communities: learning from community informatics practice

Nov 4, 2009 - Nov 6, 2009 | All Day
Monash University Prato Centre, Italy

CII Research Series: Steve Notaro -- Mapping the Way to Better Health Care: an Analysis of Champaign County Free Clinics

Nov 11, 2009 | 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm
Rm 109, Graduate School of Library and Information Science

Policy: The State of Illinois and BTOP

Nov 19, 2009 | 9:00 am - 10:00 am
Room 126, Library and Information Science, 501 E. Daniel Street, Champaign, IL

CII Research Series: Ian Brooks, NCSA -- Designing a Culturally Sensitive Interface for an Endemic Disease Cyberenvironment

Dec 16, 2009 | 2:00 pm - 3:00 pm
Rm 109, Graduate School of Library and Information Science

iSchools 2010 Conference

Feb 3, 2010 - Feb 4, 2010 | All Day
iHotel and Conference Center
University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign

To see a full listing of community informatics related events please visit the calendar located on the CII homepage: <http://www.cii.illinois.edu>

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