

VO[I]CES

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

I-Powered



Dr. Will Patterson, associate director of the Bruce D. Nesbitt African American Cultural Center (<http://www.odos.uiuc.edu/aacp/director.html>) and assistant professor in the Department of African American Studies taught a course last semester called Hip Hop and Social Entrepreneurship. The course was partly supported by the Academy of Entrepreneurial Leadership, where Dr. Patterson is a Faculty Fellow this year, and it features a couple of outstanding and unusual components: initially, five local small business owners or entrepreneurs with businesses located in or serving marginalized communities were targeted to receive a tuition waiver and book voucher to participate in the course. However, it was later determined that the funding would be used to support youth-serving organizations.

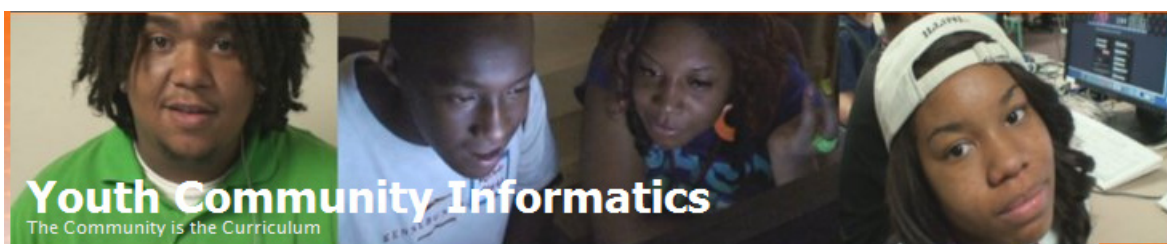
The second feature was a competition in which students presented proposals for a hip-hop-based program that meets the needs of a marginalized community or population before a panel of judges. The winning team received a \$2500 stipend to implement their program. GSLIS professor and CII co-director Ann Bishop served as a judge in the competition.

Some students in the course took a trip to East St. Louis in November, which coincided with the last outreach weekend of the term, sponsored by the East St. Louis Action Research Project (ESLARP) (<http://www.eslarp.uiuc.edu/>). The trip was co-organized with Professor Ken Salo of the Department of Urban and Regional Planning

continued on page four

YCI launches Web site

Youth Community Informatics (YCI), a CII project funded by an Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS) grant, recently launched a Web site featuring the work of faculty, students and staff over the past year. The site contains information on YCI-hosted events such as the Web site training for the youth group, the Peer Ambassadors, and profiles of the communities with which the YCI team has been working. Collaborations include community journalism activities in Paseo Boricua, Chicago, and Champaign County. The site also links to the newly redesigned iLabs, a tool that enables group inquiry by providing an online space where researchers can share information in blog format, post events on a calendar and upload documents. The tool was created by University of Illinois' Campus Information Technologies and Educational Services (CITES), but is open to anyone willing to create an account. For more information, visit: <http://yci.illinois.edu/yci/>.



Spring Speaker Series features scholars from the arts, sciences, business and media

The Community Informatics Initiative Spring 2009 Speaker Series kicked off January 21 with Professor Reed Larson, Human Development and Family Studies, Uillinois, speaking about his research on youth development in after-school enrichment programs. Details on his work can be found here: <http://www.youthdev.uiuc.edu/>.

Most talks are recorded and archived on the LIS website at <http://www.lis.uiuc.edu/news/lectures.html>. Additional events will take place on Wednesday afternoons from 2-3 pm in LIS126 unless otherwise noted. The Spring lineup features:

January 28 – Professor John Kindt, College of Business, Uillinois

Topic: Community Informatics in Business Education

As a 2008-2009 CII Teaching Fellow, Professor Kindt incorporated informatics lectures and materials into sections of Business Administration 300. He will speak about his experience with teaching students how to implement information technology in communities efficiently, among other topics.

February 25 – Professor Christian Sandvig, College of Media, Uillinois

Topic: Communication in the Tribal Digital Village

Professor Sandvig will present his research on the Tribal Digital Village (TDV), a community-based project to provide wireless Internet to remote Indian reservations in California.

