**Information Technology in the News**

### Higher Education and Government Team Up

- A new administrative information system in North Dakota will be shared by the state’s public institutions of higher education and the state government. The system will replace aging systems that have become expensive and time-consuming to maintain and keep compliant with changing regulations. Government and higher education will use the system to manage financial, human resource, and student information. Officials said they already are close to having uniform “charts of accounts,” the records of information and associated codes necessary for the system to work for all participants. The South Dakota Board of Regents, which is beginning its own migration to a central database for the campuses in its system, is closely watching the North Dakota project as an example for some aspects of its project. ([Chronicle of Higher Education](http://chronicle.com/free/2002/05/2002051401t.htm))

### Successful Test of Grid Computing

- Researchers at five universities and research centers have completed a successful test of a computing grid that is expected to support experiments at the Large Hadron Collider in Switzerland. Unlike in distributed computing projects such as SETI@Home, all of the individual nodes in grid computing are connected and can communicate as data moves among the nodes. The Globus Project and the Condor Project developed the software on which the new grid operates; both packages are open-source tools. Systems from Caltech, Fermilab, the University of California at San Diego, the University of Florida, and the University of Wisconsin were linked for this first test. ([Wired News](http://www.wired.com/news/technology/0,1282,52909,00.html))

### Court Throws Out CIPA

- A U.S. district court in Pennsylvania found the Children’s Internet Protection Act (CIPA) to be unconstitutional, violating the First Amendment. The law would have required libraries to install Internet filters to block pornographic or other age-sensitive content. Those that did not install filters risked losing federal funding. But the court declared that filters block some content that is not objectionable and is protected speech. The judges also noted that filters cannot likely block all material that they try to restrict. The ruling was supported by the American Civil Liberties Union and the American Library Association, both of which have fought the law since it was passed in 2000. A spokesman from N2H2, a maker of software filters, said he thought the court would have issued a more moderate ruling: “It seems like the court expects us to be 100 percent.” ([CNET News.com](http://news.com.com/2100-1023-929577.html))

### Panel Moves to Relax Twelve-Hour Rule

- A fourteen-member panel of the Education Department was unable to reach a unanimous decision to change the twelve-hour rule, which requires schools not operating on semesters, trimesters, or quarters to offer at least twelve hours of in-class instruction per week for students to receive federal financial aid. Opponents of changing the rule say it guards against fraud. Even though the panel did not reach unanimity, officials at the department said they will move to change the rule to require “one day” of coursework per week. Supporters of the change said that seat time is a poor measure of educational program quality and that the rule disadvantages nontraditional, including online, instruction. ([Chronicle of Higher Education](http://chronicle.com/free/2002/04/2002042901u.htm))

### Privacy Standard Earns Endorsement and Criticism

- The Platform for Privacy Preferences (P3P) 1.0 standard has garnered official endorsement from the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C), but privacy experts said the standard is not likely to improve consumers’ privacy. To use P3P, users install an application on their computers and specify the level of privacy they want. The application tells users what level of privacy is offered by sites they visit if those sites use P3P. W3C said users and Web sites should adopt this standard. But officials from the Electronic Privacy Information Center and Junkbusters, among others, argued that the standard will not curb abuses by Web site operators because it is not “easy, effective, and enforceable.” ([ComputerWorld](http://www.idg.net/ic_848725_1794_9-10000.html))

### Military Project Supports E-Learning Standards

- A new set of e-learning standards developed by the Department of Defense allows applications and content from various vendors to work together. The Advanced Distributed Learning (ADL) project began in 1997 because, according to the director of training at the Defense Department, “every time you changed a chip or part of the system, we’d have to recreate all of the content.” The new set of unofficial standards has the support of many leaders in the e-learning market, effectively shutting out other standards. Elliott Masie, president of a New York...
BERKELEY COURSE VALIDATES BLOGGING

The practice of “blogging” will hit the mainstream in fall 2002 with a new course at the University of California at Berkeley. Other schools, including the University of Southern California, will also cover blogging in their journalism classes in the fall. Students in the Berkeley class will study blogging as a form of journalism and will create their own blog on the topic of copyright. Paul Grabowicz, the school’s New Media Program director and one of the instructors of the course, said the blog will not simply be a list of links or a collection of students’ personal feelings—neither of which, he said, is professional journalism. Reaction from longtime bloggers was largely negative, with many characterizing the move as an effort by the establishment to co-opt the blogging movement. (Wired Magazine, <http://www.wired.com/news/school/0,1383,52992,00.html>)

NEW TOOL PREVENTS ELECTRONIC COPYING

Mike Kerr, the former chief executive of FreeOnline, claims that a new Web technology enforces copyright by blocking the ability to reproduce Web content. Kerr is now the commercial director at start-up Copyseal, which has a patent pending on software that lets people see Web documents in HTML but not copy the text to another site or print it out. The insertion of random, invisible characters into the documents makes the text illegible if the pages are printed and prevents the text from being reproduced on another Web site. The technology corrupts the text rather than destroying it, however, making it still possible (if infeasible) to read the Copyseal-protected document. (BW, <http://www.bw.com.au/stories/20020606/15198.asp>)

OFFICES GO BEYOND TECHNICAL SOLUTIONS

A new sort of campus services office is showing up at more and more colleges and universities. So-called computer-discipline offices, such as NETWics at the University of Maryland at College Park, offer a centralized location for information about campus computer policies as well as services to deal with violators. Unlike more common technical services offices, computer-discipline offices focus on the social impacts of computer environments. For example, computer-discipline offices often handle complaints about harassing or even illegal e-mails. Whereas a typical help desk might give advice about how to block the e-mails, a computer-discipline office might use the e-mails to locate the sender and offer counseling resources to the victim. Other topics for the office include copyright issues and etiquette for computer communication. (Chronicle of Higher Education, <http://chronicle.com/free/v48/i39/39a03501.htm>)

ABA CONSIDERS DISTANCE COURSE ACCREDITATION

The American Bar Association is considering a proposal to allow accredited law schools to offer distance courses. The proposal would limit the number of hours that a student could take through distance education to twelve of the eighty hours required to graduate, and first-year students would not be allowed to take any. The rules would apply to law students in residence at accredited law schools. Current rules do not allow any distance education courses to be counted toward a law degree. Officials at several prestigious law schools support the proposal and the educational experimentation that would result. The dean of the Concord University School of Law, which offers only distance education, thinks the proposal does not go far enough to embrace nontraditional education. The school is not currently accredited and would not be under the proposal. (Chronicle of Higher Education, <http://chronicle.com/free/2002/06/2002060601u.htm>)

Security Matters

RFID TAGS HELP LIBRARIANS

Some libraries have started using radio frequency identification (RFID) tags in their books to streamline check-in, check-out, and inventory tracking, as well as to help minimize theft. Like bar-code tags, which have become common in libraries, RFID tags contain information about the book. Unlike bar-code tags, RFID tags can be read without being visually scanned. With RFID tags, librarians can check books in or out without ever opening them or looking for the bar code. Inventory can be taken simply by walking through the stacks and passing a wireless reader-wand over the books. Rockefeller University Library uses the tags, which set off alarms and activate video cameras when the system detects a non-checked-out book passing out of a library exit. At fifty cents or more each, however, RFID tags are significantly more expensive than bar-code tags, which cost about two cents each. (Chronicle of Higher Education, <http://chronicle.com/free/2002/06/2002060601u.htm>)

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