Knowledge is Power: A Look at the Knowledge Network

Research should be accessible to everyone. But how do you engage a national audience in the research done at universities across the country? Faced with this issue, George Mason University became the first institution to broadcast on The Knowledge Network last October. This new idea, spearheaded by the National Science Foundation®, became the prototype for information sharing among educational institutions and Mason was at the helm.

The Knowledge Network provides research-based STEM (science, technology, engineering, and mathematics) programming to participating members, which includes Mason and 16 other institutions, and opens the doors to work of researchers that may otherwise not be accessible. Although science literacy continues to grow, many are unaware of the scientific research being done all around them. So in conjunction with the National Science Foundation, Mason has worked toward a solution by growing the Knowledge Network and bringing innovative information into classrooms, laboratories, libraries, and living rooms across the country.

How is this done? Broadcast-quality video content is fed to educational institutions via Internet2. Contributing institutions submit content to a cloud-based broadcast content management system which automatically converts it into the required format and places it into a central archive server. Campus television facilities then have several options for how and when they broadcast content.

There is value in sharing knowledge and this value is evident alone in the extended reach of critical research beyond traditional broadcast. Rather than limiting content to one institution, the Knowledge Network brings the university’s content to viewers nationwide.

This is just the beginning for the Knowledge Network. New institutions will continue to join the community as more structure is developed to keep the process running smoothly and Mason will be there supporting and participating in the initiative every step of the way.

*An independent federal agency that promotes science and engineering through research programs and education projects

Mark your calendar:

5/6 Last Day of Classes
5/18 Commencement
5/27 Memorial Day (GMU offices closed)
5/30 DoIT Picnic

For more information regarding DoIT news and events, please visit the DoIT web site

Blackboard Gets a Makeover

This May, in advance of the summer session, the Online Learning Resources team will roll out Service Pack 11 (SP11). This includes new features and enhancements to the myMason Portal, Organizations, and Blackboard 9.1. In addition to a fresh, new look, the upgrade includes a variety of new functionalities including a modern integrated calendar, myMason profiles with photos, a new content/math equation editor, redesigned discussion thread pages, additional testing features, and new ways to customize the way courses look and feel.

With the enhanced look and tools it is important to note that this update does not change the layout, tool location, or existing functionality of the system. In order to make this transition as seamless as possible, the myMason portal, Organizations, and Blackboard 9.1 will be unavailable from 5 p.m. Friday, May 17 through 11 p.m. Saturday, May 18. The updates will not only provide access to new and improved features, but will also address security and stability concerns. No modifications to existing courses will be required to utilize the updated system. Workshops are available for instructors and organization leaders to get a sneak peak at SP11 and learn more about the new features. For information, visit http://mymason.gmu.edu/summer2013

Sharon Pitt is on Twitter! Follow Her twitter.com/spitt

George Mason University
Information Technology Unit
Division of Instructional Technology
Awards and Recognition

Caught in the Act

From October to March, more than 50 individuals from the Information Technology Unit (ITU) have been caught in the act. DoIT would like to thank the recipients for going above and beyond to support colleagues and lend a helping hand to the Mason community. The nine individuals representing DoIT who received this special recognition are:

- Carey McDaniel
- Charles Thilking
- Eric Tateosian
- Joe DiPietro
- Johanna Lizardi
- Katrina Joseph
- Marlys Shoup
- Matt Berlejung
- Richard Wood

ITU Employee of the Month

December 2012
Richard Wood
General Manager/Executive Producer, GMU-TV

Richard Wood, outstanding supervisor, party host, music producer, ITU super star, and jack of all trades. Is there anything Richard Wood cannot or does not do? The answer is “no,” he is just that good. Richard Wood is a professional. He has positive energy, enthusiasm, experience, and dedication. He sets a great example for his staff while giving them many opportunities to shine. Richard is known in the studio to be calm under pressure and dazzles coworkers with creativity. His unique approach makes customers sing praises to GMU-TV. Richard is more than willing to collaborate on a project even if his plate is full. He is the kind of Mason employee you want representing the ITU.

