THE e-NEWSLETTER

The electronic newsletter of the

Academic Senate Committee on Computer Resources

Queensborough Community College, CUNY

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Anthony Kolios, Phil Pecorino, editors

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Happy and Healthy Holidays from

the Computer Resources Committee

**News from the Office of Information Technology
George Sherman, Executive Director**

QCC's Three Virtual Networks

Network I: Wireless
In order to ensure the stability of the Faculty and Staff Network, the Office of Information Technology (IT) decided to implement a Wireless Student Network as a separate logical network. The Wireless Network is limited to the Internet access, Instant Messaging and network printing (in the Library). For security reasons, it is scheduled to stop operating every night between 11:00 PM and 6:00 AM.
Several viruses and worms have infected the wireless network but, so far, have been kept isolated to that network. This has been successful because of strict firewall policies that also notify IT when a virus has attempted to infect other equipment. IT has created custom programs designed to stop infected wireless users from accessing the network. In the near future infected users will be directed to a website explaining how they can remove the virus or get additional help with removing the virus.
Users of the wireless network can not access SIMS or perform ftp activities or use OUTLOOK or several other applications.
Contact IT if there is a special need for a restricted application to operate in this network.

Network II: Faculty and Staff LAN
The QCC Faculty and Staff network has few restrictions. Its major limitation has been its video conferencing ability.

Network III: Video LAN
Due to the resources used by video conferencing protocol, it is prohibitive to provide video capability at every network jack. Instead, IT has created a separate Video Conferencing Network. IT can configure any campus network connection as a dedicated Video Conferencing network jack for those who need one. In this network OUTLOOK and SIMS applications are available.

Communication between the Faculty and Staff network and the Wireless network is blocked. The Faculty and Staff network is also protected every night by having Internet access blocked between 12:30 AM and 6:00 AM.

 As more threats arise from the Internet, IT will have to modify QCC's firewall policies and the way we access the Internet. IT is trying to make sure that the right tools are in place to ensure a constant, acceptable level of Internet service.

Access to Refurbished PCs at QCC

When a department finds sufficient budget to purchase a new PC they occasionally wind up with an extra old PC. The Office of Information Technology (IT) will determine the usefulness of the old PC and, if warranted, will rebuild it with Windows XP, Office XP and a memory upgrade if required. These PCs are then made available for College office use.

A list of requests for refurbished PCs is maintained by George Sherman, Director of IT. If you have a need for an additional, serviceable PC, please have your Director or Department chair send him an email. Requests are handled as they are received.

Access to QCC email

QCC email accounts can be accessed through WEB OUTLOOK in any of the networks and from off campus. Use of the OUTLOOK application is restricted to the Faculty –Staff network. The WEB OUTLOOK access is being upgraded for additional features.

News about the Academic Computing Center
Bruce Naples, Director

The QCC Catalogue is now available online at:

http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/Catalog

The QCC website is being revised. The new website may be available in late 2004 or 2005.

Developers of web pages are advised to use Dreamweaver and Contribute to create and transfer web pages. Workshops are being offered in these applications.

The number and type of workshops offered to the community has been steadily increasing. Watch for announcement.

The use of smart rooms and smart –podiums has been steadily increasing. There will be six additional smart podiums available for Spring 2004. If you have not requested a room or

podium for the Spring 2004 semester, please do so as soon as possible by sending an email with course and section information to BNaples@qcc.cuny.edu

There will be installations of smart technology into four large rooms over the next 2 years: Lb-14, M-136 and S-111 and S-112.

QCC WEBSITE POLICIES and PROCEDURES

The QCC website is being revised. The new website may be available in late 2004 or 2005. Some sections of the revised site may appear prior to the entire site going "live".

Developers of web pages are advised to use Dreamweaver and Contribute to create and transfer web pages. Workshops are being offered in these applications.

ATTENDANCE ROSTERS

The Office of the Registrar is required to collect attendance for the first 5 weeks of any semester as part of our state funding. For fully online and hybrid online courses, professors should be able to track whether or not a specific student has logged on to complete their assignments. Based upon their students participation online, Professors should then be able to complete their paper rosters which they are required to return to the Registrar's office.

Professors could then write "satisfactory attendance" or "X" out a student as they think is appropriate.

The Office of the Registrar and the Office of Information Technology recently have begun work on modification/development of an online final grade collection system.

Distance Education Sub Committee

The CCR has created a sub committee of seven faculty and one student to examine the current situation and the prospects for a Distance Education Program of any type at QCC. The sub committee is conducting surveys and will be issuing a report tot the CCR who may then issue a report and possible recommendations to the Academic Senate. Anyone with any interest or comments should contact the committee chairperson at ppecorino@qcc.cuny.edu.

