Lotus Notes Launches a New Era for Campus Communications

After more than a year of research, planning, and development, Queens College finally has a single, unified email system: Lotus Notes. And like that new remote control that came with the television you recently bought, it requires a little time to get used to. Once you do, you’ll find it provides all the old functions—and more.

Lotus Notes is what is commonly called a “groupware” system; it provides email, calendaring, document sharing, and the ability to have live online discussions—all features intended to bring people with a shared purpose closer together.

According to Naveed Husain (Asst. VP, Office of Converging Technologies), utilizing technology to foster greater community at Queens College also motivated the installation of plasma board display terminals around campus, the opening of the computer kiosk in Kiely Hall, the recently launched experiment with tablet computers in a Freshman Year Initiative class (see article below), as well as the launch of Lotus Notes.

When he first arrived on campus in fall 2004 Husain says, “I found the campus was disjointed. A number of different email systems were being used. Some people were using Pegasus, some Outlook. There was no central storage; people were downloading directly to their desktops.”

While the network hardware supporting the various programs was reliable, the programs and the server environment were not. “People had multiple accounts on multiple systems which would go up and down. The situation wasn’t robust.”

Under consideration at the time were tablet computers, which would allow students to bring their own devices to class and participate in discussions without needing to rely on the network infrastructure. However, Husain and his team decided to focus on Lotus Notes instead, as it offered a more comprehensive solution for email, calendaring, and document sharing.

Tablet Computers Take Students Back to the Future

Students in Helen Gaudette’s Freshman Year Initiative class, “Interpreting the World Through ‘Reacting to the Past,’” are not only reacting to important historical events; as test subjects in an ambitious experiment, they’re also reacting to an innovative application of new educational technology.

This September the 21 students arrived at their classroom to be greeted by two visitors. Naveed Husain (Asst. VP, Office of Converging Technologies) had come to give each of them a new Hewlett-Packard tablet computer, a clever hybrid of a laptop computer and PDA (commonly known as a Palm Pilot). He was accompanied by the director of sales for Agilix, the company providing the primary software the students will use on their new computers. The visitors were there to make sure students received proper introductions to the hardware and software that would be guiding them through the semester.

In addition to the Agilix programs Go Binder and Mobilizer, the computers had been pre-loaded with the course’s 121- (continued on page 6)
An Ambitious Experiment Begins at New Queens School of Inquiry

During a recent assembly at a nearby middle school that houses the innovative Queens School of Inquiry (QSI), Dean of Education Penny Hammrich told the gathered students, “I have the delightful pleasure of welcoming Queens College’s first sixth grade class.”

Surprising as it may seem, as a partner with QSI, the college will in a few years be offering courses to students decidedly younger than the norm. “This is a unique and very ambitious enterprise,” says Hammrich of the experimental program that will place sixth-grade students on a path to taking college-level courses when they reach ninth grade, with the potential to earn up to 60 credits—the equivalent of an associate’s degree—by the time they graduate high school.

QSI is part of the Early College Initiative (ECI), a partnership between the City University of New York and the New York City Department of Education. ECI hopes to increase college success rates for low-income, minority, and first-generation college-bound students. As it is partly funded by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation, the school has garnered considerable media attention. Ten such schools are envisioned for the city in the next three to five years. QSI is the first such school in Queens.

Hammrich notes that her recent visit to the building QSI shares with Parsons Junior High School and a program for autistic children was more than ceremonial in nature: “The idea from the inception is for these students to see themselves as part of the Queens College community—to give them the hope and the idea that they can go to college.

“QSI focuses on the inquisitive mind, discovery,” she says, explaining the school’s emphasis is not so much on what is learned, but the process by which the learning is achieved. “How do you think, how do you inquire? We want to foster that natural curiosity, to create a safe environment where students feel they can ask anything. And these students are not afraid to ask questions; they’re very bright, very inquisitive.”

SELLING A NEW PEDAGOGY

After answering a lot of questions over several months, Elizabeth Ophals is delighted to finally be doing the day-to-day business of running QSI. “The current principal of the school—me—spent every weekend putting flyers in every laundromat, every food store, every place I could hang flyers,” she says with some amusement, recalling her weeks of selling the QSI concept to surrounding neighborhoods.

“I spoke at regionwide meetings for guidance counselors and principals, introducing the idea of our school. We had a Web site. There was a lot of word of mouth. I met with every PTA of every feeder school. I met with anybody who would talk to me. In April we had an open house at Queens College which was pretty well attended, considering the suspicions on the part of the community,” she says, referring to the misconception that QSI would be a school for problem children.