Achievements: Service, Presentations, and Training

- DoIT staff members participated in over 30 committees this year within the ITU and across George Mason University. For the full list of committees with DoIT staff representation, please visit the DoIT web site.
- John Donohue presented at the ACCS Conference in March on the Benefits of Creating and Managing A/V Programs Internally.
- Matt Silverman was appointed to Chair of the 2013 Standards Steering Committee for InfoComm International. The Standards Steering Committee is responsible for advising the InfoComm Board of Directors on development of ANSI and international standards for the audiovisual industry.
- Matt will also deliver the following presentations at this year’s InfoComm Conference in June:
  - A Technology Manager’s Modern Day Survival Guide
  - Enterprise Audiovisual: Moving Past Project-by-Project Thinking
  - Audiovisual Systems Performance Verification
- Zane Phipps successfully completed all requirements for the ITIL Foundation Examination through APMG-International. ITIL is the most widely adopted approach for IT Service Management in the world.
- Susan Kehoe and Richard Wood will represent DoIT at the following conferences in the coming weeks:
  - Communication Media Management Association (CMMA) professional development conference at McDonald’s Hamburger University in Illinois
  - Association of Higher Education Campus Television Administrators (AHECTA) national conference in Memphis. While there, they will deliver Full STEAM Ahead: The Knowledge Network, a reflection of the first year of operation of the National Science Foundation’s Knowledge Network.

GMU-TV 2012 Awards

The Division of Instructional Technology would like to congratulate GMU-TV for their achievements in the production of award-winning programming. Not only does their work demonstrate the many talents of the team, but supports the university’s commitment to excellence in teaching and learning. In 2012, their outstanding work and dedication earned GMU-TV several best in class awards and recognitions from highly-regarded industry organizations including the Alliance of Women in Media and the International Academy of Visual Arts.

Award entries are self-submitted by the individuals responsible for each project. Entries face tough competition against often thousands of other entries and undergo rigorous review by judging councils. To date, GMU-TV holds 33 Telly Awards, 4 Aurora Awards, 37 Communicator Awards, 13 Davey Awards, 1 E-Learning Award, 1 Best Take Award, 29 Videographer Awards, and 9 Gracie Allen Awards.

The Finance Minute
Communicator Award of Excellence
Heather Bailey, Rich Eggleton, and Richard Wood

The Forum with Michael Fauntroy: Clarence Lusane
Communicator Award of Distinction
Heather Bailey

Urban Education: White Teacher
Communicator Award of Distinction
Amanda Kraus

Quality Enhancement Program Spot
Telly Award
Heather Bailey, Stacey Rathbun, and Richard Wood

* If you have comments, suggestions, or would like to submit items for the DoIT newsletter, please contact reese3@gmu.edu
Instructional Design: Behind the Scenes

Within Learning Support Services is a team of seven individuals who strive to make teaching and technology synonymous in the classroom. This is, of course, the Instructional Design (ID) team. Led by Steve Nodine, the ID team works with Mason faculty to blend technology resources with teaching excellence and grow the online classes, programs, and certifications available at the university.

One of the main goals of online learning is to get faculty thinking differently about how they teach and determine what tools best serve the learning process for each class. It is the ID team that helps bridge how technology can support teaching. Once faculty have submitted a course proposal and been approved by the Distance Education Office, they are paired with an instructional designer who they will work with for two semesters to transition their traditional class into an online one. This can include making certain aspects available online to completely revamping the class for an all online community. It is the expertise of the ID team that lends way to making this a successful and efficient process.

Joe DiPietro, one of the instructional designers, joined DoIT in 2011 and since has worked with several faculty members to turn their traditional face-to-face classes into technologically-enriched online courses. In the last year, Joe has worked with two members of Mason’s faculty that proved exactly how technology can enhance the learning process. These pioneers at Mason are Dr. Ted Hoch (Applied Behavior Analysis: Principles, Procedures, and Philosophy) and Dr. Lesley Smith (Senior Capstone Experience).

Dr. Hoch strived to have his students participate in online lectures, but also retain the information presented to them. In order to do this, Hoch embedded quizzes at the end of each presentation that linked directly to the Grade Center within Blackboard. This not only helped test the students’ knowledge retention, but allowed Dr. Hoch to keep a thorough record of class participation.