Review of QCC Technology Plans

The CCR is conducting a review of the current technology plans and the general condition of computer resources and access to them at QCC. The results will be made available in a comprehensive report to the Academic Senate expected in the Spring of 2004.

QCC email and privacy

The community should be aware that the college and university reserve the right to monitor, under appropriate conditions, all data contained in the system to protect the integrity of the system and to ensure compliance with regulations. The College is capable of accessing, reviewing, and recording:

1. Access to the system, including successful and failed login attempts and logouts;

2. Inbound and outbound file transfers;

3. Terminal connections to and from external systems;

4. Sent and received e-mail messages;

5. Web sites visited, including uniform resource locator (URL) of pages retrieved;

6. Date, time, and user associated with each event.

The policy is appears here at:
http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/IT/ComputerPolicy.htm

The policy raises interesting questions concerning academic freedom. There are faculty members of the University Faculty Senate examining these policies. There is particular concern since the passage fo the Patriot Act on the chilling effect of such policies on research conducted by academicians. Please see the relevant AAUP Statement : http://www.aaup.org/statements/SpchState/Statelec.htm on Academic Freedom and Electronic Communications . Finally there is a very interesting story concerning this that appeared in the journal Academe (September-October 2003 Volume 89, Number 5) available at http://www.aaup.org/publications/Academe/03so/03somcca.htm Windows Without Curtains : Computer Privacy and Academic Freedom by Martha McCaughey

Weekend Support For QCC Online Classes

Until the entire set of QCC Online classes migrate to the CUNY servers at 57th street QCC personnel will monitor the BB server over weekends and should the need arise will take the actions needed to restore and maintain access.

HELPDESKS:
ACC   BBSupport@qcc.cuny.edu
IT   1 718 631 6273

Have any Questions?
Feel free to send along any questions you may have concerning the computer resources of the college: maintenance, Technology Plan, email, workshops, etc.,
to:
Phil Pecorino –
PPecorino@qcc.cuny.edu
Anthony Kolios
Akolios@qcc.cuny.edu

We on the committee shall attempt to obtain answers for you and the QCC community and have them appear in upcoming editions of the newsletter.

BB CORNER

Information on QCC Online is available at:
http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/QCCOnline/Default.htm

The number of classes using BB continues to grow in number and diversity. See this page for a currently listing for Spring 2004

http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/QCCOnline/classes.htm

Faculty are using BB for :
- Web enhanced classes
- Partially online classes
- Fully online classes
- Committee work
- Group Work
- Faculty Development

The scheduled upgrading of the CMP to BB 6 Enterprise edition and migration of classes to the servers at 57th street has been postponed. Such migration may not occur until after the summer of 2004.

The ACC has set up a server using BB6 and has permissions for 100 class shells. The ACC is offering workshops in BB6 and advises faculty to prepare classes for the BB6 application. Dual development is being encouraged. Faculty should contact BBSupport@qcc.cuny.edu for additional information and assistance.

Due to limited use and interest licensing for **Respondus** will be discontinued.

Faculty wishing to have a BB class of any type should follow the procedure and fill at the form located at:
http://www.qcc.cuny.edu/QCCOnline/bbrequest.htm

There is now an online BB6 faculty development course entitled Blackboard 6 Knowledgebase. To enroll contact Lorena Ellis or Dave Moretti.

Views on Educational Technologies:
an occasional feature of this newsletter

When will they Learn?
When I first began teaching thirty-three years ago, I had a student who was a grade-school teacher. The first generation of kids exposed to "educational television" was entering his classroom. Are they better students I asked? Is this great pedagogical experiment a success?

 "They know their letters," he said. "But unless I come out dressed as a giant chicken they will no longer pay attention to what I am trying to teach them. They now come to class expecting to be entertained. They think school is going to be like watching TV."

QCC like so many other institutions seeking to provide the best quality opportunity for learning for their students has provided wireless networking throughout the campus. Classrooms are Internet accessible. Smart classrooms are being outfitted. Digital audiovisual capabilities boggle the mind: digital projectors, DVD, Power Point presentations, interactive "blackboards", on-line courses, class-referenced websites, distance learning. Our capacity to entertain our students will soon rival DreamWorks. Unfortunately, there is a difference between entertainment and learning, between sensation and experience.

Experiences change us. We see a play, climb a mountain, visit a foreign city, go to war, have a child—struggle to reach any grasp-exceeding

goal—and we are changed. Such experiences do not need to be repeated, we are different people for having gone through them once and the change is permanent.

