

Technology

Putting Finance into Practice

Villanova University's School of Commerce and Finance in Pennsylvania is the latest business school to add a state-of-the-art trading room to its technological arsenal. Built as part of the renovation of Villanova's Bartley Hall, the Villanova Applied Finance Lab (AFL) is equipped with 16 Dell workstations, three plasma televisions, ticker displays, and continuous data streams from Reuters and Bloomberg, as well as broadcasts from CNBC and CNN.

The \$450,000 trading room was funded by the university and will cost approximately \$45,000 per year to maintain. The university will work to raise an endowment to cover the room's annual costs, says David Nawrocki, AFL's director. In return, the room offers students an environment where students can "put classroom theory into practice," Nawrocki adds.

As a result of the new facility, Villanova has created a master of science degree in finance that is directly tied to the room's capabilities. The one-year program requires students to apply financial theory directly to real-world circumstances. In addition, the new lab has allowed the school to revive the Villanova Student-Managed Fund, which has been suspended for the last five years. The lab now provides the resources for undergraduates and MBA students to resume the active management of a student mutual fund.

The '411' on RSS

A new trend is building on the Web—RSS.

Depending on which technophile you ask, the acronym can stand for anything from Real Simple Syndication to Rich Site Summary. But no matter what you call it, its function as a veritable online hunter-gatherer of news, data, and information just may be one of the biggest boons to infor-

mation-beleaguered Web surfers since—well, since the Web itself.

RSS is an inexpensive, easy-to-use application that allows users to have headlines and other information from their favorite online sources gathered and fed directly into prepared displays on their own computer devices. Rather than having to "pull" information from the Web—that is, visit sites to search for news—users can have it "pushed" to them instead, delivered organized and customized to their interests. Users can update the display to download new stories and informational feeds as they are offered.

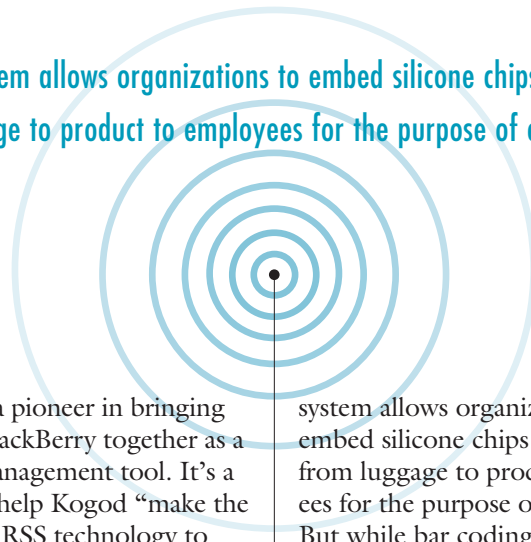
Available since 2000, RSS has only recently made its way to the business school campus. It promises to provide an efficient way for a b-school community to filter and assimilate the massive amounts of information that the Web generates.

American University's Kogod School of Business in Washington, D.C., is one of the first schools to adopt the RSS platform, defining the acronym as "Real Simple Streaming." To allow students to take full advantage of the information reader, the school has provided 300 graduate students with BlackBerry 7100t phones from T-Mobile USA. The phones use the RSS reader to access streams of content, including coursework, admissions information, job listings, and Kogod news. The BlackBerry phones and Web streaming will be fully integrated into the business school's program and infrastructure this year.

RSS has emerged as the "next big thing" in Web content publishing, says Robert Ranson, Kogod's director of marketing and communications. "We made the decision to build our new technology platform on RSS because we believe that



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streaming is going to shift the way people use the Web,” he says. Web users are switching from the “surf and search” model that requires readers to visit their favorite sites individually, to a more active media engine that alerts subscribers when new information hits the Web, he adds.

Students have access to 18 streams of Web content that are “actively pushed” to them through the RSS platform, including eight streams of Kogod news and information, two streams of admissions information, four streams of career services information, and four streams of academic information. New streams of information are also planned.

“Armed with RSS, we are going to bring business information to students in real-time,” says William DeLone, acting dean of Kogod. DeLone

sees Kogod as a pioneer in bringing RSS and the BlackBerry together as an information management tool. It’s a move that will help Kogod “make the leap into using RSS technology to advance the academic and operational processes within a business school.”

IU Tackles RFID

Radio frequency identification, or RFID, is the latest technology to hit supply chain management and one that promises to become increasingly important to the discipline. Indiana University’s Kelley School of Business will introduce RFID content to its graduate and undergraduate curricula this fall, funded by a \$150,000 grant from Procter & Gamble Co.

