

Information Resources Council Annual Report 2007-08

The Information Resources Council met thirteen times during 2007-08. Membership of the IRC was as follows: Phylise Banner (Special Programs), Leanne Casale (IR), Ruth Copans (Library), Beth Dupont (IT), Joanne Devine (English, spring), Mike Thomas 2009 (fall), Ann Henderson (IR), Susan Kress (Chair), Roy Meyers (Biology, fall), Margo Mensing (Studio Art), Justin Sipher (IT), Mike West (Finance and Administration), and Jeremy Wilmot 2008.

With a few exceptions, the IRC meetings were open to the entire community. At the first meeting (9/26/07), the Council discussed the IRC's charter and clarified the IRC's function: to serve as a forum for conversation and recommendations about matters related to information resources and technology; to develop policy; and to introduce new technologies to faculty, staff, and students. The group reviewed the IRC's accomplishments in 2006-07, noting items for the coming year's agenda; subsequently, via email, the chair also invited agenda items from the community at large. Topics for the year are listed below with a summary of the discussion in each case. Minutes for the meetings are available on the IRC website <http://cms.skidmore.edu/irc/index.cfm>

On-Line Learning, 10/10

Phylise Banner, Instructional Technologist for UWW, led a discussion about the use of new technologies in on-line learning, illustrating the session with several of UWW's on-line courses and exploring the ongoing efforts in UWW to address information literacy as well.

Information Literacy and Research Skills, 10/24/07

Ruth Copans, College Librarian, led the conversation (a continuation of several sessions devoted to this topic in 2006-2007). Department chairs had been asked to assess departmental work on information literacy in their annual reports, and the group reviewed this information as well as a summary of the BI classes taught by the Library during the 06-07 academic year (approximately 50% of campus students had participated in some form of BI related activity, with first year students receiving most instruction). The group focused on whether good work is being done in the area of information literacy; on whether enough work is being done; on whether there are best practices in some areas that could be shared; and on what assessment instruments will help us understand what skills our students have. The group identified possible next steps, including the possibility of initiating some pilot projects.

Policies, 11/7

Justin Sipher, Chief Technology Officer, led a discussion about the process for reviewing, revising, and creating new technology-related policies—and the role of IRC in this process. Some of the college's policies have not been formally examined for many years. Email policy and data security are the areas that need most urgent attention. The group agreed to assemble a task force (Justin Sipher; Bill Duffy, Director IT User Services; Jeff Clark, Director IT Enterprise Systems; Michael Marx, Associate Professor

of English; Tina Lundin, Senior Financial Analyst, Financial Services; and Jeremy Wilmot, '08) to address the email policy. IT will simultaneously work on a security policy. For the future, IRC agreed that policy items will be brought forward for discussion at the beginning of each semester whenever possible.

Email 101, 11/28

Justin Sipher led a session for the community to discuss email in relation to environment, volume, and current historical and statistical data. In particular, the session focused on the growing volume of email, our open policy with respect to access to college listservs, the challenges of SPAM, and the question of whether we should continue to bounce back undelivered messages. Dan Forbush, Executive Director of Communications, expressed the hope that *Scope Weekly* might become the conduit of choice for community messages and thus reduce the volume.

Updates, 12/5

The group discussed updates on all ongoing projects (including information literacy, Digital Assets Management, and email policy.) Justin announced that IT would participate in the Educause annual survey of students (ECAR) to measure student use of technology. Results will offer important comparison data with other institutions. The group also considered and approved continuing membership in NITLE (National Institute for Technology and Liberal Education), though we need to find more effective ways to share the ideas we get from NITLE conferences.

Aquabrowser, 12/19

IRC celebrated the end of the semester with a demonstration of Aquabrowser, a new interface for the library catalogue. Subsequently, after an extensive budget review, the College did determine to purchase Aquabrowser. (No minutes were taken during this demonstration.)

IRC Spring Agenda, 2/5/08

IRC reviewed the ECAR student survey instrument and developed the agenda for the spring meetings.

Student Panel: Digital Natives, 2/19

A student panel (organized by Jeremy Wilmot) discussed and debated with attendees a variety of topics, including the students' view of essential technology, their relation to print materials, the use of technology for social networking, technology in the classroom, privacy issues, the impact of technology on society, and the general state of technology at Skidmore.

Email Changes, 3/18

With IT staff members, Justin Sipher led a discussion about two proposed changes in email procedures. The first requires annual password resets for Skidmore computer accounts to improve institutional security. The second discontinues the present policy of bouncing back messages that cannot be delivered.

Internet2, 4/1

To provide an overview of Internet2, Justin Sipher was joined by Bill Owen, Director of Advanced Technology at NYSERnet, and Ann Doyle (participating via videoconference from Ann Arbor, MI), Director of Arts and Humanities at Internet2. Attendees were treated to demonstrations of the variety of ways Internet2 could enrich our academic programs.

Faculty Panel: Next-Generation Faculty, 4/15

Beth DuPont, Director of Academic Technologies in IT, moderated a faculty panel discussion with Michelle Frey (Chemistry), Hassan Lopez (Psychology), Laura Paul (Management and Business), and T.H. Reynolds (Exercise Science). The conversation ranged over the transformative use of technology in teaching and research; the benefits to students of new technology; and technology solutions that Skidmore might invest in.

Budget and Wrap-Up, 4/29

IRC considered the capital budget requests for FY 09, heard an update on the work of the email task force, and reviewed the work of the year. Proposed topics for next year include the following: reviewing the IRC Charter; continuing work on information literacy and its relation to other literacies (scientific, visual, intercultural, expressive); considering the relation of technology to the ongoing discussion of a Center to support faculty work; strategic planning for future technology needs; following up on Digital Asset Management issues; considering a policy relating to on-line courses (with CEPP and CAS); discussing and implementing new email policies; exploring the relation of classroom design to new pedagogies; and making the most of our participation in NITLE.

Membership of IRC for 2008-2009:

Next year's membership is as follows: Joerg Bibow (Economics), Jenifer Bonner (Biology), Leanne Casale (IR), Ruth Copans (Library), Beth Dupont (IT), Deborah Hall (Studio Art), Ann Henderson (IR), Susan Kress (Chair), Victoria Neff (2011), Michelle Paquette (Special Programs) Justin Sipher (IT), Mike West (Finance and Administration), and one more student representative (to be appointed by SGA).

I am grateful to all the members of IRC for 2007-08: special thanks go to Phylise Banner, Ruth Copans, Beth Dupont, Justin Sipher, and Jeremy Wilmot for organizing and orchestrating particular sessions.

Respectfully submitted,

Susan Kress
Chair, IRC