

Byte me

Painting the Digital Cave

WITH TECHNOLOGY RACING FORWARD AT LIGHTNING speed, Rick Smolan decided it was time to take a snapshot of the information superhighway. With his ideas — and the support of thousands of people worldwide — 24 Hours in Cyberspace was born.

Twenty-four Hours (<http://www.cyber24.com>) relied on photojournalists from around the world. They compiled stories from all five continents on Feb. 8 detailing the millions of uses for computer technology today.

Students from across the 50 states helped the group document how computers are changing their lives and their communities.

Smolan, a world-renowned photojournalist, spearheaded the project. He says traveling around the world and documenting different cultures during the past dozen years made him a natural to coordinate the effort.

For students, Smolan says, the project was a chance

to carve their names on the walls of the digital cave. "What people saw on Feb. 8 was simply the tip of the iceberg," he says.

Students from more than 100 colleges and high schools, including the U. of Kentucky and Bowling Green State U., Ohio, contributed to 24 Hours.

U. of Kentucky professor Robert Lod-

der had students put together a site with content from his school of pharmacy class on home medical testing kits. "We [had] 25 students working on the project," Lodder says. "They are learning a lot about how the Internet works behind the scenes."

Students at BGSU found different uses for the Internet on campus and in surrounding towns. BGSU journalism professor Sam Winch led a group of 18 students who spent a weekend gathering information for their stories — on such topics as the use of computers in a small hardware store to students learning how to play the guitar on the Web.

"I thought it might be a good example of how photo stories will be told in the near future," Winch

says. "It seems to be the biggest growth area in photojournalism."

Smolan says the project will conclude with a permanent Web site, a book and a CD-ROM.

Ben Abes, U. of Kentucky / Illustration by Matt Hawkins, Kansas State U.



Bits & Bytes

Don't log on without it

Florida State U. has announced plans to use new identification cards that will allow students to transact business on the Internet. Students will be able to slide the cards through a reader on the computer to check their grades or use online services. Unfortunately, the new "smart cards" will not do the students' laundry or cook their Ramen noodles.

Ultimate pen pal

Long hours of copying notes out of library books could become a thing of the past. Students now can scan a digital highlighter

over sentences or columns of numbers and transfer the information immediately into any Macintosh or Windows application. The only drawback? The IRISPen (Image Recognition Integrated System) comes with a price tag of \$299 — that's worth at least a couple hundred highlighters.

It's your move

Now playing online: head-to-head trivia games, crossword puzzles, scavenger hunts and other contests. Interactive Imaginations Inc.'s redesigned Web site (<http://www.riddler.com>) allows players to compete with each other almost instantly for prizes including trips, work-out machines and cars. I'll take online games for \$200, Alex.



Merry Men

HOW DOES THE OLDEST ALL-MALE, collegiate, musical, burlesque comedy troupe in the nation still make people laugh after 108 years of performing?

"There's something inherently funny about a guy putting on a dress," says senior Tim Gloege, a chair of the Mask and Wig Club at the U. of Pennsylvania.

That may be true, but the real key to success for Mask and Wig lies in its ever-changing cast members, who are among the hardest-working men in show business. For more than a century, the long string of Mask and Wig performers has kept Penn and Philadelphia audiences guffawing with their outrageous brand of singing, dancing and cross-dressing humor.

Their skit shows are akin to the Canadian comedy quintet Kids in the Hall, but some productions are more like comedic musicals, chock full of elaborate song and dance numbers.

The troupe's 40-plus members work nearly every day all year long writing, rehearsing, building sets, performing and more. Mask and Wig produces an entirely student-run production each fall and performs a professionally directed show every weekend from the end of January through March. All this, plus a spring break tour, means that the guys don't get a lot of free time and never get time away from each other.

"It's not, 'See you tomorrow', but 'See you today,'" says senior performer and social chair Matt Rosler.

Nonetheless, the members of this prestigious club wouldn't give it up for anything in the world, Rosler says. All of the Mask and Wiggers feel a bond — much like a fraternity or family — that stays with them after graduation. A strong network of alumni has held the same regard for the troupe for 20, 50, even 75 years.

A strong fan base hasn't hurt either, as year after year students flock to see the men perform. The Mask and Wiggers are one of the featured attractions at the annual spring fling, a campuswide entertainment blowout. This allows them to strut their stuff for an audience of thousands.

"They're talented, genuinely funny guys who capture the spirit of the university," says Penn freshman Jessica Boar.

If history prevails, Mask and Wig will continue performing for another 108 years under the same motto: "Justice to the stage, credit to the university." Ben Franklin — Penn's founding father — would be proud. Even if he never wore a dress.

Jason Giardino, U. of Pennsylvania / Photo courtesy of the Mask and Wig Club



Big Dan and the Big Irony

What's wrong with this picture? Magazines, newspapers and TV networks make millions of dollars every year covering college sports. But when Northwestern U. basketball player and self-described computer nerd Dan Kreft was asked to write a column for *Sports Illustrated* — for free — NCAA regulations forbade him because it would be helping a commercial entity sell its product.

"It's just an example of how oppressive NCAA regulations are," says Kreft, whose witty Web page and insider's view of life as a Big Ten Conference athlete caught the attention of *SI* editors.

"Evidently [the NCAA] would rather foster the image that jocks are illiterate," Kreft says. "God forbid we should write anything, and someone would make a dime off it."

Kreft says the regulation — Article 12.5.2.1 of the NCAA constitution — is particularly ironic because the NCAA has no qualms about allowing the media to profit from students' athletic prowess.

"Don't tell me they don't make money off featuring athletes," says Kreft, whose popular Web page is titled "Big Dan in the Big Ten" (<http://www.eecs.nwu.edu/~bigdan/>).

"If the NCAA is going to make an issue of college athletes having a byline, they should scrap the whole idea of covering college sports," he says.

The Northwestern hoopster adds that the regulations also defeat the concept of the student-athlete by limiting academic and journalistic opportunities. "It's a real shame for students in journalism," Kreft says, citing the case of a Northwestern school of journalism graduate student and basketball player who had to curtail free-lance endeavors because of the rule. "They're hampering people's careers."

Kreft says that many students have e-mailed NCAA presidents commission chair Sam Smith (bakard@wsu.edu) about the regulations, but he is doubtful the regulations will be changed anytime soon.

"It depends on how willing the NCAA is to admit they're wrong," Kreft says. "They seem pretty content to just sit on their haunches and say, 'This is our rule, and if you don't like it, you can....'"

By Anonymous

"Anonymous is a student-athlete who, according to NCAA regulations, would lose his/her eligibility if we printed his/her byline. — ed.