

# The Information Age

## *The School of Information Studies celebrates its centennial*

It's a typical crisp and cold November evening in Syracuse. Despite the brisk temperature, there's a warm atmosphere inside the Everson Museum of Art of Syracuse and Onondaga County. The School of Information Studies (IST) is 100 years old and it's celebration time. "This is our coming-out party," says Raymond F. von Dran, dean of the School of Information Studies. "It's the dawn of the Information Age and we assembled for our 100th right on cue. Information is the most important thing in terms of the 21st century and we are well positioned for it."

STEVE SARTORI

SU faculty, staff, alumni, and friends of the School of Information Studies gathered in the Sculpture Court of the Everson Museum of Art in downtown Syracuse for IST's 100th anniversary celebration dinner.

From card files to computer cataloging, a lot happened over the past century in understanding, retrieving, and disseminating information. Whether moving to Carnegie Library in 1907 to accommodate the expanding program, or separating from the College of Liberal Arts in 1915 to gain independence, IST has been an innovative school throughout its history.

In 1961, Wayne S. Yenawine, dean of the School of Library Science (IST's predecessor), considered closing the school because enrollment was so low. Fortunately, his instincts dictated that it remain open. To improve the school's status, Yenawine, who was dean from 1956 to 1965, sent his professors to neighboring Central New York colleges, universities, and libraries to share knowledge, and invited professionals to campus to expose this budding college at Syracuse University.

Among those professors was Antje Lemke G'52, who was instrumental in shaping the school during her more than three decades of service. "Our school couldn't shut down, it was just the beginning of the Information Age," says Lemke, who started teaching after receiving a master's degree in library science and retired from the IST faculty in 1986. "We began integrating library needs with science and technology; the book-oriented library was starting to transform into a modern information service. We started the change early and Dean Yenawine helped put our school on the map."

In 1974, Dean Robert Taylor changed the name from the School of Library Science to the School of Information Studies. "The name was ambiguous enough to cover a wide range of things," says Taylor, who was dean from 1972 to 1981. "This new phase turned us into a much broader institution and we were the first school of its kind in the nation to take this major step."

Today, as a national leader in the information industry, IST offers five degree programs: a bachelor's degree in information technology, three master's degrees, and a doctoral degree in information transfer. The master's programs are in telecommunications and network management; information resource management, which Syracuse University was the first to offer; and the college's flagship, library science, which was ranked fourth in the nation by *U.S. News & World Report* in 1995. "IST fills a great need in the industry," says Josh Becker '95, who is pursuing a master's degree in information resource management. "As an undergraduate at IST, I was exposed to faculty who bent over backward to ensure I made the most of my college education. That was illustrated by the interesting and involving research they conducted."

Evidence of the IST faculty's innovative research is abundant. Take a look, for instance, at the work of these professors:

STEVE SARTORI

IST professors Sari Feldman (center, left) and Elizabeth Liddy G'77, G'88 stand with Chancellor Kenneth A. Shaw (far left) and IST Dean Raymond F. von Dran after receiving awards of innovation at the school's 100th anniversary dinner.

• Michael Eisenberg created AskERIC, an Internet-based education information service funded by the United States Department of Education.

• Charles McClure did foundation work on the role of public libraries in the Internet/National Information Infrastructure, and has served as a consultant to Vice President Al Gore, the White House, and Congress, helping to develop legislation pertaining to the Internet.

• Zixiang (Alex) Tan co-wrote a book on telecommunications policy in the Pacific Rim.

• Elizabeth Liddy has developed DR-LINK, a text retrieval system that uses basic speaking language. Based on its success, she started the software company TextWise in 1994, and has students helping her build the venture.

"The benefit of working with students is that their knowledge is new," Liddy says, "and they want to continue the learning; they won't stand still."

Becker is one of those students. He has been with TextWise for more than two semesters and, as "web master," he finds that "every day is an intellectual challenge; there is always something new to work on."

Such student involvement is exactly what the college seeks to achieve. "We are a tier-one research institution," von Dran says, "and we constantly strive to be a student-centered research college within the University."

