Welcome to the English Academic Technology Bulletin. This monthly publication of the English list communicates basic information regarding the use of technology in the preparation and imparting of instruction. The English list is a closed, moderated list restricted to the staff of the English Department of the College of Humanities of the University of Puerto Rico, Rio Piedras campus and other authorized users. If you are interested in subscribing to the English list or contributing content to the bulletin, please notify Alicia Pousada (apousada@earthlink.net), the list moderator. To post to the list, just Reply to this message. Remember that what you post will go to every subscriber.

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Announcements

Call for papers. Journal of Online Technology.

The MERLOT Journal of Online Learning and Teaching (JOLT) is a peer-reviewed, online publication addressing the scholarly use of multimedia resources in education. JOLT is published quarterly in March, June, September, and December. The objectives of JOLT are to:

- Enable faculty to use technology effectively in teaching and learning by learning from a community of researchers and scholars;
• Enable academic programs to design and deploy academic technology to optimize teaching and learning;
• Build a community around the research and scholarly use of multimedia educational resources.

JOLT welcomes papers on all aspects of the use of multimedia educational resources for learning and teaching. Topics may include, but are not limited to: learning theory and the use of multimedia to improve student learning; instructional design theory and application; online learning and teaching initiatives; use of technology in education; innovative learning and teaching practices.

For specific information on submitting a manuscript, please see the Guidelines for Author at: http://jolt.merlot.org. To be considered for the Fall 2006 issue, manuscripts must be submitted by May 31, 2006. The official Call for Papers may be found at: http://jolt.merlot.org/callforpapers.html

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Newbies Corner

Phishing revisited

We have talked about phishing before in this bulletin, but recent developments make it necessary to revisit the topic, since it has become a major hazard to Internet users. The word phishing (coined in 1996) is an analogical reference to the use of e-mail “lures” by spammers and scammers to “fish” for passwords and financial data from the Internet “ocean.”

E-mail scams are becoming increasingly common. Generally, they take the form of a fraudulent e-mail that appears to be from a legitimate Internet address (e.g. your bank, Internet service provider, or a company with which you do regular business). The letter asks you to verify personal information or account details. Usually, it specifies that you will suffer some consequence if you don’t respond, such as "your account will be closed or suspended". A phishing attack that focuses on one user or a single department within an organization is known as “spear phishing.” It can appear to originate from your company’s Human Resources Department or Technology Department.

Knowing how to spot a scam must become part of every Internet users’ repertoire. To do this, users must understand the common elements of phishing e-mails.
1. The address of a real company appears in the “From” field. Since it is very simple to change the "from" information in any e-mail client, you should not assume that the letter is legitimate because you see a familiar address there.

2. The e-mail often contains logos or images taken from the web site of the company mentioned in the scam e-mail. Again, it is very easy to lift an image from any website, so this should not be taken as proof of the legitimacy of the letter.

3. The e-mail will contain a clickable link. Do not click on this link, for if it is a scam, it will take you to a phony site where your information will be stolen. To check the real address of the link, highlight the link with your mouse and then check the bottom left of your screen. If the address shown there is not the real address of the company, then you know you’re being phished.

4. In poorly executed phishing scams, you may also spot imperfect logos, spelling errors, odd symbols within the hyperlink, or random names or addresses in the body of the text (including variants on your own name or address).

In case you think you’re safe since you rarely use the Internet, please note that anyone with an e-mail address is at risk. Even casual surfing where you subscribe to a newsletter or ask to have information sent to you will get your e-mail address into circulation. If your address has been made public by posting in forums, chat groups, or newsgroups, then you’re even more susceptible to phishing because of e-mail “spiders” that search the Internet and grab as many e-mail addresses as they can.

The best way to avoid being phished is to NEVER click the links within suspicious e-mails. Always delete any suspect e-mail immediately and then empty the trash.

