

## Information Resources Council Annual Report 2006-07

The Information Resources Council met thirteen times during 2006-07. Membership of the IRC was as follows: Phylise Banner, Leanne Casale, Ruth Copans, Beth Dupont, Joanne Devine (spring), Cameron Dunn '07, Ann Henderson, Susan Kress (Chair), Hassan Lopez (fall), Margo Mensing, Tom O'Connell, Justin Sipher, and Mike West.

In April of 2006, FEC, IPPC, and SGA approved a proposal that the Vice President for Academic Affairs (VPAA) chair the IRC, a change reflecting the new administrative structure. Since the Dean of the Faculty (DOF), the Chief Technology Officer, the Director of the Library, the Registrar, the Director of the Tang Museum, and the Dean of Special Programs are all members of the VPAA's staff and since these administrators or their designees are also members of IRC, it seemed to make sense to shift the leadership of this group from the DOF's office to that of the VPAA.

This year's IRC continued to serve as a forum for conversation and recommendations about various matters related to information resources and technology. With a very few exceptions, the meetings were open to the entire community. At the first meeting, the Council reviewed IRC's function, role, and membership; noted the IRC presence in the Strategic Plan; and reviewed agenda items inherited from last year's IRC; subsequently, via email, the chair also invited agenda items from the community at large. For this year, the group decided to focus on fewer topics and explore them in more depth. Those topics are listed below with a summary of the discussion in each case

### **Information Literacy and Research Skills:**

At the request of Ruth Copans, the Council devoted several meetings to discussions of information literacy and its growing complexities for both students and faculty. The group considered the formation of a task force to study the issue and commissioned Barbara Norelli, Cameron Dunn, Beth Dupont, Michael Marx, and John Weber to write a charge. The charge (see attached) focused discussion on the range of skills our students need to cope with the information challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century and on which committee or group should drive this initiative forward. At a November pedagogy workshop, "Library 101 in the year 2006," the charge was discussed, and attendees resisted the notion of an information literacy requirement, recommending that IRC discover what departments are already doing. Accordingly, the matter was taken to the December 2006 Department Chairs Retreat; chairs agreed to summarize the ways their departments were addressing research skills in their annual reports. IRC also approached CEPP to discover whether the matter of research skills could be included in the Writing Proposal, but CEPP did not believe it wise to add more complexity to that proposal; moreover, as the conversation about information literacy developed, it became clear that IRC had broadened the concept to include visual literacy as well. In this regard, another pedagogy workshop growing out of the work of IRC this year, "Thinking about Media: New Literacy and the Classroom" was held in February and attracted strong attendance. IRC encouraged collaboration of the Library, IT, and first-year-seminar faculty with the goal of incorporating instruction about information literacy skills in the seminars. IRC also

approved the idea of a Library-sponsored institute for faculty. Next year's IRC will evaluate the summaries from department chairs and determine next steps.

### **Students and Technology:**

IRC devoted two sessions to this general topic. A Skidmore student and employee of Audible.com, described a process to allow students to access lectures online: students would record faculty lectures and post them to Audible.com. Only students who had attended class would be able to access the online lectures. He proposed piloting the project with a few classes. IRC posed numerous questions about the quality of teaching and learning under these circumstances, the likelihood of restricting access, the ownership of the lectures, and the difficulty of getting wide-spread faculty approval. IRC recommended that the student contact SGA to ascertain the level of interest from students and report back to IRC if the students urged further consideration.

A faculty member requested advice about the use of laptops during final examinations. IRC noted that students with documented special needs may use laptops, but there is no institutional policy guiding other use. IRC discussed the honor code, the feasibility of configuring laptops to limit applications, equity for those students who do not own laptops, the procedures followed at laptop campuses, and the likely distraction for both students using the laptops and others in the classroom. At this point, IRC did not detect strong interest in the creation of an institutional policy.

### **Digital Assets Management:**

The Digital Assets Management (DAM) Task Force presented its report in spring 2007, and the IRC held three open meetings to discuss its findings. The DAM Task Force (Lisa Aronson, Andrew Ashton [chair], Beth Dupont, Corey Freeman-Gallant, Elizabeth Katzman, Susan Kerr, and David Seiler) was charged with researching the digital asset needs of the Skidmore community and providing a report to assist the College in its planning efforts. IRC discussed the recommendations of the Task Force, requested more information about the paths taken by peer colleges, considered the role of a consultant in helping us move forward, and determined to explore the possibilities of consortial collaborations as well. The Executive Summary of the DAM report (attached) was subsequently shared with the VPAA Senior Staff, Academic Staff, and with the Board of Trustees. IRC agreed to continue discussions in 2007-2008, with the expectation of developing a long-range plan. To sustain momentum, members of the Task Force recommended piloting a project with the NITLE DSpace initiative; this recommendation was subsequently implemented.

### **Oracle Student System:**

Prompted by a concerns from a faculty member (in the fall) relating to the quality of the user interface for the Student Information System, IRC held an open meeting in April to discuss and assess our student system. Justin Sipher and Ann Henderson coordinated a presentation, providing an overview and history of the Oracle Student System software and outlining some of the challenges we have encountered. While our experience with the Oracle system has been frustrating at times, our decision to enlist with Oracle seems now to be paying dividends (thanks in great part to the collaborations of Ann Henderson and

Betty O'Connor with the providers), and we have increasing confidence in the system, even as we are committed to making further improvements. Oracle's purchase of PeopleSoft greatly enhances Oracle's presence in the educational market; Oracle plans to merge its Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) system with that of PeopleSoft to create a new system (Fusion). The first installment of this new interface will be delivered in 2008; the complete Fusion system will be in place by 2012. The College faces major decisions in coming years as staff members deal with both the questions associated with upgrading the system and the resources required to implement those improvements.

**IT Updates:**

In January 2007, Justin Sipher presented the IT Capital Projects Requests for 2007-08 and outlined the IT plans to phase in the MicroSoft VISTA operating system. In February, IRC welcomed the new Senior Instructional Technologist in Academic Technologies, Ben Harwood

**Membership of IRC for 2007-2008:**

Next year's membership is as follows: Phylise Banner, Leanne Casale, Ruth Copans, Beth Dupont, Joanne Devine, Ann Henderson, Susan Kress (Chair), Margo Mensing, Roy Meyers, Justin Sipher, Mike West, and Jeremy Wilmot '08.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Kress  
Chair, IRC