“A lot of our practice,” Ophals says, describing her unusual school, “is based on the University Park Campus School from Worcester, Massachusetts, which is allied with Clark University. It is a model of small classes, individual attention, high expectations, and absolute emphasis on academics and a strong teaching staff.”

QSI’s five teachers spent 20 days over the summer preparing the curriculum and attending a seminar at Clark University. It’s not unusual, Ophals says, for teachers to sit in on each other’s classes. The group is energetic and inclined to “new ways of thinking. There’s a great deal of learning going on among the teachers all the time.”

QSI’s small size helps facilitate the exceptional level of faculty collaboration. Because all the students take lunch at the same time, the faculty share a common planning period. And, there’s another benefit: “Parents come to our school and they all say the same thing: I’ve never seen a school before where the students have so much access to the teachers.”

This leads Ophals to mention the important contribution of Queens College in providing two of QSI’s five teachers. “One was described as the most outstanding student teacher this professor had had in ten years. The other was a top graduate of the TIME 2000 math education program.” Another, who doubles as both a music and a wellness teacher, is currently getting another master’s degree in the secondary literacy program at QC.

“The college was a very cooperative partner,” she continues. “They translated everything into any language we wanted and printed all the flyers and posters. Some professors even offered lessons at our Open House.”

While the current 77-student enrollment is four shy of the 81 she anticipated having, Ophals says, “The parents don’t know us well enough, yet. But I’m not worried about next year. We’ll have a million applications.”
Grants Helping Godwin-Ternbach Museum Preserve Its Collection

ZOE BELOFF (Media Studies) screened her film Shadow Land, about a 19th-century French medium, and JEFFREY ALLEN (English) read from his novel Night Train last month at the National Arts Club . . . NICK COOH (SEES), a Sigma Xi Distinguished Lecturer for 2004-06, has been giving talks on his research at colleges and research centers in the U.S. and Canada. In September he visited the University of Nebraska to present two lectures: “Hurricane Hazards in the U.S.” and “Mechanics of Hurricane Destruction.” In October he visited St. John’s University in Newfoundland to talk about “Mechanics of Hurricane Destruction” and “The Unique Damage Potential of Hurricanes in the Northeast U.S. and the Maritime Provinces of Canada” . . . In September SHIRLEY CRAWFORD (Financial Aid) joined other financial aid experts in a CUNY-Daily News outreach program, Scholar Dollar$. The five-day, first-of-its-kind call-in helpline was devoted solely to financial aid: what it is, where to find it, and how to get it . . . The Lower Hudson Conference/NY State Council on the Arts Conservation Program will help restore Muffa T, a 20th-century oil-and-collage-on-canvas painting by Italian artist Alberto Burri, a key figure of the post-WWII Art Informel movement, Europe’s equivalent of Abstract Expressionism.

A grant of $3,000 from the Milton & Sally Avery Arts Foundation will be used to restore Milton Avery’s 1932 oil-on-canvas Beach Party. Avery, who personally donated the work to Museum namesake and founder Joseph Ternbach, was a major modernist whose work strikes a fine balance between figurative and abstract art. He lived and worked all his life on Long Island.

Once these works have been restored by conservator Alexander Katlan, he will discuss them in the annual spring Museum Studies course. The works will also be displayed in the museum’s recurring exhibition of recent acquisitions.

GTM is currently involved in a grant awarded for 2004-2006 by the Institute of Museum and Library Sciences’ Museum Assessment Program for Museum Advance-ment & Excellence. This provides consulting services to assess and guide GTM in improvements in Collections Management and Governance, and is the first step toward funding for such improvements. It is also the first step toward accreditation by the American Association of Museums.

The Godwin-Ternbach Museum (GTM) has recently been awarded a number of grants related to its efforts to preserve and restore its collection. A $4,000 award from the Lower Hudson Conference/NYSCA Program.

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At a commuter school, Mirian Detres-Hickey, the college’s new Director of Special Services for People with Disabilities, has a commute to top all commutes. It begins in Massachusetts. “I love my home,” she says of her place in Brimfield. “I have three acres and three Newfoundlands, and in Queens it’s hard to find an apartment that will accept you with even one dog.”

To clarify, hers is a weekly commute; she spends weekdays living with in-laws in Franklin Square in Nassau County, returning to New England on weekends.

But Detres-Hickey seems hardly challenged by the demands of three large dogs, having raised six children, including two with serious health issues.

Exuding a quiet sense of strength and determination, she recounts how she pursued her PhD while sometimes shuttling between two hospitals. “I would take my laptop and sit there with my children and do my work while they were sleeping.”

