



The Ethics of Technology

A new writing course encourages students to explore the ethical implications of advances in IT.

Most information systems students are probably more comfortable managing databases than writing metaphors. And John Artz, an associate professor of information systems at The George Washington University School of Business, might seem an unlikely person to teach fiction writing. But fiction, he says, is the perfect vehicle when it comes to teaching IT students to explore the possible long-term outcomes of technological innovation.

Artz developed “Writing Stories to Explore the Ethics of Technology” as part of “Writing in the Disciplines,” a series of courses that

crosses the curriculum at GW’s campus in Washington, D.C. “The university developed the program because it feared that students had lost the ability to write effectively,” explains Artz. “There was a push for courses that taught students to write within their own disciplines, rather than just through the English department.”

Artz began teaching the course two years ago. Throughout the semester, students tackle ethical issues and outcomes surrounding topics as diverse as software piracy, genetic manipulation, and medical advances.

“When it comes to technologi-

cal advancement, we tend not to think about implications. We don’t want to worry about what’s going to happen in the future,” says Artz. “But students need to think about what the likely outcomes are and whether there’s a potential downside to technology.”

“Writing Stories” is open to any business student, but students from other schools also take it because they find the idea of technological ethics intriguing, Artz says. Interest has been high—this year, he expanded the size of the course to 30 students, up from 25.

During the first half of the course, Artz teaches students how to construct a story and walks them through the stages of crafting characters and plotlines. For practice, he asks students to think of a counterargument to the premise of the science fiction novel *Jurassic Park* by Michael Crichton.

Students must grapple with the novel’s argument that unregulated scientific research—in this case, the cloning of dinosaurs—conducted solely for commercial gain will lead to catastrophe.

In the second half of the course, students write stories on the ethical issues of their choice. What happens, for example, if scientists find a way to achieve immortality? One student’s main character lives so long that he has done everything there is to do and is trapped in an endless cycle of boredom. Another student wrote a story about a couple who clone their dead child. In their grief, they spoil the clone so much that he becomes a completely different person. The couple had not realized that personality relies on a child’s experiences as much as on his DNA.

Through such fictional scenarios,

NEWSBYTES

■ HENLEY DEVELOPS E-LEARNING

The European Commission has provided funding to Henley Business School at the University of Reading in the U.K. for a project examining e-learning. The goal of the project, launched in March 2007, is to develop the use of e-learning technologies in Europe's education and training systems.

■ NEW SECURITY CREDENTIAL

Murray Jennex, associate professor of information and decision systems at San Diego State University's College of Business Administration in California, is among the first 175 people to receive the Certified Secure Software Lifecycle Professional (CSSLP) certification. The CSSLP was launched last September by ISC2, a nonprofit that edu-



cates IT security professionals. The credential certifies that individuals are able to address vulnerabilities that affect software applications and are informed about best practices in software security.

■ VIDEO RECRUITMENT

Students at Audencia Nantes in France now can train for job interviews via a newly installed on-

campus video-recruitment terminal. The terminal is financed by French bank Société Générale's *Mission Handicap*, which aids handicapped students in their job searches. Using the terminal, which offers its content in seven languages, students can participate in job interview simulations and prepare with a virtual coach before meeting with recruiters.

■ EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR

The Education Special Interest Group of the Association of Information Technology Professionals has named Bruce White its Information Systems Educator of the Year. White is the chairman of the undergraduate information systems management program and program director of the computer information systems masters program at Quinnipiac University's School of Business in Hamden, Connecticut.

students explore issues that they otherwise may not have considered and learn to look at them from multiple perspectives. Fiction, Artz emphasizes, allows them to take current technological trends, play them out in a number of ways, and imagine different future possibilities.

Many educators stress the importance of understanding the past, but Artz offers a different point of view. "Marshall McLuhan, the 1960s' sociologist, said that looking to the past to understand the future is like driving by looking in the rearview mirror. Writing stories is a way to give students insight on the future and on the consequences of technology," Artz says. "It provides them with a stronger basis for making more ethical decisions."

■ Adding E-Conferencing To the Curriculum

Now that online collaboration is becoming more pervasive in business, more business schools are adding e-conferencing tools to their offerings. Pepperdine University's Graziadio School of Business and Management in Los Angeles, California, recently added e-conference rooms to its programs. It offers each student a personalized e-conference space for his or her personal and academic use.