If you think the message may be legitimate, go to the website of the company by typing in the address or using your own Favorites or Bookmarks list to navigate there. Then check with the company (via Customer Service) to see if they’ve sent you the request. If it turns out to be false, report this to the company so they are aware that their good name and image are being used illegally on a “spoof” site. Many companies now provide scam and spoof reporting links on their web sites. You can also report phishing to the Federal Trade Commission (http://www.ftc.gov) and to the Anti-Phishing Working Group (http://www.antiphising.org) which is building a database of common scams.

[Source: http://www.webopedia.com ]
Transferring VHS to DVD

Here are some step-by-step instructions on transferring video from VHS format to DVD using a VCR, a video capture device, and your PC with DVD burning capabilities.

1. Start with a VCR. Make sure it's been cleaned recently, so it reads your videos as clearly as possible. (You can use a wet or dry cleaning tape available at most drug or department stores.)

2. Connect the output of the VCR to the input of a video capture device (like ADS Tech's DVD Xpress DX2 for $100). The video capture device converts composite or S-Video signals to digital format and sends them to a PC via a USB connection.

3. Use a computer program like Ulead VideoStudio 9SE DVD software for editing the video. VideoStudio offers a Movie Wizard and a more complex VideoStudio Editor approach. The wizard guides you through the process of capturing the video, creating menus, and then writing it to DVD. But if you want to improve the quality of your video, then you should use the more powerful VideoStudio Editor.

4. Set the videotape to a point just before the film starts. Then display the capture screen (which shows a preview of the video) on your computer, hit Play on the VCR, and click on the Capture Video button. When the video finishes playing, stop the capture. Repeat this process for each clip you want to transfer to DVD.

5. Always use the highest quality setting possible so your image looks as good as it can. An hour of video in the highest quality DVD format takes up about 1.5GB. Lowest quality is about 400 MB, but you won't be very happy with the results. If you don't have enough space on your PC, use an external hard drive.

6. Once you've captured all the video, you can edit it. VideoStudio allows you to order the clips, apply auto exposure and auto level filters, etc. If you don't want to get into all of this, then just accept the capture as is.

7. Create the disc. The program allows you to create menus or chapters for easier navigating.

8. Finally, burn the video onto a DVD-R using your PC's rewritable DVD drive. High-quality Memorex discs are good, but if you want archival quality media, try Kodak Preservation DVDs which are made of gold.

For more information or details, go to: Richard Baguley's Making Movies at: http://www.pcworld.com/resource/columnist/0,olid,33,tk,borsc,00.asp
Using technology in the classroom

Role of Web in higher education

For an interesting look at the role of the Web in higher education, read: Critical Assessment of the World Wide Web as an Information Resource in Higher Education: Benefits, Threats, and Recommendations by Albert Lozano Nieto (Pennsylvania State University), Enrique Guijarro (Valencia Polytechnic University), and Enrique. J. Berjano

Available online at: http://jolt.merlot.org/documents/MS05012.pdf

Creoles and computing

For a very interesting article on the role of computers in the standardization, implementation, and dissemination of creoles in education and other spheres, please go to:

http://www.multilingual.com/FMPro?-db=archives-&format=ourpublication%2ffeaturedarticlesdetail.htm&-lay=cgi-&sortfield=magazine%20number-&sortorder=descend-&op=eq&Ad%20Type=reprint-&recid=33444&find

Helping students assess website information

As we all know, our students have taken to the Internet in a big way. Unfortunately, they often don’t have a critical outlook when they blindly copy down information they have found on websites. Here are some of the skills that we need to teach them, so they’ll get the most out of their Internet research.

1. Searching skills—Teach your students to use multiple keywords in their searches and to use the advanced search function of their search engine to delimit their searches and reduce false hits. Teach them also to read beyond the second page of results, since search engines utilize popularity, not necessarily utility or accuracy, as their criterion for placing sites in the first pages. Finally, teach them that Google and Yahoo are not the be-all and end-all of search engines. They should also explore academic search engines like: Google Scholar (http://scholar.google.com) and Scirus (http://scirus.com/srsapp).
2. Genre and date—Teach your students to observe the domain suffixes of web addresses. For official statistics, addresses ending in .gov are usually the most reliable. Academic sites usually end in .edu or .ac; however, warn them that student papers may appear with these designations and may not be accurate or worthwhile. Sites emanating from geocities.com are most likely personal pages, and the content should be evaluated based on the credentials of the person authoring the pages. Students should be instructed to check for the last time the site was updated to be sure that the material is not old or rendered irrelevant by time.