March 11 – Professor Sara McLafferty, Department of Geography, Uillinois

Topic: GIS in the Upper Sangamon Watershed

A 2008-2009 CII Research Fellow, Professor McLafferty will present her work on developing a GIS tool with community members that will assist them in planting biofuel grasses near the Upper Sangamon Watershed.

April 8 – Professor Stacy Harwood, Urban and Regional Planning, Uillinois

Topic: Connecting Low-Capacity Communities to the Brownfield Marketplace

Professor Harwood will discuss her work in East St. Louis, Ill., to gather data on potential brownfield sites in order to help spur development in the community. Professor Harwood is also a 2008-2009 CII Research Fellow.

April 22 – Professor Kevin Hamilton, Art and Design, Uillinois

Topic: The Biological Computing Lab: A radical piece of CU history

NOTE: This event will be held in Room 46 of the LIS Building.

Professor Hamilton will discuss his research on the BCL (Biological Computing Laboratory), an independent division in the UI Department of Electrical Engineering and center of “countercultural” activity in Champaign-Urbana, founded in 1957 by Professor Heinz von Foerster and operated into the mid 1970s.

In addition to the speaker series, there will be a panel on service learning and a talk by Professor **Karen Mossberger** (Department of Public Administration, UIC). The panel, featuring professors **Laura Lawson (Landscape Architecture, Uillinois)**, **Stacy Harwood (Urban and Regional Planning, Uillinois)** and **Ken Salo (Urban and Regional Planning, Uillinois)**, will take place March 6 at 12 p.m. (during LEEP weekend – location TBA). Mossberger’s talk, sponsored by CII and Information in Society, is scheduled for February 23 at 4 p.m. (location TBA). Professor Mossberger has recently published a book called **Digital Citizenship**. For more information, visit <http://www.uic.edu/cuppa/pa/faculty/mossberger.html>.

Seed Grant Updates

Through the Illinois Informatics Institute and the Office of the Provost, the Community Informatics Initiative is able to provide seed funds to a number of projects across campus. A new call for proposals has been posted to our Web site, with a deadline of March 2, 2009. Here are updates from many of this year's grantees:

Civic Engagement among Local and Descendant Communities of New Philadelphia, Illinois

PI: Christopher Fennell, Anthropology Department

Work continues on a new and more interactive Web site for the New Philadelphia Archaeological Project. It will provide more opportunities for collaboration between local and descendant community members and the project archaeologists. A preliminary template of the site has been made available to community members for feedback.



The boundaries of the historic New Philadelphia superimposed on an image of its modern landscape.

Participatory GIS in the Upper Sangamon Watershed: Geovisualization, Collective Decision-making and Environmental Governance

PIs: Miriam Cope, Sara McLafferty and Bruce Rhoads, Geography Department

The team has developed a Geographic Information System (GIS) for the Upper Sangamon watershed. The tool enables identification and visualization of geographic scenarios for the planting of biofuel grasses in environmentally beneficial and economically sound ways. They have also planned stakeholder meetings where farmers, landowners, conservation groups and others will interact with the GIS in a participatory process to engage the biofuels issue.

Connecting Low-Capacity Communities to the Brownfield Marketplace

PI: Stacy Harwood, Urban & Regional Planning Department

For four months, Harwood's team has been gathering information about the environmental history of East St. Louis, Illinois properties. Focusing on three neighborhoods and on abandoned gas stations, they have found environmental history data that will help determine if the properties are brownfield sites. Data sources included Sanborn maps, city directories, newspaper articles, environmental databases and a variety of government documents. They also conducted interviews with long-time residents and visual inspections. Next, they will develop a Web site about the process and work with organizations looking to acquire property for development.