Supported by e-learning technology provider Elluminate, the e-conference rooms are real-time online meeting environments where stu-

DATABIT

The budget crunch may be a boost to alternative computing tools. A study by online IT community MeriTalk, open-source software maker Red Hat Inc., and IT reseller DLT Solutions estimates that the use of open-source software could save the U.S. government **\$3.7 billion** over three years. Virtualization technology and cloud computing could save **\$13.3 billion** and **\$6.6 billion**, respectively.

dents can collaborate with teams or fellow classmates, whether they're at home, at work, or on the road. The online spaces also allow professors to bring students or guest speakers into the classroom from anywhere in the world.

Graziadio students use unique Web addresses to access their e-conference rooms. Once there, they invite others to join them to brainstorm on a shared whiteboard, collaborate on documents, share files, chat, or create

TOOLS OF THE TRADE

A Network Management Tool Helps Students Take Control of Their Careers

Whether it's on the job, at a conference, or online, networking is an essential part of a successful business career. But many professionals may not devote the time necessary to build a network of high-quality contacts.

Building and tapping into a valuable network is the idea behind UpMo, an online network management tool created by Upwardly Mobile Inc. of Sunnyvale, California. Intended for professionals, career services offices, and university alumni programs, UpMo is designed to help people improve their networking skills and make the most of their networks—whether or not they're currently looking for jobs.

UpMo includes four different tools. The Network Readiness Evaluator asks users a series of questions to help them examine their networks and identify strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. The

UpModel Chooser invites users to browse examples of high-earning professionals, select those they'd like to emulate, and read the details of their success, including the books they've read, the courses they've taken, and the mistakes they've made.

The Career Mapper provides an interactive, clickable map to show users how they can achieve their goals and how different life decisions—such as taking time off to raise children or earning a degree—might impact their careers. Finally, the Career Action Plan includes instructions to help users pursue their chosen career paths.

The Career Action Plan can be integrated into Microsoft Outlook or Web mail applications such as Yahoo and Google. It gives users daily, weekly, and monthly career and network development tasks, including phone calls, meet-ups, e-mails, and events.

UpMo aims to provide a starting point for students who are uncertain where to begin when it comes to using their networks most effectively. Subscriptions to UpMo are available on a monthly, quarterly, or annual basis. For more information or to view a demo, visit www.upmo.com.



presentations in a wiki-style format. They even can invite friends and family from outside the Graziadio community. To use the technology, students must have access to an Internet connection and a speaker/microphone headset, although the school is considering providing headsets to incoming students starting this fall.

To view a video describing the e-conference room environment, visit wikis.pepperdine.edu/display/GSBME/e-Conference+Rooms.

A Host of Sites Hits the Web

Business education is big on the Internet. A number of Web sites for business students and faculty, targeting a diverse array of topics and demographics, have recently gone live.

For those interested in general leadership, the Thunderbird School of Global Management in Glendale, Arizona, has launched a free, interactive Web site. It's designed as a resource for executives trying to come to grips with the recession and adopt more effective methods of leadership. The Thunderbird Knowledge Network, found at www.thunderbird.edu/knowledgenetwork, gives executives access to stories, columns, videos, podcasts, and blogs generated by the school's faculty. Site visitors also have the opportunity to post their own video responses to the question, "What can global leaders do to create sustainable prosperity worldwide?"

Topmba.com is a new resource for EMBA candidates seeking out the right business program. It features podcasts; articles and interviews with business school professors, deans, and program directors;

and school profiles. It also includes information from partner institutions, which help interested candidates prepare themselves for face-to-face meetings with admissions officers at the QS World Exec MBA Tour, a series of in-person education fairs in a variety of countries.

Those looking for background materials on global corporate social responsibility can find them at www.businessinsociety.eu, created jointly by the European Academy of Business in Society and the European Foundation for Management Development, both based in Brussels, Belgium. The Business in Society Gateway Web features inter-




national research, education, and training initiatives on CSR from business schools and universities; multimedia materials and links; and an international events calendar.

Finally, business professors looking for new ideas for their classrooms can visit the MIT Sloan Teaching Innovation Resources (MSTIR) Web site, a new launch from the Massachusetts Institute of

Technology's Sloan School of Management in Cambridge.

The site, found at mitsloan.mit.edu/MSTIR, contains teaching videos, case studies, and other materials developed by MIT faculty and students on topics ranging from global entrepreneurship to sustainability.

The Web has become the perfect arena for widespread knowledge sharing, says JoAnne Yates, MIT Sloan's deputy dean. "Our goal is to spread knowledge and make a difference in the world of business education—to have an impact on business education and where it is going in the future." 

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