Dr. Lesley Smith’s use of technology generated better results for her students than a face-to-face class would have afforded. Not only did Dr. Smith often provide individualized video feedback for her students, she also incorporated tools that allowed students to complete assignments that may have caused difficulty for many in a traditional classroom environment. Each student was tasked with developing and delivering a brief elevator speech regarding who they are as an individual. Understanding that public speaking and comfort in front of a camera are not first nature for everyone, Dr. Smith provided Voki, a text-to-speech tool, which motivated students to participate by letting their avatars do the talking for them.

These are brief examples of the great work being done on campus with instructional design and as the university expands its online learning, the ID team will be at the forefront. As student satisfaction and interest amongst faculty to turn to e-Learning continue to grow, Joe and his colleagues will certainly be busy.

Coming to Mason: Pod Classrooms

This fall, George Mason University will unveil its first Pod Classroom in Exploratory Hall, Room L102 on the Fairfax Campus. This classroom places a total of 72 students in eight pods with nine students each. Each pod has microphones, speakers, and network connections making it easy for the teachers and students to collaborate and share information. The Pod Classroom will have more cable pulled in it than the other 31 classrooms in Exploratory Hall combined. It will be used as developmental space by 22 faculty members from varying disciplines who will work on teaching effectiveness, experiment with an active learning environment, and teach more students in the process.

Throughout the design process, DoIT collaborated with the Learning Environment Group, the Center for Teaching Excellence, Campus Planning, and Mason faculty while pulling inspiration for this innovative classroom from North Carolina State University’s SCALE-UP Project (Student-Centered Active Learning Environment for Undergraduate Programs) and Massachusetts Institute of Technology’s TEAL Project (Technology-Enhanced Active Learning). Be sure to stop by Exploratory Hall this fall to take a look!
Rebuilding and Refreshing with Efficiency

As part of DoIT’s commitment to innovative thinking, the Learning Space Design team within Classroom and Lab Technologies, along with support from Facilities, introduced a new approach for the classroom refresh process this year. The team found themselves faced with 10 rooms, an unprecedented number, requiring upgrades before the spring semester. With only a short window of time to complete all the work necessary to have the rooms up and running, the team outlined the project and tasks at hand and put their thinking caps on.

What was their bright idea? Extending the time line typically used for this project which in turn would allow them to achieve the desired outcome in a more organized manner. Compared to the previous process in which rooms were decommissioned and all work done inside the room, this new process shortened the amount of time rooms were inaccessible for teaching purposes while also increasing the amount of time for the refresh activity. With most of the work being done outside the classroom instead, more care and attention to detail were allotted to the building process thus ensuring all equipment was put together properly from the get-go.

“Breaking down the process into stages made things more manageable and straightforward,” said Zane Phipps, one of the project managers. “By allotting more time our technicians were less pressed meaning more care and concentration could be channeled into building top-notch racks and triple checking to ensure all work was done properly.”

“This process worked extremely well for both DoIT and Facilities,” said LeAnn Pittman, also a project manager. “Although the time line became longer, the process allowed for much more efficiency and served as a great model for future builds.”

Based on the decrease in support calls placed once the semester started, this new process proved to be quite successful and resulted in a better outcome than expected. The extended planning alleviated a lot of stress that refresh projects often incur and the additional time helped produce quality work.

Did You Know?

- From January to December 2012, over 25,000 software reservations were made via the Virtual Computing Lab. This was a 670% increase from 2011 which had over 3,300 reservations during its inaugural months. This year, the VCL is on track to surpass last year’s numbers.
- In FY2012, instructional designers and GMU-TV producers assisted with the development of 80 new distance education courses at Mason.
- CVT managed conferencing services for over 1,000 meetings and classes last fiscal year. This was a 43% increase from the previous year in which CVT managed almost 750 meetings and classes.
- GMU-TV has had a variety of industry leaders in their studio for Studio A. Look who’s stopped by recently.
- As of spring 2013, over 60% of technology enhanced classrooms supported by DoIT are equipped with digital devices and meet industry technology standards. All DoIT supported classrooms will be compliant to industry standards by 2016.
- Almost 45% of all university courses used Blackboard Learn during the fall 2012 semester, up 4% from the previous semester (spring 2012). This number is increasing across all colleges each year.

We’ve Moved!