Informatics in the Garden

PI: Michelle Wander and Laura Witzling, Natural Resources and Environmental Sciences

Wander's team is evaluating community use of informatics tools to enhance access to soil quality and environmental risk information. They have determined chemical and physical characteristics of soil samples from ten community gardens, and are conducting biological assays of the soils. They are working with educators, gardeners and the public to develop online and in-person trainings for community members on soil management and environmental risk beginning Spring 2009. A survey revealed participants prefer hands-on learning experiences, so the team members are developing ways for online users to have active learning experiences with hands-on appeal.



Professor Michelle Wander and grad assistant Laura Witzling at a soil testing training for community members.

Not What They Said but How They Said It:

The Political Courage of Black Girls and Women in Their Everyday Experiences

PI: Ruth Nicole Brown, Gender and Women's Studies Program

In a continuation of her research on narratives of Black girlhood, Brown has launched a year-long project focusing on media created by Black girls and the value that educational institutions place on Black girls and their productions. Data collection started December 1 with a group of girls at a local middle school. Participant observation, photo voice, and performance are the methods used in Brown's study. An exhibit of participant-created photography will be on display at Krannert Art Museum starting Feb. 20, 2009, and a performance based on the girls' narratives will debut in Fall 2009.

I-Powered, continued from page one

who are reflecting on issues of outreach, service learning and the legacy of ESLARP. Two vans transported doctors Patterson and Salo, their students, and members of the Champaign-Urbana Citizens for Peace and Justice to East St. Louis, where they garnered attention as a critical mass of African American students in blue and orange hooded sweatshirts emblazoned with "I-Power" on the front, and "Doing Good in the 'Hood'" on the back.

Dr. Patterson stressed that University of Illinois students of color are "I-Powered," meaning they are in an important position to connect with youth in East St. Louis and interest them in education and civic leadership.

The visit to East St. Louis included conversations with Reginald Petty, an historian and storyteller of East St. Louis; a Centreville planner, who told students he needed hazardous materials certification to work in the polluted environment there; the Concerned Citizens of Precinct 12; and the South End New Development Organization (SENDO). An impromptu visit to the former home of jazz musician Miles Davis was a highlight. Participants on the trip were inspired by the opportunities to introduce hip hop into the landscape, through improvisation and rhythm, celebrating the community. Students were also shocked that a city of East St. Louis' size (pop. 30,000) had no hospital.



Former home of Miles Davis

The post-trip discussion at the African American Cultural Center included fish, chicken, and macaroni and cheese from the Sea Boat, as well as conviviality with approximately thirty students from across campus and members of the Race, Space and Law Reading Group (<http://racespacelaw.art.uiuc.edu/>), sponsored by the Illinois Program for Research in the Humanities. Certainly one of the aims of the Community Informatics Initiative is to cross disciplinary boundaries and critique social oppressions, so we look forward to continuing collaborations with the African American Cultural Center and Dr. Patterson. The next step will be to create an online forum with those in attendance so that conversations can continue virtually and I-Powered can grow in numbers and influence. If you would like to subscribe to the I-Powered listserv, contact Sharon Irish at slirish@illinois.edu.

CI Club travels to East St. Louis



CI Club volunteers Brett Sanderson, Roy Saldaña, Jr. and Kristin LoDolce sort through one of Ms. Dunham's former residences searching for items in need of preservation. The face masks are a precaution against harmful dust and mold particles in the air.

Community Informatics Club members also attended the Nov. 14-15, 2008, Outreach Weekend organized by the East St. Louis Action Research Project (ESLARP). With GSLIS student Noah Lenstra as coordinator, Jeff Ginger, Kristin LoDolce, Damon McGhee, Lizzie Pope, Roy Saldaña, Jr., Hui Yan and friends traveled to East St. Louis (ESL) to work at the sites that house the archives of Katherine Dunham, the renowned anthropologist and dancer.

The group arrived late Friday in time to tour the Katherine Dunham Museum and visit one of Dunham's residences where they helped with site cleanup. Then they took a driving tour through the city, with Lenstra providing a tour guide-style narration of ESL history, before meeting up with the larger ESLARP group at an area hotel. Also in attendance were Professor Martin Wolske's LIS 451 class, Professor Stacy Harwood's urban planning (UP 474) class, and many others from across the College of Fine and Applied Arts, in addition to Professor Will Patterson's Hip Hop and Social Entrepreneurship (AFRO 498) class.