3. Content—Make sure your students approach the content of a website with a skeptical eye. Flashy appearances should not be taken as a sign of legitimacy. Use of emotional language or punctuation should raise doubts as to the agenda behind the website. Ditto for sarcasm. The reasoning of the content should be analyzed carefully to spot fallacies, red herrings, straw person arguments, slippery slope arguments, appeals to emotion, and hasty generalizations. Statistics should be taken with a huge grain of salt unless clear (and verifiable) sources are given. Students should be warned about the persuasive force of photos. Finally, students need to look for signs of balanced argumentation (e.g. links to sources with opposing views).

For a good set of guidelines to help evaluate web sites, go to Widener University’s site at: http://www.widener.edu/Tools/Resources/Libraries/Wolfgram_Memorial_Library/Evaluate_Web_Pages/659.


Preparation of good PowerPoint presentations for use in class

PowerPoint presentations have become de rigueur in many conferences and workshops. They are also increasingly common as part of classroom lectures or even in student oral presentations. However, these presentations can easily become boring and/or superficial. Here’s how to avoid the most common pitfalls.

1. Remember that the slides are there to illustrate and supplement your speech. They should not constitute your entire talk. In other words, don’t just stand there reading slides. Your audience members could do that by themselves.
2. As you present your material, interact with the audience and make eye contact. This personalizes and energizes your talk, so you don’t lose the audience’s attention.

3. Prepare colorful and well-illustrated slides or video clips that complement your words, but don’t go overboard. If there are too many slides or too many special effects, the audience can’t process them.

4. Use smart timing. Put up a slide and let the audience process it before you comment on it. Talking on top of the slides just confuses the audience. Also consider leaving the screen blank at times while you talk. This focuses the audience back on you. Consider allowing questions as you go along to further the interactivity of the presentation.

5. Try to save your handouts for the end. Otherwise, people read the handouts instead of watching your slides or listening to you.

6. Most important of all, practice thoroughly before giving your presentation. You want to make sure that your talk fits into the available time and doesn’t have any technical glitches. Have a backup plan in case your technology fails.

If you follow these basic tips, you should be able to have fun with PowerPoint and use it to enhance your usual teaching techniques.

Open Language Archives Community (OLAC)

The Open Language Archives Community at http://www.language-archives.org is an excellent source for both researchers and students in search of information regarding specific language varieties and language corpora for analysis. The community receives more than 2,000 requests daily, and the most popular languages searched are Dutch, English, Quechua, Arabic, Greek, German, Chinese, and Malay. A number of requests have also come in regarding endangered and Amerindian languages, as the archives are a very useful repository for projects involving language preservation and rescue.

Four new repositories joined the Open Language Archives Community in 2005, namely:

- the Audio Archive of Linguistic Fieldwork at the Berkeley Language Center, UC Berkeley, USA;
- the Comparative Corpus of Spoken Portuguese at IEL Unicamp, Campinas, Brazil;
- the Online Database of Interlinear Text (ODIN) at California State University, Fresno, USA; and
• the Pacific and Regional Archive for Digital Sources in Endangered Cultures (PARADISEC), at the Universities of Melbourne, Sydney, New England, and Australian National University.