The doctorate in special education leadership she received in July from Walden University/Indiana University was part of an overall plan. “My goal was to find a place at a college or university where I could have the most effect by developing a program for education students going into Special Ed. I want to give them the reality of what is out there based on my experience,” she says. That experience includes her state service monitoring 14 Massachusetts school districts for Special Education compliance with regulations under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) and Individuals with Disabilities Education Act (IDEA).

“Here I work with the disabled students—which is what I’ve always loved. And I’m also hoping that in the near future I will be able to work with the education department, special education, and the psychology department in a collaborative effort for students to do part of their practicum or independent studies working at our Office of Special Services (OSS). While working they can be learning about different disabilities. These are skills they need to know; there is nothing like real life experience to prepare future teachers or psychologists to deal with issues related to disability services.”

A number of factors make the development of such a program extremely timely, she believes, referring to the Bush Administration’s policy of insisting on inclusion—or “mainstreaming”—of disabled students while reducing and, in some instances, eliminating funding for the special services they require.

Citing horror stories from the field where teachers with no Special Ed background are expected to cope with growing numbers of Special Ed students in their classrooms, she says, “Approximately 16 states are suing the federal government right now for lack of funding the reform. The reality is that the inclusion piece does not work. My doctoral dissertation was on this subject,” she says. In addition to her PhD, Detres-Hickey holds master’s degrees in bilingual special education from Long Island University and in human services administration from Springfield College. She received a BS at Castleton State College in Vermont.

“I’m very excited,” she says of her new role at Queens College. “The staff here is excellent and very knowledgeable and supportive of each other and the students.”

Detres-Hickey’s spirit of advocacy is evident when she talks about her dedication to her staff. This year, the U.S. Department of Education did not renew a federally funded grant, in effect since 1982, for QC’s and other CUNY college offices that support students with disabilities. The end of this funding has meant reductions in pay and some staff departures.

“Besides taking the cuts in salary, they took on the responsibilities of the staff that left. My task this year is to try to find funding for them.”

Fortunately, Detres-Hickey knows the funding terrain. As consultant for the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration of the federal government, she’s reviewed and written grants for the past 17 years.
At 29, Zelig Krymko finds he’s experiencing college much differently than he might have at 19. “I’m much more focused,” he observes.

Krymko, a transfer student from Yeshiva University, is the recipient of a New York City Housing Authority Scholarship. He won this for a combination of his excellent grades (3.87 GPA) and an essay concerning the gratitude he and his family feel toward the United States for giving them a new lease on life when they arrived in the 1970s as Jewish refugees from the Soviet Union.

“At 19, I was a year old. We came to New York, where we automatically got a beautiful apartment in a wonderful area,” he says, referring to the Ravenswood Apartments in Astoria. “We got help from the government and my parents were able to go back to college. My mom became a physical therapist.”

While a senior at Stuyvesant High School, Krymko started exploring his Jewish heritage. He joined a program called March of the Living, which brings Jewish teens from all over the world to Poland, where they visit concentration camps and other remnants of the Holocaust. They then go on to Israel, where they observe Israel Memorial Day and Israel Independence Day.

“This experience inspired me tremendously to become passionate about my people and Israel, my religion and God,” he says. “I went to yeshivas for a few years, and worked in Jewish education.”

His studies included time at Chabad Yeshiva in Israel. “It’s a rabbinical school,” he says. “But I’m not a rabbi.”

Krymko, who speaks Russian and Hebrew fluently, has served as the national director for college activism for the Zionist Organization of America and has also worked as a Hebrew teacher for Chabad in both Toronto and Los Angeles. He continues to promote Israel by volunteering for an organization called True Peace. “It’s a PR group for Israel. I give seminars for college students on how to present Israel’s position in a positive way in the current Middle East crisis.”

Currently a junior, Krymko is majoring in speech and language pathology and is exploring professions where he can make a difference in people’s lives one-on-one, while using his previous skills and knowledge. He is also considering law school after graduation.

Krymko says Queens College is helping him deal with problems some older students face—in his case, a recent divorce. “Being at Queens College and being able to stay focused has helped me to deal with the trauma of the past year.”

In addition to finding respite from the demands of his personal life in the classroom, Krymko also finds it in the gym. “I love to swim. I took a swimming class my first semester here and it was amazing. It encouraged me to continue swimming on a regular basis. And I also work out in the gym.

