TECHNOLOGY NEWS

Our Mission:

"The mission of the Office of Information Technology is to support and enhance the academic and administrative activities of Southern Methodist University.

To fulfill its mission, IT provides computing, information processing, and communications resources to satisfy the needs of faculty, students, and staff, and offers comprehensive support services to help them use technology effectively and creatively.

IT is dedicated to actively seeking input from it customers, understanding their needs and challenges, and working with them to implement appropriate solutions. In its leadership role, IT is committed to creating and nurturing the vital information technology environment required for SMU to achieve its vision of excellence in education".

Questions, comments, or suggestions?
Contact
IT Communications
oitcommunications@smu.edu

Introducing the newly designed smu.edu/oit!

The Office of Information Technology was reorganized and renamed. Therefore, 7 different websites previously maintained by various groups in IT have been consolidated, rewritten and enhanced! During the Focus groups held in April, several suggestions were made regarding the website content and layout. All of these suggestions have been incorporated.

The IT website now offers the following:

• A master index of all available help resources including the help desk, multimedia support, database support, research support and more
• A master index of all available services including the ability to filter the service offerings by audience (faculty, staff and students).
• Additional details about each service linked with available training and documentation to allow for a "one stop" approach to understanding, troubleshooting, learning and requesting a service
• A master index of all training resources including both Online and Hands On Training
• Information on IT projects and our project management process
• And still more enhancements under development

We hope that you find the website easier to navigate and very helpful in learning about the various services and support that is offered by IT. We'd love to hear your feedback on the new site! Send any suggestions or comments to OITcommunications@smu.edu.

Spam Filtering: Introducing spam.smu.edu!

Several months ago, IT implemented a brand new spam filter to replace our previous two filtering solutions. The new filter provides much more effective protection and has vastly decreased the number of spam messages reaching the campus community. The filter has also been extremely effective in blocking many of the phishing attempts that previously made it through safely. Although the filter is not perfect (no filter is!), the results of the new filters have been phenomenal.

Because some messages may be tagged incorrectly by the spam filter, IT has established spam.smu.edu. This website allows you to view any messages that are routed to the quarantine folder on the spam filter. You can then release a message from the quarantine, block users or whitelist addresses from the filter. This will allow the SMU community to manage and control the messages they receive more effectively.

Spam.smu.edu is available through any web browser. Simply go to spam.smu.edu and enter your SMU ID and your SMU password (same password used for Access.SMU). Messages are only stored in quarantine for a period of 30 days. For more information, please visit our website.

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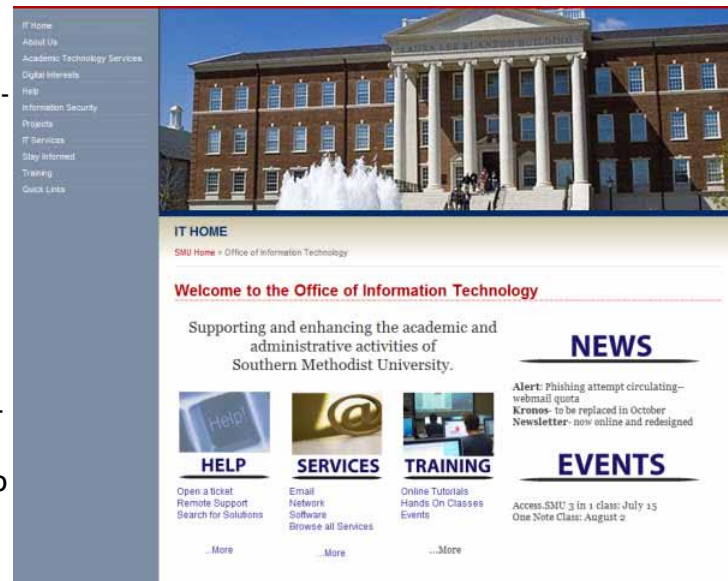
Focus Groups...Follow Up

During the month of April, IT held a series of focus groups to gather information from the campus community on our various services and support. We obtained a wealth of information and great suggestions from those meetings, and have been working diligently to implement as many of the changes as possible. The following are a few items that we have addressed over the summer months.