Recent OLAC publications that may be of interest to you or your students are:

http://www.dlib.org/dlib/february05/hughes/02hughes.html


Teaching literature online

Numerous articles and websites have appeared in recent years promoting the teaching of literature online. One of the more promising that has come to light is by Prof. Mark Canada of the University of North Carolina at Pembroke. On his website [http://www.uncp.edu/home/canada/work/markport/pedagogy/onlit.htm], Prof. Canada includes the detailed syllabus, model, and evaluation techniques for his online Introduction to Literature course, as well as samples from students’ portfolios. His reading list includes:

* The Book of Genesis
* Antigone
* Sir Gawain and the Green Knight
* Hamlet
* The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin
* Oronooko
* Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl
* Faces in the Moon

Students are required to assemble a portfolio of their course work, including: a personal profile, a reflective essay on the growth experienced through taking the course, a research annotation of a person, place, or event related to the course, the development of a web page dedicated to an American author, an annotated bibliography, two analytical essays, a poetry explication, two 30-minute oral presentations done in personal meetings with the professor, and a variety of optional components.

The website is a marvel of organization and clarity and can serve as a model for anyone attempting to teach an online course via a website, Blackboard, or WebCT.
Windows tips

Monthly Maintenance

To keep your Windows computer humming along nicely, perform the following tasks on a monthly basis:

1. Make sure you have all recent Windows updates. If you’ve configured your computer to make automatic updates (an advisable step), then you’re covered already. If not, go to Microsoft Update [http://update.microsoft.com/microsoftupdate/v6/default.aspx?ln=en-us] to see if your computer is missing any of the latest updates or patches. Remember that every Tuesday is “patch day” at Microsoft.

2. Update all of your computer’s device drivers. To do this, check the manufacturer’s websites for your motherboard, graphics card, audio device, LAN equipment, and any other devices in your PC.

3. Update all your programs, especially your antivirus program. Many programs come with update routines (usually found in the Help or Tools menus) that you can set to update automatically. Do so whenever possible to reduce your monthly task load. This is particularly critical with your antivirus program.

4. Delete all temporary files and unnecessary backups. You should delete all files older than one week from your C:\WINDOWS\TEMP folder. Windows 98, ME, 2000, and XP users can use the Disk Cleanup option to get rid of various temporary files, empty the Recycle Bin, etc. It can be found under System Tools and also under My Computer (just right-click the drive you want, select Properties, and click on Disk Cleanup) A nice freeware program that scrubs your hard drive is CCleaner (short for Crap Cleaner) which is downloadable at: [http://www.filehippo.com/download_ccleaner]

5. Defragment your hard drive. You can use Window’s built-in Disk Defragmenter, although it doesn’t defrag the paging file which can cause major slowdowns. Other more complete defragging programs are Norton Utilities Speed Disk contained within Norton System Works (which can be conveniently purchased and downloaded at: [http://www.symantec.com/home_homeoffice/products/overview.jsp?pcid=sp&pvid=nsw2006] ) or the freeware program Diskeeper Lite which is a great and speedy alternative if you don’t mind the regular nags it sends you to upgrade to its paid version. You can download Diskeeper Lite at: [http://www.majorgeeks.com/download.php?det=1207].
If you carry out these tasks faithfully every month, you'll find that your computer runs more quickly and you'll have more space for storage.

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Mac Nuggets

Boot Camp

Apple Computer has just released free trial beta software called Boot Camp to allow Mac users to run Microsoft Windows XP on Intel-based MacIntosh computers. Boot Camp creates a hard drive partition for Windows XP and lets users choose between the two operating systems at start-up time. It will be included as a feature of Leopard, the next major Mac OS release. The company thinks Boot Camp will make its Macs more appealing to Windows PC users who might be considering a switch.

To use the 83MB beta version of Boot Camp, customers need the latest Mac OS X Tiger v10.4.6 release, an Intel-based Mac, 10GB of free hard disk space, a blank CD and a "bona fide" installation disc for Microsoft Windows XP, Service Pack 2, Home or Professional edition. Boot Camp burns a CD with all the required Mac-specific drivers for Windows and walks users through creating a partition on the hard drive. It also installs a Startup Disk control panel for Windows. Users then hold down the "option" key at start-up to choose between the two operating systems.

In Windows XP mode, the files on the MacIntosh side are not visible. In Mac OS X mode, users can read and write files on the Windows side if they're in Microsoft's FAT32 format, but in the NTFS format they'll be able to read them only.