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The next morning the group returned to the Dunham sites for more cleanup, or as Ginger called it (attributing the term to Professor Abdul Alkalimat), “urban archaeology.” Later, they went back to the Dunham Museum where they performed odd jobs such as cataloging a small library, arranging Ms. Dunham’s countless awards on the wall in her former office, painting the gate at the entryway and hanging Christmas decorations. Then the group traveled across the river to the Missouri History Museum in St. Louis to see a special exhibit of Dunham’s personal collection and films of her performances.



Roy Saldaña, Jr. and Hui Yan tour the house led by Noah Lenstra.

CI-related Research Featured at iSchools

Three groups from GSLIS are traveling to the iSchools Conference at University of North Carolina-Chapel Hill Feb. 8-11, 2009, to present community informatics-related research.



iSchools is a consortium of information science programs at universities across North America. Their mission is to build connections to the information field among key constituencies.

GSLIS students Claudia Serbanuta and Sara Thompson with Professor Chip Bruce will present a poster on the Youth Community Informatics (YCI) “Information Spaces in the Community” workshop. The workshop, developed in the summer of 2008, allowed youth to use inquiry-based learning to discover information spaces in the community, and then create a presentation on their findings. In the process, they learned to use computer programs, media and Internet tools. Later, the researchers and students from an online course used the same format to host a workshop for the Mortenson Center Associates. The poster illustrates how this experience was beneficial for the participants, how they presented their findings, and what they learned about information spaces and using new technologies.



GSLIS community engagement students Logan Moore and Rebecca Crist perform an inventory on photographs of former Cunningham Children’s Home residents and staff.

Another group, Paolo Gujilde, Rebecca Crist, and Logan Moore (all GSLIS master’s students), will present a poster on the “Cunningham Children’s Home (CCH) Archives Project and the University-Community Partnership.” The group worked with CCH, a former orphanage in Urbana that now serves at-risk youth, to inventory a collection of photographs of former residents and staff. The purpose of the project, part of Professor Ann Bishop’s Fall 2008 Community Engagement course, was to “aid in the creation, dissemination, and preservation of an important part of the community’s memory and legacy.”

In addition, Professor Kate Williams and GSLIS PhD student, Aiko Takazawa, will present “What is Community Informatics in Japan? A look at 12 cases.” Williams and Takazawa examined a small sample of articles written by Japanese scholars on uses of social network services that were developed by municipal offices using open source software for community development to identify the characteristics of community informatics-related projects in Japan.

CII on the Move

Fall 2008 found students, staff and faculty from the Community Informatics Initiative on the move.

Professor Chip Bruce traveled to Cyprus and Turkey for two weeks last September. He was a keynote speaker at the “Information and Communication Technologies in Education” conference in Limassol, Cyprus. His presentation, “Learning at the Border,” focused on learning in settings that fall somewhere between structured and informal, and he talked specifically about Youth Community Informatics projects happening at GSLIS. He also traveled to Çanakkale, Turkey to present a doctoral seminar, which aired on Turkish TV and made newspaper headlines, and visited a preschool and research site based at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi. The trip was funded by the Fulbright Inter-country Lecturer’s Program.



Professor Chip Bruce participates in learning activities with children at Çocuklar Evi (Children’s House), a university-based school at Çanakkale Onsekiz Mart Üniversitesi in Turkey.

In early October, CII co-director Ann Bishop, and Sharon Irish, CII project coordinator, attended the Imagining America (IA, <http://www.imaginingamerica.org/>) conference in Los Angeles. Bishop is the University of Illinois liaison to IA, which is a consortium of higher education institutions dedicated to engaging scholars and artists in public life. A highpoint of the conference was the keynote lecture, “La Memoria de Nuestra Tierra: Creating Sites of Public Memory,” by artist Judith F. Baca, the prominent educator and muralist who founded the Social and Public Art Resource Center (SPARC, <http://www.sparcmurals.org/sparcone/>) in Los Angeles in 1976.