A likely successor to the current bar code system, the RFID coding

system allows organizations to embed silicone chips in everything from luggage to product to employees for the purpose of easy tracking. But while bar coding must be read manually, RFID works automatically, from a distance via a wireless connection. With retailers like Target and Wal-Mart requiring their vendors to adopt RFID systems, it’s a technology that’s quickly becoming a priority for any business with a supply chain. And although privacy issues have been raised, hospitals are looking into RFID systems to track staff, patients and medications, while schools are investigating the technology to track students.

Last spring, the Kelley School built what its representatives call the first working RFID model at a U.S.-based business school. Designed pri-

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

Elluminate Live! Adds Interaction to Distance Learning

With Web collaboration and online learning becoming more prevalent in business programs, e-learning software provider Elluminate Live! Academic Version is designed to facilitate real-time interaction in virtual environments. Elluminate Live! simulates the face-to-face experience of the traditional classroom by adding live interaction to distance education programs and blended online/onsite course offerings.

Pennsylvania State University’s Smeal College of Business Administration in University Park has been using Elluminate Live! to support its online iMBA program since 2002. In addition, faculty can hold virtual office hours, interact in real-time with students on assignments, and present

just-in-time course material to groups of students located throughout the world. Students also can use its virtual group spaces for online collaboration or its record-and-playback feature to watch a previously recorded class asynchronously.

The program’s voice-over IP (VOIP) component, in particular, drew the school to the product, explains Rick Shearer, assistant director for instructional design and development for Penn State’s World Campus. “The product had to have integrated, high-quality VOIP technology, so our students wouldn’t need two phone lines or a high-speed connection,” Shearer says. In addition, the product works with PC and Mac platforms and is hosted

by Elluminate Live!, which frees the university from maintenance responsibilities.

Babson College also recently chose Elluminate Live! Academic Version for its Fast Track MBA program, which combines in-person and Web-based training. The program already used the Blackboard course management system for its online component. Using Elluminate Live!, Babson plans to expand its Fast Track MBA to include synchronous online interaction, says Tova Garcia Duby, operations and e-platform manager for Babson’s Curriculum and Technology Group. “We are now using the program to make courses available to students who might otherwise not have access,” she adds.

For more information, visit www.illuminate.com.



marily for students in its MBA Supply Chain Academy, the model incorporates several types of systems, including antennas, electronic product code tags, and reading devices hooked to computers that store item information. Kelley has since launched courses in which students have experimented further with the systems—studying, for example, how products are moved from warehouse to retailer to shopping cart.

The new content is partly a response to a growing demand for RFID-savvy workers, says Ash Soni, chair of the department of operations and decision technologies at the Kelley School. “All indications are that RFID technologies will have revolutionary applications not only in supply chain management, but also in operations and management well beyond the obvious benefits we can identify today.”

DATA BIT

The U.S. Congress put the CAN-SPAM Act into effect in January of 2004, with the intent of reducing the amount of unwanted junk e-mails. Since then, however, spam has increased, comprising 80 percent of all e-mails sent, up from 50 percent to 60 percent before the law was enacted.

‘Academici’ Connects Academics

Academics worldwide now have a new tool to find like-minded scholars. Faculty at the University of Birmingham in the United Kingdom have created a global academic networking platform. The virtual network, Academici (www.academici.com), is designed to be a networking tool for faculty to use to connect with their global colleagues.

Markus Vinzent, the H.G. Wood Professor of Theology at the University of Birmingham and a founder of the project, explains that Academici is meant to address a central problem in academia—finding colleagues for collaborations. “It is always hard to find colleagues either on campus or internationally to develop joint projects or find conference speakers,” says Vinzent. The Web, he adds, is not set up to facilitate direct

personal contact.

Academici allows faculty to locate and contact their peers by name, university, or academic area of study. “Faculty can use the virtual academy to find colleagues working in similar academic areas or to develop cooperative partnerships with universities, scholarly societies, and industries worldwide,” Vinzent says. “In this way, Academici offers the unprecedented opportunity for cross-fertilization between and across academic disciplines. It is a tool designed by academics for academics.”

Content on www.academici.com is available in English, German, Spanish, and French. Basic membership to Academici is free. Premium membership—which includes features such as advanced searching functions and private messaging on the network—is available for free for a one-month trial period. After the trial, users can purchase a premium membership for a monthly fee of €5.95.