To download the free beta program, go to:
http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file_description/0,fid,63040,00.asp#

Please note that any time you try a beta version, you are taking the chance that some bug exists which hasn't been worked out yet. Be sure to back up everything on your hard drive before installing any beta products or set up a Restore point, so you can roll things back to where they were before the installation if a problem arises. If you're not willing to take the chance, then wait for Apple to complete the beta testing and come out with the final version of the program.

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MacJanitor

Performing routine maintenance on your Mac will keep it happy and stop expensive repair problems from cropping up. Unfortunately, Macs are automatically set to run their maintenance maneuvers in the wee hours of the morning. If you turn off your Mac at night, you may be missing out on this maintenance schedule. To overcome the problem, try downloading and running a free program called MacJanitor available at: http://www.versiontracker.com/dyn/moreinfo/macosx/10491. The program allows you to set more convenient hours for maintenance tasks or carry them out manually at will.

Manual maintenance using Terminal

You can also trigger the maintenance programs already present in Macs by using Terminal (in your Applications/Utilities folder):

1. Open Terminal.
2. Type into the Terminal window the following command: sudo sh /etc/daily (There's a space after "sh"). This triggers the daily maintenance tasks.
3. Press RETURN.
4. When prompted, type your Mac OS X Administrator password and press RETURN. You will see a read-out of the maintenance processes.
5. When the processes are done, quit Terminal.
6. If you wish to run the weekly or monthly tasks, type weekly or monthly in place of daily. Monthly tasks take longer to run.

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Repair Disk Permissions

In Mac OS X, every file and folder has an associated set of permissions which are sometimes altered unintentionally when new programs are installed, causing speed and performance problems. Repair Disk Permissions resets these permissions to their defaults.

To repair disk permissions:

1. Open your Applications folder.
2. Open the Utilities folder.
3. Double-click on Disk Utility.
4. Select your hard disk in the left column.
5. Click on the First Aid tab.
6. Click the Repair Disk Permissions button.
Useful sites and downloads

WordWeb Thesaurus and Dictionary

Here’s a free program that can pretty much replace your dictionary. Along with common definitions, it includes synonyms and antonyms, and you can use it with any word processor or as a stand-alone tool.

The Lookup field lets you use asterisks and strings as wild cards to find words in various ways. If you enter *gry, for example, the program will retrieve angry, hungry, and other words ending with those letters. You can also add words to the program's database. Poets and linguists may find the program's hypernyms, hyponyms, metonyms, and homonyms useful.

The professional version of this program costs $18 and lets you create anagrams and words matching a pattern. Download WordWeb Thesaurus and Dictionary at:
http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file_description/0,fid,4726,00.asp

Open Office

Would you like to use Microsoft Office applications without using Microsoft Office? OpenOffice.org is a free, open source productivity suite available for numerous operating systems. It supports many common file formats, as well as many different languages. Its files are interchangeable with those of Microsoft Office applications (e.g., Word, Excel, and PowerPoint).

OpenOffice.org is a sizable download, so you’re best off downloading it over a broadband connection. Go to:
http://www.pcworld.com/downloads/file_description/0,fid,23158,00.asp

Continuum books

If you’re looking for new books dealing with philosophy, film and music, literature, education, linguistics, theology or biblical studies that are a bit off the beaten track, try Continuum books at: http://www.continuumbooks.com. The Continuum International Publishing Group was created in 1999 with the merger of the Cassell and The Continuum Publishing Company in New York. The company produces over 500 books a year, with an active backlist of over 6,000 titles.
Alchemy

Alchemy is a free tool that allows linguists to do morphological analysis on the computer. The user manually enters a text from which the computer generates a list of words. The word list can be sorted from left to right and from right to left to discover prefixes or suffixes respectively which can be highlighted in different colors. The computer then generates a list of morphemes called the Morpheme Explorer which can be categorized by the user as roots or affixes, with designation of part of speech, person, number, and gender. The word list can be filtered in various ways to aid in analysis.

