3-1-2004

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Director’s Statement: New Directions at the Berglund Center

Posted on March 1, 2004 by Editor

By Jeffrey Barlow

This is a period of transition at the Berglund Center. The Center was created in the spring of 2001. It was the vision of Jim and Mary Berglund, who generously funded the Center, that it become a leader in the analysis of the impact of the Internet. Our Founding Director, Steven Boone, joined us in the fall of 2001 and I served as Faculty Director.

Steve planned to work with us for three years, using his managerial expertise and corporate experience to give the rest of us, academics and students, a firm foundation in the skills necessary to operate a center. Steve resigned in December 2003 to become the President of SakéOne, and I have replaced him as Director.

Another key person in the Center’s development has been Theresa Floyd, who led us through the mysteries of Excel charts and database programming, and provided the seasonal baskets of treats that made the Center more than just a collection of computers. Theresa since has joined the Human Resources staff at Pacific University.

Steve and Theresa met the challenge of getting the Center off to a solid start. We are now usually top ranked in Google searches for either “Internet Studies” or “Internet Studies Center.” Articles from Interface are frequently cited in print and electronic publications. We have had many favorable comments from our very interactive and lively audience, which does not hesitate to send us opinions, critical or supportive.

We have named as Berglund Fellows a number of fine scholars doing original research and hosted several well-attended summer institutes. Thus we met most of our Fellows and have worked with them electronically.

To have accomplished this in less than three years, and in competition with our sister centers at
huge universities, has astonished us all. There are a number of reasons for this success. First, our editorial staff has proven talented, creative, and indefatigable. We have never failed to receive regular high quality submissions from our editors.

The second reason for our success has been our talented students. We may be the only serious academic center in any subject staffed entirely with undergraduates. The Center is, we think, a testimony not only to our students’ personal qualities, but also to the advantages of the Liberal Arts education offered at Pacific University. We are particularly proud that they have maintained outstanding grades the entire time! While each has been important, we are particularly grateful to our talented web masters and systems operators, including Jesse Snyder, Matt Ernst, Heather Hawkins, Marci Lim, and Ben Young, assisted by Nate Wilson.

Thirdly, Pacific University has been an ideal home for the Center. Pacific has been expanding very rapidly and quarters and resources are tight. We have sometimes scrounged materials from unlikely places, but we have always had sufficient physical space and computing support. For these we thank Pacific’s Directors of Instructional Technology, beginning with Jeb Weisman and ending with Lee Colaw. We are also grateful for the support of President Emeritus Faith Gablenick of Pacific University, whose vision created the Center, and President Phil Creighton who continues to nurture it.

We are especially appreciative of the Matsushita Corporation, whose support of the Matsushita Center for Electronic Learning at Pacific University has permitted us to continually update hardware and software. Matsushita support has also been invaluable in helping us develop a niche in the study of the Internet in Asia, as well as an audience there.

After three years, it is an appropriate time to make some changes. First, beginning with our April issue, we will re-do the formatting of Interface. More importantly, in the fall of 2004, we will move to a quarterly publication. This will give us an opportunity to create a fully peer-reviewed section of Interface. Peer-review means that scholars will review submissions prior to publication. Only those making a contribution to the field of Internet studies will be published.

Becoming a peer-reviewed quarterly ensures that publication in Interface will be useful to younger scholars seeking certification or promotion. This will ensure a flow of important articles in addition to those being produced by our Berglund Fellows.

Each posting of Interface will be more substantial. Free of the pressures of a monthly deadline, our editors can more thoroughly develop submissions. This, too, will raise the quality of the journal.

We will continue to support Berglund Fellows, offering grants in increasing numbers in each of the next three years. We are broadening the format of the Fellowship, supporting not only research, but the effective use of electronic resources within classrooms as well. These Berglund Classes are intended to set standards for electronically enhanced teaching.
We promise, however, not to lose the broad appeal of Interface. We will bring on an editor in writing about gaming, for example, as well as publishing more software reviews. We will review more books in each issue, covering a wider range of publications. We also anticipate a monthly posting of a newsletter calling our readers’ attention to noteworthy events in the development of the Internet.

The Internet is a constantly developing–some might say mutating–entity, and we intend to change to keep up with it. Please continue with us upon this evolutionary journey.

Jeffrey Barlow
Director, Berglund Center for Internet Studies

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