In mid October, CII co-director Caroline Haythornthwaite attended the Association of Internet Researchers (AOIR) conference in Copenhagen, Denmark. There Professor Haythornthwaite served as a faculty mentor for a doctoral colloquium, participated in a roundtable, “Rethinking Networks, Communities and Learning,” and, with GSLIS associate professor Lori Kendall, conducted two panels on the Internet and Community: Community Cohesion and Connectivity and Distributed Community. The papers from those panels will be published in a special issue of American Behavioral Scientist (<http://abs.sagepub.com/>).

In late October, CII senior research scientist, Martin Wolske, and GSLIS master’s student, John Vincler, attended the 5th Prato Community Informatics & Development Informatics Conference, sponsored by the Community Informatics Research Network (CIRN, <http://www.ciresearch.net/>) in Prato, Italy. Wolske presented “Youth Community Informatics: Using New Digital Media to Foster Personal Growth and Community Action,” a paper he co-authored with Moustafa Ayad, Nama Budhathoki, Chera Kowalski, Chaebong Nam, Chris Ritzo, John Vincler, Lisa Bouillion-Diaz, Ann Bishop, and Chip Bruce, about the ongoing work of the Youth Community Informatics project, funded by the Institute of Museum and Library Services (IMLS). Vincler presented “Speaking to and through the archive: An exhibition of Puerto Rican materials at the Newberry Library curated by students from the Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School in Chicago.” Vincler’s paper received the highest score of all the peer-reviewed submissions at the conference.

CII’s director of networking, Paul Adams traveled to Los Angeles in November to attend the CTCNet Conference. CTCNet is a coalition of community technology centers serving communities across the country. As a member of the organization’s national board, Adams helped lead a discussion on the future of CTCNet.

In December, six GSLIS faculty and staff members, including Paul Adams, Abdul Alkalimat, Ann Bishop, Diana Stroud, Kate Williams and Martin Wolske, attended a workshop held by the IL Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) in Chicago, where they met with community technology centers located throughout Illinois. Adams, Alkalimat, Bishop, Williams, Wolske and Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC) Technology Director Alejandro Molina attended as panelists.

Paul Adams honored for achievements in community engagement



Paul Adams, director of community networking for the Community Informatics Initiative (CII), has been named a recipient of the 2008-2009 Campus Award for Excellence in Public Engagement (CAEPE). The award is given annually to recognize up to six members of the campus community (three faculty, staff, or academic professionals and three students) who “fulfill in exemplary ways the University's commitment to public engagement.” Congratulations, Paul!

Adams is being recognized for his work with community partners to help bring technology resources and training to underserved areas such as East St. Louis, locations throughout Champaign County, and São Tomé, West Africa. Adams has been working on public engagement initiatives since being hired by GSLIS as Prairienet's director in 1999.

Adams traveled to Africa twice last year to work on community development-focused projects. The first was a CII-sponsored project in which three GSLIS graduate students and three high school students from East St. Louis accompanied him to São Tomé, West Africa, to build the first-ever free, public access computer lab at the country's National High School.

The second was a personal trip, which Adams makes annually. Through Marion Medical Mission, a group that helps provide clean drinking water to remote villages, Adams traveled to Malawi where he helped install 76 wells. Four years ago, he began applying his technology infrastructure experience to his work in Malawi by providing the project's field managers with laptop computers. This year, he brought additional donated laptops outfitted with Linux software. In the future he plans to meet with library directors at Malawi's Mzuzu University to discuss collaboration on technology infrastructure projects.

Soon, Adams will lead a project to expand access to medical and health information on HelpSource to elderly, homebound residents of Champaign County. HelpSource Consortium is a comprehensive, online reference guide for human services, healthcare providers, and residents of East Central Illinois and West Central Indiana. Carle Clinic Foundation awarded CII \$10,000 to undertake the project. The money will be used to install recycled computers in the homes of clients and provide them with basic training on how to find medical and health information.

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