• Change the format of our communications to clearly indicate the target audience and computer platform affected. Our email messages now include this information at the very top of each message. We also try to include a brief message and post additional details on our website for those who want more information.
• Eliminate the categorization fields when submitting a ticket via help.smu.edu. We have removed that requirement from help.smu.edu. Now you can simply document your request for help without selecting a category.
• Revise the website so the front page is less wordy and overwhelming. Our new site just launched. Throughout the design we tried to keep your comments and feedback in mind. We hope you agree!
• Change the phone tree message when calling help so they don't have to press 1. Done! Now you can just call 84357 and get straight to a help desk agent.
• Offer online training in the office. The University has purchased licenses for Atomic Learning which offers faculty and staff the ability to complete software training right at their own desk!

There were several other suggestions which we are continuing to develop and implement. Thank you to all who participated and shared your ideas with us. We appreciate your insight and your support!

Online Training brought to your desktop!

The University has purchased a limited number of licenses for Atomic Learning. Atomic Learning offers over 30,000 tutorials covering a wide range of software applications. All of the tutorials are accessible online through your internet browser. Most of the tutorials are brief, lasting approximately 2-3 minutes. Most have audio as well as video and closed captioning. The available tutorials allow you to quickly learn a new skill just in time! For example: if you need to create a pivot chart in excel, there's a quick tutorial for that! If you need a quick demo on mail merge, it's available. In fact, microsoft Word 2007 has over 52 different tutorials available!

These licenses are available for current SMU faculty and staff only. To request a login to Atomic Learning, visit http://help.smu.edu. Login using smu\smuid as the username and select Atomic Learning under the Additional Services menu. Your account will be created within 48 hours.

Any students or retired faculty and staff interested in these tutorials, may access them from the Fondren Library West Computer Labs located in Fondren Library West room 103 B and C.

We hope you will take advantage of this great training opportunity. If you have any questions, please contact the IT Help Desk at 214-768-4357.

IT Support in Fondren Library

IT and CUL embarked on a pilot project this summer offering limited technical support to students and library patrons in FLE. A student worker has been available at the Library reference desk from 12:00pm-5:00pm Monday through Friday. This program provides assistance with wireless configuration, Microsoft Office questions, printing problems and basic troubleshooting of Locker, Webmail, Blackboard and Access.SMU.

This pilot project allowed IT to provide hands on support in the library and alleviate some of the technical support requests often received by the Reference Librarians. The summer pilot went extremely well and therefore, we are continuing the program this fall. Student assistance will be avaialble in FLE from 7:30am until 5:00pm Monday through Friday for walk up requests only. In addition, several hours of support are also available in Hamon Arts Library.

Departmental Computer Orders

As the Fiscal year ended, departments placed a number of computer orders to spend their Technology dollars. At the beginning of the summer, the install team had over 190 installations in the queue. To address this volume, IT hired a temporary worker and transitioned a field support consultant to the Install team in order to help address the workload. We are working as quickly as possible to install the computers across campus. The number is now around 90! We appreciate your patience as we try to catch up with the number of installs.

We have made an important change to the order process. In the past, orders would be placed but the charges for that order would not be JE'd in a timely manner. In order to provide Departments assistance with their accounting, we have implemented a new purchasing module in our Help Desk Software. This will allow us to JE charges on a monthly basis. As a computer is ordered, a purchase request will be opened. These charges will then appear in the monthly report to upload to SMU Financials. In the near future, we will configure the purchasing module to also email the requestor a copy of the order with the exact charges to be accrued.

IT Support Extended to Taos

IT has made some significant changes in the network infrastructure of the SMU in Taos campus. Wireless access is now available in all of the casitas as well as the other classroom buildings. Over the next few months, IT will work on increasing the network speed as well as implementing a Voice Over IP (VOIP) phone system.