“I never thought I’d go to a CUNY school,” Krymko remarks. “Most of my friends at Stuyvesant High School went to Ivy League schools. But I’m in Queens College and I love it.”
and instant messaging—which is great with each other in the classroom by email all the time. I see them communicating.

“There are a few who are on the tablets technology in class, Gaudette observes, after several weeks of having the new INITIALIZATION OBSERVATIONS

After several weeks of having the new technology in class, Gaudette observes, “There are a few who are on the tablets all the time. I see them communicating with each other in the classroom by email and instant messaging—which is great because we wanted to set up a wireless community within the classroom as well as outside of class.”

Gaudette explains that Queens is the first commuter school to offer “Reacting” classes, in which students learn about history through reading, writing, role-playing, and recreating important historical moments. Part of the trial is to determine if the computers can offset the advantages experienced by students taking these courses at residential campuses where they can conveniently meet outside of class and strategize. “I’m hoping the tablets will make it easier to build that sort of community here, which is necessary for the ‘Reacting’ concept to succeed.

“It doesn’t seem to be disruptive in any way,” she says of the in-class computer communications. “We have an understanding: when you’re in here you’re using the computers for class work. I don’t care what you’re using them for outside of the class,” she says, indirectly alluding to another important aspect of the trial.

To get the most realistic sense of how these computers would function in a typical student-user environment, Gaudette’s class has been told to treat the computers as their own. This means they can use them for other work and other applications typically favored by their peers, such as Internet downloads, gaming, etc.

“Part of what I will assess,” says Gaudette, “is how the computer enhances their work in other classes. But I’m primarily looking at how it benefits the ‘Reacting’ experience.

“I communicate with this class more than I have with classes in the past; they are much more willing to email me and ask me about anything. They’ve also been emailing me their papers, which I put up on Blackboard,” she says, referring to the college’s version of the popular interactive education program for conducting many classroom activities online.

“I think the tablets have made the students so much more aware of what information technology is available on campus,” she says, recalling the recent experience of meeting a student and being able to instantly email him some information via their two tablet computers. “We did that in the cafeteria and it was great!”

A NATIONWIDE STUDY

The trial is part of a nationwide study being conducted by the Educause Center for Applied Research (ECAR) to assess whether technology can have an impact on student learning.

Working with a contact at Intel Corporation, Husain helped facilitate a grant to CUNY for the purchase of the tablet computers and software for the trial taking place in Gaudette’s class and three other CUNY colleges. Gaudette’s—one of two Queens FYI classes—was chosen, he explains, “because we needed to find a group of students we could assess, who would be going through the exact same program together with one group of students that would have technology and one that would not.”

“These students are freshmen,” says Gaudette. “So this is opening up a wonderful experience that they’ll take with them for the next four years.”

TABLET (continued from page 1)

page textbook. Using Go Binder and one of the computer’s unique features—a stylus that lets you write on any content displayed on the screen—students learned they could underline text, write notes in the margins, even highlight in color marker on the screen exactly as they would in a textbook or notebook.

Additionally, students can employ typical computer features such as searching text, Web surfing, cutting and pasting, etc., to aggregate research materials.

INITIAL OBSERVATIONS

Lotus Notes Has Its Roots in Academia

Like so many of the computer programs that have become part of our daily lives (think Google), the college’s new email program has an academic pedigree.

Lotus Notes and its Web-based version, Domino, are rooted in some of the first computer programs written at the Computer-based Education Research Laboratory (CERL) at the University of Illinois. In 1973 CERL released a program primarily for computer technicians working on large mainframe computers. Called PLATO Notes, it could securely file and keep track of communications regarding technical problems with the systems they were maintaining. These “bug reports” carried the user’s ID and the date, and thus, provided the rudiments of what would later become email.

An expanded version of the program was issued in 1976 under the name PLATO Group Notes. It remained popular into the 1980s, when the desktop computer revolution called for something different. By this time, a number of software developers from CERL were independently working on various new Notes-like products.

One of them, Ray Ozzie, under contract to the Lotus Development Corporation, founded a company in 1984 to develop for PC what would become known as Lotus Notes, which became commercially available in 1989.
LOTUS NOTES (continued from page 1) proposals to custom-build a new system, use a system employed elsewhere in CUNY, or purchase an entirely new existing product.

“I believe that you should buy a best-of-breed product off the shelf because the business of the school is not the development of software packages,” says Husain. Cost effectiveness also proved to be a major deal-maker. Initially interested in Microsoft Exchange, the program used at Brooklyn and Hunter Colleges, Husain made the stunning discovery that the other leading groupware program, IBM’s Lotus Notes (used at Baruch and City Colleges) was available to educational institutions through the IBM Scholars Program for free for students and faculty! This amounted to more than a million dollars worth of software.