NEWSBYTES

■ BARGAIN MAC

In a move to break into the low-end computing market, Apple recently introduced its “Mac Mini,” a no-peripherals-added computer for \$499. The new product is aimed primarily at home users, who must add their own keyboards, mice, and monitors. Analysts believe Apple’s mini Mac—along with its eMac, which costs around \$800—will help keep Apple from losing any more market share to the 100-pound gorilla in the industry, Microsoft. However, business users may still be tethered to their PCs until compatibility issues

between Macs and PCs are addressed, which will hinder Apple from making large inroads into Microsoft’s customer base.

■ NO PHISHING

A new plan is in place to thwart “phishers”—spammers who attempt to trick people into giving personal information by sending fake e-mails that seem to come from reputable companies. Microsoft, eBay, and Visa have joined forces to launch the Phish Report Network, whose purpose will be to gather all phishing reports and issue immediate

alerts of phishing scams to Network subscribers.

■ IN FOR AN UPGRADE

Carleton University in Ottawa has selected HP to design, implement, and manage its \$10 million campuswide upgrade of its network infrastructure. The enhanced network will deliver ten gigabit-per-second Ethernet performance and bandwidth, include 14,000 ports in 20 buildings, and provide 100 megabit-per-second desktop access. The project is expected to be completed by 2008.

'Pharming': A New Cyberthreat

Just when e-mail users are savvy enough to put metaphorical “no phishing” signs up on their computers, cyberthieves have devised yet another new scheme. Called “pharming,” the new threat is even more menacing than phishing because it can dupe even the most vigilant computer users. Phishing requires users to click on a link in a fake e-mail and actively divulge information. Pharming, however, takes advantage of the Web’s own address system to trick users.

Every Web site has a unique internet protocol (IP) address that is conveyed numerically—the IP address for www.msn.com, for example, is 207.68.173.254. Because numerical IP addresses are difficult for users to remember, the Web utilizes a domain name system (DNS), which automatically translates simpler word-based addresses into IP addresses for users.

Pharmers hijack this system by rerouting DNS information to fake Web pages. They do so either by infecting a user’s computer with spyware (sent via an e-mailed virus) or through a technique called DNS cache poisoning, in which they break into DNS servers to reroute domain names. Unaware of the switch, users may believe they are visiting a familiar Web site when actually they’ve been diverted to a duplicate. Users may input their passwords, credit card numbers, and other sensitive information without realizing they are giving their information to sophisticated thieves.

So far, these attacks have been on lesser known Internet service providers, but



WEBWATCH

■ CALLING ALL BLOGGERS

Young student entrepreneurs have another online resource to use to learn what it takes to start a business. AllBusiness.com, an online media and e-commerce company, has launched its AllBusiness Blog Center at www.allbusiness.com/blog/. Billed as a “one-stop-shop” for entrepreneurs and small business owners, the Blog Center offers articles, forms, and tools that address real-world business questions. One Blog Center feature, called “Blogging My Business,” allows entrepreneurs to share their day-to-day experiences in starting and managing a business. The site also



includes blogs on sales, marketing, management, and business law.

■ SOUTH AFRICA MBA

SURREAL, a South Africa-based online publisher, recently launched a web portal for the South African

MBA market. Located at www.MBA.co.za, the Web site aims to educate prospective MBA students about MBA programs and business education. In

addition, the site’s creators felt there was a dearth of information regarding programs in this part of the world. An objective for MBA.co.za, they say, is to promote the South African MBA on a global scale.

security experts still recommend that users stay alert. They advise users to look for any variations in otherwise familiar Web sites, such as misspellings or misplaced graphics. In addition, users should make sure the domain name of any page that asks for personal information is preceded by “*https://*,” which indicates it is secure; they should also look to the bottom of their browsers for a lock or key symbol and click on it to check who owns the security certificate. Users also can install a spyware detection program such as Spyware Doctor, in addition to antispam, antivirus, and firewall protection, to keep their computers secure.

Finally, those who are especially diligent may want

to stop using the domain names of their favorite banks and online retailers altogether. Simply visit www.networksolutions.com and click on the “Whois” link at the top of the page. This resource allows users to type in a specific domain name, hit search, and receive its registration information, including its numerical IP address near the bottom of the page. Those who type in www.nytimes.com, for instance, can locate its IP address, 199.239.137.245. Then, they can type the IP address into their browsers, rather than the domain name, to ensure the site they are visiting is genuine.

For more information about phishing and pharming, visit the Anti-Phishing Working Group at www.antiphishing.org—or the more wary can also reach its site at 208.254.36.106. 