In order to provide better support for the faculty, staff and students on the Taos campus, one of the IT Field Support team members is working full time in Taos. Bryan Wheat has been working diligently to assist the campus residents in configuring their computers for the network. In addition, all of the lab machines have been upgraded with the latest software and several new machines have been installed. Bryan continues to work on configuring other computing devices including the video conferencing unit and printers.

As Taos begins its first fall semester, we are pleased to offer network access and support throughout the campus.

Audio Conferencing ID's Now Available

The OIT Telecommunications Department is now offering audio conferencing services through Time Warner Telecom. The service allows for up to 96 participants in a conference call. If you have an academic/ business need to make audio conference calls you should complete the request form located at help.smu.edu. Supervisor approval is required.

When your request has been processed you will receive an email with your conference ID, moderator passcode and national call-in number. The email will contain web links that include online user training, a quick start guide, a user guide and a list of local access call-in numbers. It will also contain a link to your web conference account and your assigned web login ID and password.

All audio conference calls placed using your new conference ID will be billed monthly to your departmental budget account. It is the responsibility each individual entrusted with a conference ID and passcode to maintain the confidentiality of the conference ID to avoid fraudulent calls. Current rates for using the conference service are .15 per minute per participant using the national call-in number, and .12 per minute per participant using a local call-in number.

If you have questions regarding this new service offering, please contact the OIT Telecommunications Department at 214-768-2000.

Blackboard Upgrade: A New Look and Feel
### By: Steve Snider

If you haven't seen the new Blackboard interface take a look. Release 9 has new look and incorporates Web 2.0 technology. The new interface is more intuitive and will help build courses faster.

New Features:
• Addition of the blog and journal tool
• Additional functions in groups
• Enhanced assignment tool
• The Digital Dropbox has been removed. File exchange is now handled through the enhanced assignment tool and group functions.

When the course is in the View mode, instructors will see exactly what the students see. When you put the course in Edit mode, you can add, change or delete items and tools. The Edit Mode switch is at the top right of the page. Also note the small chevron pull-down menus associated with items. The pull-down menus appear in all parts of the new Blackboard. Another nice feature is the ability to reorder items by dragging them up and down

There will be a number of Blackboard training courses offered throughout the semester. In addition, new help guides have been written and posted on our website.
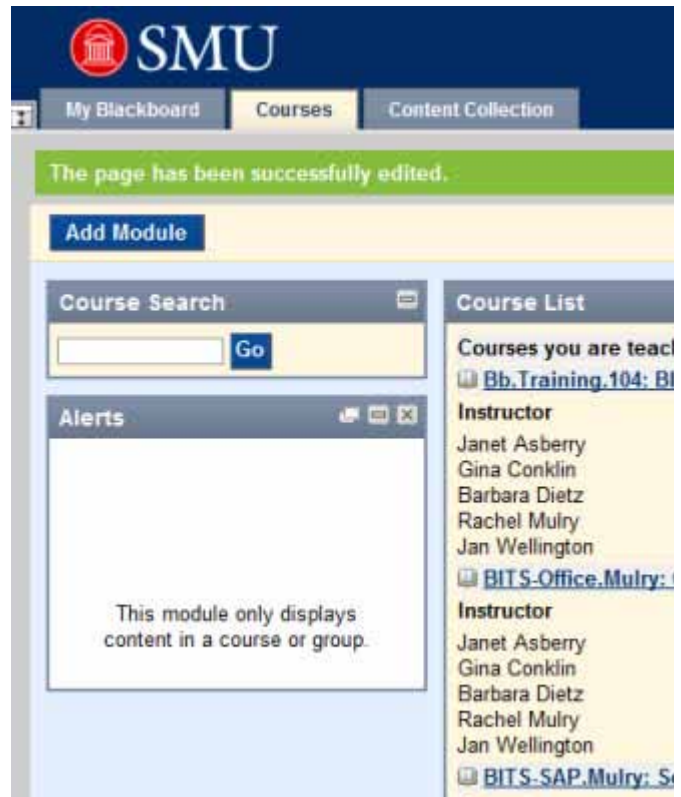
Refining the Mac OS: Snow Leopard
by Jason Warner