The interface is very intuitive, and there is a decent help function. Unfortunately, it does not support Unicode and is thus limited to Latin scripts. Nor does it currently have a help desk or users group, so you're basically on your own when using it. However, it does have great promise and may very well be improved in the future. It is certainly worth taking a look at and may prove useful as a teaching aid.

Alchemy can be downloaded from http://linguistica.uchicago.edu and is usable in Windows, Mac OS X, or Linux/Unix systems.

LSA Tutorial on Archiving and Linguistic Resources

Those professors or doctoral students who are compiling documentary linguistic resources can learn about the optimal practices for creating and conserving such data at an online tutorial organized and presented at the Linguistic Society of America by Jeff Good (MPI Leipzig) and Heidi Johnson (University of Texas, Austin and AILLA). Tutorial abstracts and slides can be viewed at: http://www.language-archives.org/events/olac05.

Cyberhumor

You know you're living in 2006 when...

1. You accidentally enter your password on the microwave.
2. You haven't played solitaire with real cards in years.
3. You have a list of 15 phone numbers to reach your family of three.
4. You e-mail the person who works at the desk next to you.
5. Your reason for not staying in touch with friends and family is that they don’t have e-mail addresses.
6. You pull up in your own driveway and use your cell phone to see if anyone is home to help you carry in the groceries.
7. Every commercial on television has a web site at the bottom of the screen.
8. Leaving the house without your cell phone, which you didn't have the first 20 or 30 (or 60) years of your life, is now a cause for panic and you turn around to go and get it.
10. You get up in the morning and go on line before getting your coffee.
11. You're reading this and nodding and laughing.
12. Even worse, you know exactly to whom you are going to forward this message.
13. You are too busy to notice there was no #9 on this list.
14. You actually scrolled back up to check that there wasn’t a #9 on this list. AND NOW U R LAUGHING at yourself.

[Courtesy of Emily Krasinski]

Computer Observations

Computers can never completely replace humans. They may become capable of artificial intelligence, but they will never master real stupidity.

A computer is perfectly reliable until the moment you switch it on.

The function of a computer expert is not to be right about more things; it is to be wrong for more sophisticated reasons.


Computer Lightbulb Jokes

How many PC owners does it take to screw in a lightbulb?
--Only one, but she’ll have to go out and buy the lightbulb adapter card first, which is extra.

How many tech people does it take to change a lightbulb?
--We have received your request concerning your hardware problem, and have assigned your request service Number 39712. Please use this number for any future reference to this lightbulb issue. As soon as a technician becomes available, you will be contacted.
Bill Gates in Purgatory

Bill Gates died in a car accident. He found himself in purgatory being sized up by God. “Well, Bill, I’m going to let you decide where you want to go.” Bill replied, “Well, thanks, God. What’s the difference between the two?” God said, “I’m willing to let you visit both places briefly to help you make a decision.” Bill said, “Okay, then, let’s try hell first.”

So Bill went to hell. It was a beautiful, clean, sandy beach with clear waters. There were thousands of beautiful women running around, playing in the water, laughing and frolicking about. The sun was shining, and the temperature was perfect. “This is great!” he told God, and off they went to check out heaven.

Heaven was a high place in the clouds with angels drifting about playing harps and singing. It was nice but not as enticing as hell. Bill thought for a moment and then said, “Hmmm, I think I prefer hell.” “Fine,” replied God, “as you wish.” So Bill Gates went to hell.

Two weeks later, God decided to check up on him. When God arrived in hell, he found Bill shackled to a wall, screaming amongst the hot flames in a dark cave. He was being tortured by demons. “How’s everything going, Bill?” God asked. Bill responded, his voice full of anguish and disappointment, “This is awful, this is not what I expected. I can’t believe this happened. What happened to that other place with the beaches and beautiful women?” God responded, “Oh, that was the screensaver.”


If you enjoyed this issue and would like to become a subscriber, please write to Alicia Pousada at apousada@earthlink.net.