In case you haven’t noticed, several DoIT staff members have moved locations. If you need to find the following individuals or just want to say hello, you can find them in their current spaces on the second floor of Innovation Hall, Room 232:

Wayne Kirschner
Chang Lee
Charles Thilking
Classroom and Lab Technologies

Rodrigo Alva (Fairfax Classroom Support Technician) Rodrigo joined CaLT in January after serving as a wage employee at the Arlington Campus for five years. Originally from Peru, Rodrigo has lived in the D.C. metro with his wife for eight years. Rodrigo is an animal lover whose current furry best friend is a three-year-old Jack Russell named Allie. In addition to his technical savvy, Rodrigo excels in film and video and as a freelance videographer and editor has worked with the IMF, WHO, and Newseum. He is an extreme music fan who plays multiple instruments and enjoys listening to a range of genres from opera to The Beatles.

Philip Kopyscinski (Fairfax Classroom Support Technician) Philip joined CaLT in January after working as a wage employee for one year. Originally from California and then Washington state, Philip came to the East Coast six years ago to attend Corcoran College of Art and Design. While at Corcoran, Philip studied photojournalism before making the switch to computer technology. Philip is excited to be at Mason and working toward his degree in computer science. Philip enjoys being active and regularly goes mountain biking and rock climbing. He’s also a Formula 1 and motorcycle racing fan, loves being near D.C. and at DoIT.

Communication and Planning

Linda Sheridan (4-VA Shared Courses Coordinator) Linda joined CaP in April. Before coming to Mason, she was the Director of Curriculum for a startup education company. Prior to that, she was the Assistant Director at the extended campus of Old Dominion University in Sterling. She holds bachelor’s degrees in economics and political science from Mary Washington College and a master’s in counseling from Virginia Tech. Linda enjoys camping, reading, and serving as an advocate for animals. She and her husband are both vegan and have two sons, Daniel and Hugh.

DoIT Operations

Kimberly Raley (Administrative Assistant) Kim joined DoIT Ops in January. Kim is a native Virginian and comes to Mason after more than 20 years with the Department of Defense. Kim is a huge sports fan who roots for all the D.C. teams. In addition to her husband and two dogs (Mario and Harvey), Kim enjoys spending time with her large extended family which includes seven nephews and one niece. Kim is a world traveler, having visited many areas including Greece, Norway, and Iceland, while also enjoying the local music scene.

Educational Media Services

Timothy Caldecott (Director of Engineering) Tim joined EdMS in March. A graduate of Liverpool University, Tim hails from across the pond, but has lived in the U.S. for over 30 years. Tim began his career as an audio engineer and spent many years in the music business. Having also held positions in product support and R&D, Tim has traveled the globe with companies including Direct TV, Sony, and NVision. Tim is an Emmy Award winner for his work on the 2002 Winter Olympics in Salt Lake City. Tim is a wine connoisseur, but also enjoys raising Siberian Huskies, ham radio, and designing his own electronics in his spare time.

Learning Support Services

Judy Luo (Web Applications Developer) Judy joined the Online Learning Resources team in December. She came to Mason in 2005 to work toward her PhD in information technology, which she received last year. During that time, she worked as an instructor in the Applied Information Technology department for three years. Originally from China, Judy came to the U.S. in 2000 to attend the University of Nebraska where she received her master’s degree in computer science. Judy enjoys karaoke, tennis and badminton, reading novels, and spending time with her family, which includes her husband, son (11), daughter (8), and mother.

Aubrey Meusel (Collaborative Learning Hub Administrator) Aubrey joined the LSS team in March. Before coming to DoIT, Aubrey worked at a firm where she specialized in design and special event planning. As a Mason alumna, holding degrees in graphic design and events management, she returns to GMU, specifically the CLUB, where she was a former student supervisor and senior lab assistant. Originally from Baltimore (Go Ravens!), Aubrey is excited to return to the university. Aubrey enjoys event planning and specialty cake design.

Eric Tateosian (LMS Administrator) Eric joined the Online Learning Resources team in November. Before Mason, he spent time in technical and training roles with Arthur Andersen, USPS, Jackson Hewitt, and Strayer University. Originally from New Jersey, Eric lived in Florida for several years before moving to Virginia. He has degrees in business administration and computer information systems from the University of South Florida and the University of Tampa, respectively, and a master’s in e-Learning technology and design from Jones International University. Eric enjoys his two cats, raising tropical fish, sailing, fishing, and vacationing with his family.