When Apple's Snow Leopard website advertises "more reliable disk eject" as a one of the primary refinements in the next incarnation of its operating system, all but Apple diehards might initially wonder if moving from Mac OS 10.5 to 10.6 is really worthwhile. With Snow Leopard, Apple seizes an opportunity to focus on fine-tuning its core software rather than serving up major changes or additions in a sweeping overhaul; Snow Leopard simply makes Intel (that's right, only Intel) Macs "faster, more reliable, and easier to use."

In evaluating the current release candidate for OS 10.6, I found that Snow Leopard performs just so---installing quickly and even taking up just over 6GB less disk space than a clean install of the previous Leopard. Meeting the hardware requirements of an Intel processor, 1GB of system memory, and 5GB of free hard drive space, my test system seemed enjoyed snappy performance most noticeably in the form of interface animations and graphics.

While simply installing Snow Leopard proved easy and functional, it was not until I opened Apple's Mail application when the relevance of this upgrade became immediately apparent, specifically for Apple customers like SMU's who also take advantage of Microsoft's Exchange mail servers. With Snow Leopard, Apple adds thorough support for the Exchange email system, enabling Mac OS to use its own Mail, iCal, and Address Book applications to access Exchange services such as Outlook's email, calendar invitations, and Global Address Lists. Setup of an SMU Exchange email account proved extremely easy, and in minutes SMU email, SMU calendar, and SMU contacts were accessible. Here are some features I've tested successfully:

• Mail was able to auto-complete names from the SMU Global Address List
• iCal was able to view free/busy availability of other SMU accounts and conference rooms

Snow Leopard continued...
• iCal was able to manage multiple Exchange calendars, perfect for managing departmental or other employee calendars
• Address Book was able to view the SMU Global Address List as well as an individual's Exchange-based contacts

 Initial testing reveals that Snow Leopard will improve the performance of Intel (again, that's right, only Intel) Macs while substantially diminishing the amount of hard drive space required for installation---and should be a smooth upgrade for customers already running Mac OS 10.5 (Leopard). The most substantial refinements in Snow Leopard finally deliver tight integration between Mac OS and Microsoft Exchange---perfect for Apple customers at SMU.

Join us on September 24 at 1:30pm in the Hughes Trigg Forum for a Snow Leopard overview presented by Apple!

Mark your Calendars!
IT will be hosting several brown bag events during October's Security Awareness Month. These events will cover security issues pertaining to passwords, mobile devices, desktops and email. We will also host a Technology Fair offering a wide range of brief training sessions, demos and prize give-aways.
October 2 12:00-1:00 Hughes Trigg Forum   October 8 12:00-1:00 Expressway Towers, Ste 200
October 16 12:00-1:00 Blanton Building Rm 112   October 23 12:00-1:00 Hughes Trigg Forum
October 30 12:00-1:00 Hughes Trigg Forum   October 30 10:00-2:00 Tech Fair-Hughes Trigg

Your Digital Lockers are Here!
By Brad Boeke

Exactly one year ago, IT implemented a really interesting and versatile Web 2.0 tool for everyone on campus to use. It is called Digital Locker and it is a web-based digital archive, where you can drag and drop all of the digital stuff you want to keep, make accessible to yourself on the Web, and share selectively with anyone you wish, anywhere in the world. Brought to you by Xythos, a company recently purchased by Blackboard, Inc., your SMU Digital Locker will enable you to provide large files to others without sending bulky email attachments, organize and describe important documents and presentations, share research results and notes with colleagues, archive old but still useful websites, distribute photo web galleries, and deliver large video files, and much, much more.

How Digital Lockers Work
The SMU Digital Locker is your own private web-based digital repository - kind of like your high school locker, except much better. With Locker, you can easily create folders to organize, store, and distribute digital files, anything at all from text to video to web. Most importantly, you can share some or all of the files with anyone on campus or off. So, individual files and/or entire directories can be shared with anyone in the world - and you control their level of access. These collaborators can be limited to just reading, reading and writing, or administering your files. But, you are always in control and can change that access at any time. You can't do that with your shared network drives.