Factored in with licensing, development, programming, and hardware costs, it was an offer that couldn’t be refused. But Lotus Notes carried another major benefit: known as a “workflow” system, it can be used for the development of other databases and applications.

GETTING STUDENTS CONNECTED Aside from the technical considerations, Husain says that Lotus Notes was chosen for another reason: “to get students more connected to campus through virtual campus life.”

Additionally, college administrators will also be able to send students vital information quickly and at no cost.

According to Husain, all students now have Lotus Notes accounts and about 60 percent have activated their accounts. All student accounts are expected to be active by spring. Ninety-seven percent of staff are on the new system, with the addition of faculty to be completed by December.

Jeff Barnes (Deputy Chief Information Officer), a former Lotus Notes consultant who provided much of the on-campus training, knows firsthand its transformative potential. Because most Queens College students are commuters attending classes on widely divergent schedules, they are prime candidates to benefit from the various Lotus Notes communications features.

“We’re giving students an infrastructure that they can use to communicate with each other on a regular basis,” he says. Essential to this is the program’s built-in, centralized directories of all student and faculty users. With these directories, students can easily extend their interaction with one another and with their professors outside of class.

The reach, of course, is global. “We want students—no matter where they are in the world—to still feel connected,” says Barnes, referring to the program’s chat function, more commonly known as instant messaging or IM-ing, which allows for the instant exchange of text messages.

That connection could extend well beyond Queens College, as Husain explains one proposal under consideration: “The idea is to carry the students’ email addresses forward so that they have a lifetime email address, a lifetime connection to Queens College.”
How aware are New Yorkers of their present-day biological riches and their historical losses? How important is the persistence of nature in New York to the physical and psychological well-being of its populace? In a metropolis, is the natural unnatural? These and other questions will be addressed by some of the nation’s finest nature writers—including Tony Hiss (*The Experience of Place*), Mark Kurlansky (*Cod* and *The Big Oyster: New York on the Half Shell*), and Phillip Lopate (*Waterfront: A Walk Around Manhattan*)—during Nature and New York: A Conference on Why Nature Matters to New Yorkers.

The first in a series of periodic conferences being held by CIRCE (the CUNY Institute for Research on the City Environment; formerly called the Institute to Nurture New York’s Nature), it will take place on Friday, December 2 from 9 am to 4 pm at the college's LeFrak Concert Hall. John Waldman (Earth & Env Sci.) is the conference’s organizer.

Early registration fee for the conference is $20, which includes coffee, lunch, and a reception. (Registration at the door will be $30.) To sign up, visit www.yourleague.com/coursecode?nny100 or send a check, made out to Queens College CEP, to Queens College Continuing Education, 65-30 Kissena Blvd., Flushing, NY 11367.
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<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Event</th>
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<tr>
<td><strong>THU</strong> 3</td>
<td>FILM: Behind Enemy Lines, by Israeli filmmaker Dov Gil-Har. Godwin-Ternbach Museum, 7 pm.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>FRI</strong> 4</td>
<td>CONCERT: Leonard Lehrman, piano. Music of Marc Blitzstein. LeFrak Hall, 3 pm.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>SUN</strong> 6</td>
<td>Undergraduate Open House. Student Union, 12–3. FILM: Tell Me a Riddle. Discussants: actress/director Lee Grant and Rachel Lyon (Media Studies). LeFrak Hall, 2 pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>THU</strong> 17</td>
<td>ANNUAL POETRY FEST: With Fred Buell, Peter Carravetta, Stephen Stepanshev, Maria Terrone, others. Rosenthal Library, President’s Conf. Room #2, 3 pm.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>FRI</strong> 18</td>
<td>CONCERT: Queens Philharmonia. Mendelssohn’s Violin Concerto, Beethoven’s Symphony No. 7. LeFrak Hall, 8 pm.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>MON</strong> 21</td>
<td>LECTURE: “Caesarea in Israel: King Herod’s Royal City,” Kenneth G. Holum (Univ. of Maryland). LeFrak Hall, 7:30 pm.</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>TUE</strong> 22</td>
<td>QC EVENING READING: Glyn Maxwell &amp; Derek Walcott. Music Building, 7 pm. $10. Information: 718-793-8080.</td>
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<td><strong>FRI</strong> 23</td>
<td>CONCERT: QC Afro-Cuban Percussion Ensemble, Carlos Gomez, director. LeFrak Hall, 12:15 pm.</td>
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**Exhibits**