That's also reflected in the work of alumni, who are influential within the information arena, from the software and wireless cable industries to public libraries. As program coordinator in the concert office of the music division at the Library of Congress, Oxana Horodecka '68 recognizes that "this is a totally different profession than when I started. Even though the focus today is on the latest technologies," she says, "the basic premise of creating systems and providing services will always be first and foremost."

Dean von Dran wants to spread that premise, along with the IST name, around the globe. With a recently developed distance-education program in Toronto and plans to create a program in Asia, IST has its sights set on international acclaim. "In the School of Information Studies we look at ourselves as a leadership school nationally; we want to be the leader in the world," he says. "A global influence will allow us to be a mecca for research in education."

—*Natalie A. Valentine*

# Toy Story

Lunga is a young girl living in a poor rural town in South Africa. She is dying of cancer.

Because her pain is so great, Lunga lies in her bed semiconscious and unmoving most of the day. But when Lunga was given her first black doll, she found the strength to hug it and give a shy smile. As her cancer worsens, she keeps the doll close to her to help ease the pain.

Lunga, like many South African children, couldn't have a black doll under apartheid. But through the efforts of Syracuse University, in combination with Ikamva Labantu, a South African community organization, that has changed.

"There are so many things these children need, but they especially need a sense of themselves," says Wynetta Devore, a professor in the School of Social Work. The black dolls, she says, give self-esteem vital to children growing up with no running water, no electricity, and inadequate nutrition.

Devore coordinated the donation of almost 700 black dolls from Syracuse University and the community in spring 1996 after learning about the nation-

WYNETTA DEVORE

Black dolls collected through the efforts of Syracuse University bring happiness and self-esteem to the children of South Africa. The University provided close to 700 dolls for the project.

wide drive of Linda Tarry, chair of Friends of Ikamva Labantu U.S.A. Ikamva Labantu, which means "the future of our nation and people," was formed in 1992 to help South Africans still suffering from the effects of apartheid. The grass-roots organization has established day-care centers, improved medical care, and initiated projects such as the South African Doll Project.

The Rev. Tom Wolfe, Protestant chaplain at Hendricks Chapel, and Mary Jo Custer, director of student assistance, enlisted the help of student organizations and residence halls in collecting the dolls. "I've never been involved in a project that is so easy to sell, so tangible, and so heartwarming," Wolfe says.

Resident advisors and hall councils ran fund-raisers to collect money for the project. Students from the School of Social Work set up a table in the Schine Student Center to give out information and collect donations. Twenty-five members of Phi Eta Sigma honor society helped staff the table.

When the project concluded, hundreds of dolls were presented to Devore at a gathering in Hendricks Chapel. One of the dolls, crafted by a third-grader, had carefully stitched arms and legs, but no face. Attached to the doll was a note that read: "This doll has no face because I want you to look at it and see your own face."

The nearly 700 dolls collected from Syracuse were but a small number of the 15,000 brought to South Africa by Devore as part of the nationwide effort supported by former New York City Mayor David Dinkins, *New York Times* editors, and the National League of Professional Baseball Clubs. Although some South African doll-makers scoffed at the project and said no one would buy black dolls, the boys and girls in the day-care centers outside Cape Town embraced the dolls with love and joy, according to organizers.

"These are not just toys, they are self-esteem in a package," says Wolfe. "The dolls are essential for a nation deprived of the right to see images of its own skin color."

—*Elaine Cipriano*

# Interactive SU

Every Monday afternoon a group of about eight faculty members meets in a conference room in the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications. Their mission: carving out the future.