To access your Digital Locker, open a web browser (Internet Explorer, Firefox, Safari, Chrome), and navigate to locker.smu.edu. Log in with your email alias (the name before the @ in your SMU email address) as the username and your SMU password. Your SMU Digital Locker can be accessed by you anywhere, anytime, as long as you have access to a computer and an Internet connection. SMU Digital Lockers are available now for SMU students, staff, and faculty. Lockers can also be set up for organizations or departments on campus as well. Just call the help desk at 8-HELP to get that simple process started.

Digital Locker Key Features
Your Digital Locker is designed to be a single space where you can manage all of your important files and share them with others in several different ways. To help you do this, Digital Locker has many Web 2.0 collaborative features, such as RSS, Wikis, content tagging, version control, and commenting. Here's a short list of what is possible:

• Email - Your Locker works together seamlessly with your SMU email. When you add or change content in your Locker, you can easily send secure email notifications right from your Locker to your customers, friends, students, or colleagues.

• Library Services - Digital Locker has a complete set of library services, including file check-in, check-out, version control, audit history, and comments. This service allows you to monitor what goes in and out of your Locker as well as keep track of all of the previous versions of a document authored by several people at the same time.

• Integrated Wikis - You can quickly set up and host a Wiki (or several) on your Locker to share information and re-sources to whomever you wish. Your Wiki could be used, for example, to organize and selectively share ePortfolios with your academic advisor, professors, parents, or prospective employers.

• RSS - This feature allows users to subscribe to any folder, document or Wiki through the Digital Locker RSS system and receive automatic updates when content is added or changed. Using this feature, for example, will enable auto-matic email notifications to be sent to you, whenever your students submit assignments to your locker.

• Secure File Sharing - Digital Locker eliminates problems and risks created by email file attachments. It replaces at-tachments with secure file links (a URL or Web address) that allow users to safely share content with people on cam-pus or off. This feature allows you to share important documents and other kinds of digital resources with your peers and colleagues in other organizations, research centers, and universities worldwide.

To get started using your SMU Digital Locker, login to locker.smu.edu, set up your Locker, and begin to use it right away. It's free, it's easy, and it works!

User Services is now Support Services

In conjunction with the reorganization and renaming of the Office of Information Technology, User Services also underwent some major transformations! Classroom Support, Training, Communications and Cell Phone support was added to the existing teams. In addition, several individuals were assigned to new roles in order to address various support needs.
•   The Desktop Consultant team was divided. One consultant was reassigned to the Install team to assist with the growing number of computer installations. A team was formed to provide concentrated effort on desktop support projects and initiatives such as LanDesk, Software deployment, desktop policy configuration etc.
•   Only 4 desktop consultants were left to serve as the field support team. Instead of being assigned to particular de-partments, these 4 individuals now share support responsibilities for the entire campus. This ensures that all depart-ments will receive exceptional support and quick responses regardless of vacation time, sick time etc.
•   The Service Desk team was formed under the direction of Rachel Mulry. This team includes Field Support, Help Desk and Cellular Support. The three teams have been working more closely together to ensure that all customer requests are transitioned and resolved effectively.
•   The Help Desk has begun configuring and activating cell phones to provide backup support for Marilyn who con-tinues to handle all SMU Departmental cell phone orders!
•   The Classroom/ AV Support team, Communications team, Training team, and Professional Development teams all work together under the Direction of Abby Kinney to ensure that support is provided for all of the services offered by IT.

Support Services leadership is working on a strategic plan to address several key support needs including AV support for administrative and academic areas, higher percentage of phones answered at the help desk on first ring (currently 40% of the calls are rolling to voicemail due to volume), quicker software delivery and computer installations, and training for all of the services we provide. Additional details on our progress will be shared in future newsletters.