Sensation, on the other hand, is something that happens to us, a stimulus that momentarily alters our state of mind, perception or awareness, but when the stimulus is removed, the sensation fades. Sensations need to be constantly renewed, re-experienced, and repeated. Drugs, television, MTV videos, televised sports, amusement park rides, computer games, the evening news, are all activities that have no lasting effect, in fact are designed to be transitory. Their profitability lies in their renewability, like medications that ameliorate symptoms but never heal the underlying condition. School should offer students opportunity for experience, not fleeting sensations. It should change them. Significantly, the digital wizardry now being installed in campuses around the country was developed as the quintessential delivery systems for sensations, not experience.

Change does not occur without resistance. It requires work, sometimes sacrifice, even hardship to achieve. There is an old saying amongst writers: "Writing is easy—you just sit and stare at the keyboard until your forehead bleeds." Writing, like learning, is an activity of the mind, and the mind is the principal tool of education. Today, word processors have become the universal tool for writing. However, the facility with which they edit words is not to be confused with writing. When, as a college student I wrote a term paper on a typewriter, I had to write multiple drafts. Unquestionably, this was drudgery. Today, word processors allow us to edit with ease. Like the washing machine and vacuum cleaner, they have reduced the necessity for an apparently tedious and repetitive task. Yet, each time I rewrote the paper, I also rethought what I was writing—it was part of the process. Learning and sweeping the floor are different kinds of activities. We all know that when learning a new skill be that playing baseball, drawing, learning a musical instrument or writing, repetitive tasks done *mindfully*, (batting practice, musical scales or rewrites) are essential to the learning process.

Word processors as *teaching* tools undermine this learning as they do not demand by their nature that we rethink our work. They can make it seem that the creation of a finished, polished product lies in the appearance of the page not the content of the ideas, or the clarity and precision of the writing. I have had students who went on line, downloaded whole paragraphs that they recognized as relevant and then pasted in their entirety into a paper. These blocked and pasted sections (perfectly formatted and spell checked) sometimes contained words, even whole phrases they didn't understand and may never actually have read.

The word processor is an extraordinarily powerful and valuable writing and editing tool for someone who already possesses the thinking skills required for good writing. However, its power to facilitate the easy and potentially mindless manipulation of words, sentences, even whole paragraphs can make it an impediment to developing the mental discipline and linguistic precision that are the essence of good writing.

In teaching photography, I would say the same thing about automatic cameras. Photography is at heart a visual language. Contrary to marketing hype and popular expectations, the camera does not communicate the experience of the photographer automatically. Photography, like writing, is foremost a process of the mind, a way of seeing. Anybody who has had to look at someone *else's* vacation photographs knows that wonderful or interesting experiences do not translate automatically into wonderful and interesting photographs. Automatic cameras simply magnify a person's ability to generate more of the same with less effort.

Passively taking in information is not experience. It can be sensation. You only have to watch the nightly news to see how it is transformed into entertainment. John Locke took the position in his 1689 dissertation on cognition, *An Essay Concerning Human Understanding*, that we don't know the world directly, we only know our *ideas* about the world and these ideas are based (correctly or incorrectly) on the input of our five senses. He then wondered if there was any means by which we could be certain that there

was any conformity between theses ideas and "the reality of things".

My generation (over fifty) formed its ideas of the world essential through experience. Information was available, but had to be sought. Today we are barraged with it and our ideas about "the reality of things" are being formed increasingly (and for a growing number exclusively) by information alone. The danger is that information isolated from experience can be mediated even manipulated if there is no experience to test or verify its relevance or accuracy. Movies like "Wag the Dog" play on this idea, "spin doctors" exploit it, and the would-be designers of virtual reality, aspire to its totality.

Our students are used to a world where information and sensation flow over them, where digitally enhanced "Big Birds" hold their attention through Power Point presentations and Gattling Gun imagery. But where is the learning? How do these technologies make possible the educational experiences that will change them?

Power Point programs allow an instructor to present important ideas in simple, clear, outline form filled with eye-catching images and attention-grabbing sound effects. But this is not the same as taking notes. Note taking requires the student to distill a complex lecture into simple ideas that contain the essence of the knowledge being communicated. The process of distillation, the process of thinking about the meaning of what is heard and then writing it down **is** the learning process. Power Point presentations may provide the distillation, but to the extent that they eliminate the necessity for the student to do the work of distilling the concepts and ideas themselves, they undermine the learning process; they offer sensation, not experience—Sesame Street's Big Bird come home to roost.

Learning like any experiences that has the potential to change us requires work and all the digital toys that try to turn this work into play and which students have been trained by marketing and media not only to expect but demand as a lifestyle, may be of less value to them and the larger society than we imagine.
Bob Rogers—Art and Photography

Readers are invited to respond to the newsletter to continue this conversation on the merits or dangers in using educational technologies. They may also respond directly to Professor Rogers.