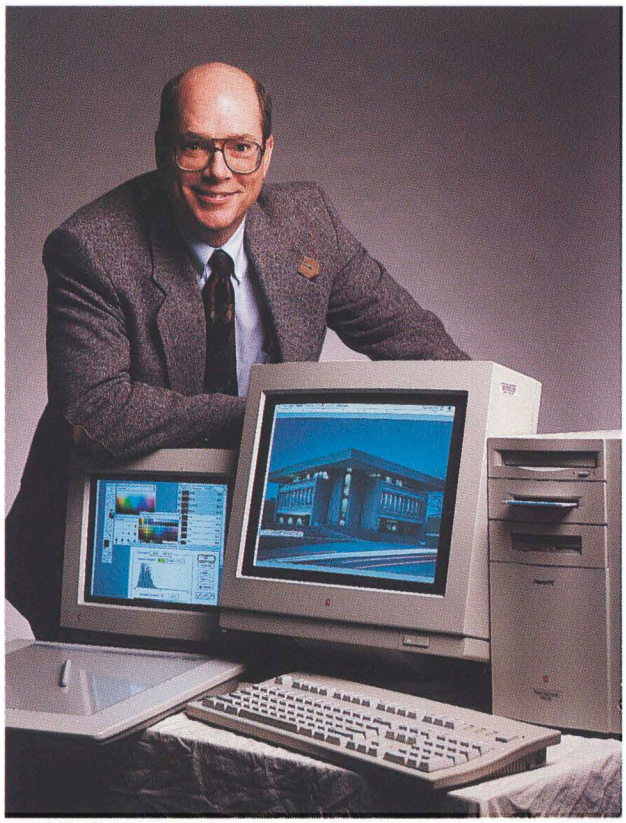
With plans for a Department of Visual and Interactive Communications (VIC), Newhouse is one of the first schools in the country to get a jump on this emerging technology that has become so necessary to success in the world of mass communications.

The new department offers photojournalism and illustration photography programs, and will soon reintroduce a program for graphic arts. The department is also home to school-wide offerings in interactive communications. These programs will include already established courses such as Communicating with Computers, Advanced Graphic Arts Design, and Multimedia, as well as other courses.

Department Chair Tony Golden heads a faculty of about eight instructors whose disciplines range from photography to journalism to graphic design. Golden describes his team as energetic and attuned to the latest technology and the future direction of media. "We have one of the best faculty teams around," Golden says. "We're exploring new territory, designing courses that don't exist."

That territory includes the former home of the Career Development Center (CDC) on the ground floor of Newhouse I. The CDC moved to another location and a new computer lab designed especially for VIC will take its place by fall 1997. The lab will have leading computer technology and an experimental lab featuring the peripheral hardware necessary for VIC majors such as dye-sublimation printers, video-recording units, high-tech imaging units, and graphics tools. Funding comes from corporations and academic resources.

JASON MINOR



Tony Golden heads the S.I. Newhouse School of Public Communications' efforts in establishing a program in visual and interactive communications. It will be one of the first programs of its kind in the country.

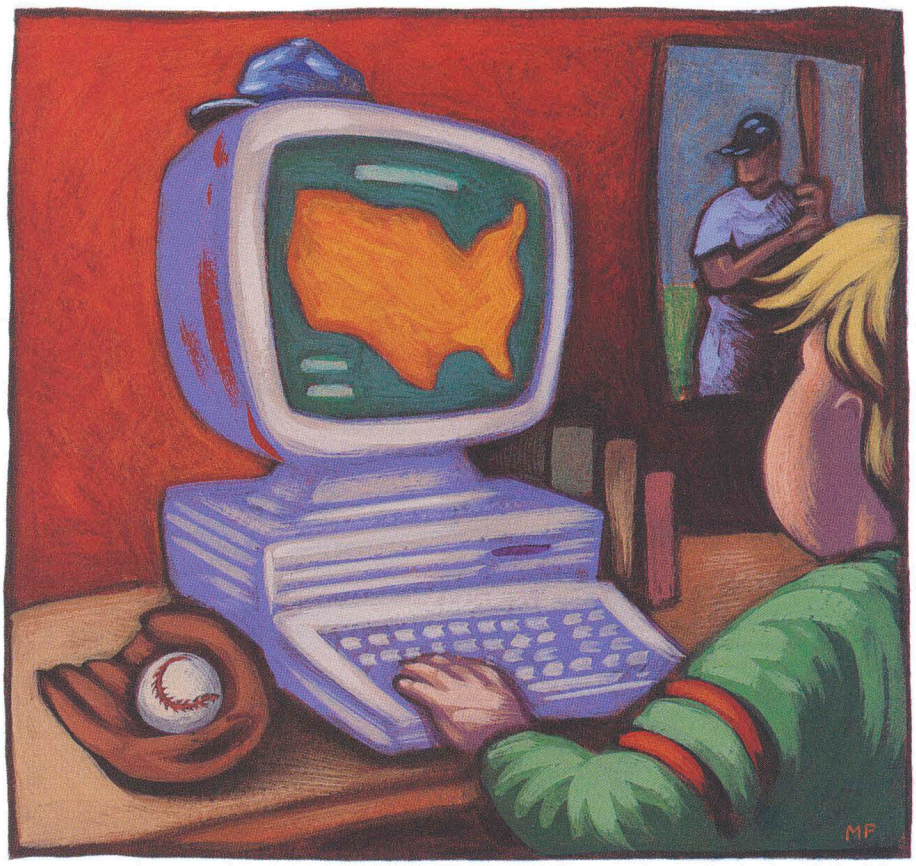
Andrew Phillips, a senior magazine journalism major whose main interest lies in graphic design, hoped Newhouse would initiate a program like this. "I suggested this a few years ago," he says. "This is something we really need to be doing. Newhouse students have to get this kind of experience."

