9-1-2005

From the Director's Desk

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Pacific University

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Posted on September 1, 2005 by Editor

By Jeffrey Barlow

With this September issue we begin our 2005-06 season of Interface. We have experienced many pleasant changes in the past few months and trust that these will be reflected in our content during the year. Our budget has been significantly enhanced, thanks again to the generosity of Jim and Mary Berglund, and of Pacific University.

With these added resources, we are both expanding previous activities, such as Interface itself, and our grant program. (Please see the call for proposals at: http://bcis.pacificu.edu/journal/2005/04/proposals.php). We are also continuing to facilitate electronic classes to our partner Wenzhou Medical College (WMC) in China. We have been joined in the Berglund Center for the year by a valued colleague, Tom Yang, Professor of English at WMC and the indispensable innovator for the program at the Chinese end. (To see reports on the program, go to: http://bcis.pacificu.edu/nwacc/) During the year, as well as pursuing an additional degree in the College of Education at Pacific University, Tom will be working on a series of exciting initiatives at the Berglund Center.

We are also undertaking a regular program of Berglund Roundtables, which will feature a series of six speakers during the coming months who will discuss their personal experience in working in fields enabled by the Internet. The first of these speakers, Mark Lipson of Lunar Logic, a software development firm, will present on September 22. Mark will be discussing the issue of cultural problems connected with both outsourcing work to a branch of his company in Russia, and in working with foreign programmers. To participate electronically in this event, please see the announcement in this issue.

As we begin our new round of activities, we are very conscious of how much we owe to the outstanding students of Pacific University whose dedication and creativity make our work possible at the Berglund Center. We are fortunate in having a very low turnover this year, as it has been possible to continue some of our recent graduates in professional positions. We are, however, losing a key figure, Ellen Maiden, who has been our office manager for the past year. It has been Ellen’s attention to detail that has permitted the rest of the students to fully deploy their own talents. Ellen, a business and Japanese language major, moves to the office of International Programs where she will work in a field more central to her own career aspirations.

A key member of our staff from the beginning of the Berglund Center has been Theresa Floyd, office manager, designer, and Database Goddess. Theresa returns to us in the coming year and
her steady presence will under gird our expansion in coming months.

This expansion will include breaking ground for a new Berglund Professional Studies building in the spring of 2006. The new building will not only provide the Berglund Center with facilities designed for our operations, but will also bring us together with colleagues from post-graduate programs at Pacific University.

One of the advantages of our work here is that it is both theoretical and applied. Applied in that we use the Internet for our own activities, and in doing so get to explore new technologies and new pedagogies. But as well we get to study and assess these activities, assisting others in making wise decisions about their own initiatives as we attempt to create and foster best practices. For those of us who work at the Berglund Center, this is the best possible work we might undertake at this time and place.

As we work in preparing this posting of Interface, however, we do so with the cacophony of the current human and environmental tragedies in New Orleans ringing in our ears; a deluge of media sights and sounds equivalent to the terrible floods which have engulfed the region. Front and center in these events is the Internet itself. If the tragedy of 9-11 was marked by the cell phone, it is the Internet, used for communication when other systems are down, which carries much of the news, speculation, and analysis, as well as helping families and friends communicate.

So as much pleasure as we take in our own plans for this year, we find it greatly tempered by the suffering of others. We hope to conduct our own work in such a way that it might be of continued assistance to the wider human community.

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