Newhouse Dean David Rubin agrees, adding that many students who have taken VIC classes have already graduated and taken jobs at interactive firms like Disney Interactive as well as Hearst Interactive. "We've been in the field of computer-based interactive media for the last four or five years on an experimental basis," he says.

"This finds a home for it and begins to get it into the curriculum in an official capacity."

The new department will also boost Newhouse's reputation as a leader in mass communications. "We always have to be on the cutting edge," Rubin says. "The technology is here. The jobs are here. The interest is here. My hope is that students coming out of high school who are computer literate will see this department as where they want to be."

—*Tara Gelsomino*




MICHAEL PRINZO

## Kids Web

Young students who use the World Wide Web to look up information on a particular topic can easily be overloaded with unrelated information, misinformation, or information written at a level too difficult to understand or use. But the web is now becoming more kid friendly, thanks to a digital library developed by an SU researcher and geared specifically for schoolchildren.

Kids Web is the work of Paul Coddington, a research scientist at the Northeast Parallel Architectures Center (NPAC). According to Coddington, only a fraction of the enormous amount of information steadily growing on the web is useful, intelligible, and interesting to schoolchildren. "Finding this information using standard web digital libraries and search engines can be very time-consuming and frustrating, especially for kids," he says.

Kids Web—which can be found at *http://www.npac.syr.edu/textbook/kidsweb/* or *http://www.infomall.org/kidsweb/*—provides students with a subset of the web that is simple to navigate. Information is targeted at grades K-12.

Each subject section—including geology, government, and literature—features a list of links to information that is understandable and interesting to schoolchildren. Also available are links to external lists of subject material, which more advanced students can browse for further information.

Unlike most digital libraries, Kids Web is edited to include only high-quality material. Coddington is developing software to enable qualified educators from around the country to easily suggest new material and edit different sections—a process now done by e-mail.

Kids Web grew out of a computer multimedia class, based on the World Wide Web and Mosaic, which was taught to eighth-graders as part of the 1994 Young Scholars Program at SU. When the Kids Web prototype went online the following summer, it was the only known digital library of its kind. Many web sites already contained education information, but they were aimed at teachers, not students. Now, several other digital libraries similar to Kids Web have emerged.

Although the current Kids Web provides links to kid-friendly sites, a navigator can still link to sites that may be inappropriate for children, making it necessary for adult supervision. As part of his continuing research, Coddington is working to develop a way to keep children from navigating to pornographic or other unsuitable links on the web. "We'd like to create a subset of the web on a server at NPAC and copy onto it appropriate links, creating a hierarchy of access to the Internet," he says.

Kids Web was developed as part of The Living Schoolbook Project, formerly known as The Living Textbook Project, which applies high-performance computing and communications to K-12 education at a handful of upstate and downstate New York schools that are connected to NPAC via the NYNet fiber-optic network.

Kim Mills, senior research scientist and NPAC coordinator for content development of The Living Schoolbook Project, says Kids Web has already been well received by teachers and students involved in the project. "Kids Web provides an information resource for teachers to develop project ideas and is an easily accessible classroom resource for students," Mills says. "Teachers are using Kids Web as a model to develop their own home pages on particular topics and are developing their lessons around them. Unlike textbooks, the Internet is constantly being updated and contains all points of view on controversial subjects."

—*Gina M. Burmeister*