



# IT Interface

NEWSLETTER FROM THE  
OFFICE OF INFORMATION  
TECHNOLOGY SERVICES

## Inaugural Edition of the IT Interface Newsletter



Rich Zera

Let me begin by thanking the Albion College community for giving me such a warm welcome since I joined the staff as CIO and director of enterprise

technology on January 22, 2013. While I am still “drinking from the fire hose” and have a great deal more to learn and absorb, the caring nature of the IT staff as well as the faculty, staff and students have made the transition as friendly as possible.

This inaugural edition of the IT Interface Newsletter is the beginning of a program to try to keep the campus better informed of improvements and issues surrounding information technology at Albion. Through this newsletter and other venues, we hope to cover issues such as changes in technology that affect students, faculty and staff, both at Albion College and perhaps at home.

By working with members of the college community, we need to collaboratively build a “shared vision” of where information technology at Albion College needs to be heading. As technology is already such an integral part of our current and prospective students’ lives, so also it needs to be reflected

in our operations wherever possible and appropriate. With that goal in mind, we will be examining myriad technology directions and options, adapting “best practices” from other schools where appropriate, and perhaps creating a few of our own innovations that others might copy.

Unfortunately, we are not blessed with abundant financial resources at this time, so establishing priorities and making some tough decisions will be required. That’s one of the reasons why we are working with college leadership to establish a new IT Planning Committee – to ensure that the valuable perspectives of faculty, staff and students are heard and vetted. The IT Planning Committee will be vital as we assess the technology landscape of Albion College, and will help ensure bi-directional communications occur with all members of the community.

In this issue of IT Interface, you will see articles on some changes in the organization structure of the Office of Information Technology, a status report on our conversion to a predominately wireless network infrastructure, steps taken or underway to secure more Internet bandwidth, formulation of some policies and formal operating procedures for information technology, and potential changes in allocation of budget dollars in IT to ensure our teaching and learning environment is a top priority.

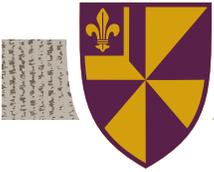
As we begin this journey together, please let me know how you think we are doing, and feel free to share any suggestions you may have or ideas you may have picked up from other schools. The transformation of technology will certainly not be immediate on all fronts, but by working together we can make sure that the breadth and currency of technology will be an important component of the “Albion Advantage.”

Rich Zera  
CIO

**ALBION HAS ADDED 186 WIRELESS ACCESS POINTS OVER THE PAST YEAR, BRINGING OUR TOTAL TO 372.**

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# Organization Changes in Information Technology

IT has lost some valuable resources in recent months, led by the retirement of former CIO Scott Stephen and departure of Melinda Kraft, director of instructional technology, and Ryan Maes, system administrator. While the institutional knowledge and valuable contributions of these individuals cannot be minimized, we also need to plan for the future in terms of how to replace those positions. Therefore, as at least a first interim step on organizational realignment as we move forward, the following changes have been implemented as of April 1, 2013:

**Jordan Rich**, who has been director of our user services area, will expand his managerial responsibility to include the information (administrative) systems area. While Jordan will not become a “Banner Guru” in this new assignment as interim director of information and user services, he will provide guidance and direction for both User and Information Services as we explore ways to more creatively provide support for users. Jordan will also look to expand ways in which users can help themselves more effectively and examine the future growth of major administrative support systems.

**Robin Brubaker** has agreed to step up to a redefined role of interim director of instructional technology and media services. Joining Robin will be Ralph Houghton, who brings a wealth of knowledge on instructional technology and media, and Scott Boulanger, who has already developed into an accomplished media/classroom support hardware specialist. In this new combined area of Instructional Technology and Media Support, we hope to provide adequate resources to meet multiple mission-critical needs, including support for all media/presentation systems whether in technology-enhanced classrooms or other venues, whether presentations are given by faculty or others. Robin retains responsibility for the Moodle Learning Management System, and with her team, will become active in examining ways to further enhance the teaching and learning environment at Albion.

**Eric Beadle** retains responsibility for networking, telephones, servers, hardware/software deployment, security administration, and handling of more complex problems involving any type of technology issue. With his team of versatile and dedicated staff, his Systems and Networking area will also continue

to support other areas of IT for more complex problems, infrastructure planning, and coordination with Facilities on major construction or renovation projects that may require technology changes. Eddie Bachle joined Eric’s team in December 2012 as a full-time staff member and will be a technical leader of the hardware/software supporting the Albion web presence, as well as serve as a valuable addition for other technology issues.

There are a number of other shifts in duties that will unfold as part of this realignment of the team in IT that will be shared as they occur. Your usual great support for the IT staff will be appreciated as we all go through the transition to new roles. As many of us learn our new roles, we don’t want to cause problems for our user community. For now, if responsibility for a function you deal with is being moved within IT, you may feel free to call either the new area picking up the duties or the former area, and we will share your needs internally instead of making you call multiple places. We will communicate more with the entire community as the training and transition progresses and new problem-reporting mechanisms are put into place.

*For your convenience, a new organization chart is attached at the end of this newsletter and a complete directory of IT staff is included with indentations to reflect organizational areas.*

## FAREWELL, SCOTT STEPHEN



Information Technology bids farewell to CIO Scott Stephen who retired in December, 2012. Scott worked in IT for over 24 years and was a great asset. Scott started with Albion as a programmer analyst and worked his way up to associate vice president in July, 2007. Scott was instrumental in implementing the Banner/ERP system and was always a hands-on manager. We will miss his leadership and roll-up-your sleeves attitude. Scott also had a strong connection with the City of Albion as he served as chair for the Faculty and Staff Leadership United Way campaign for many years. Scott was named staff emeritus in December, 2012. Best wishes to Scott as he starts the next exciting chapter in his life!

## Cable Television Issues on Campus

Residential students and others who may have occasion to turn on a television on campus certainly have noticed at least a couple of issues with the service, which is provided by WOW Cable Television. Since the issues are with our provider and are not in the control of anyone at Albion College, we took student concerns and complaints to WOW and received the following response.

First, channels have been appearing and disappearing, leading to confusion and difficulty in finding programs. WOW states that this is the direct result of their massive effort to upgrade the service from analog to digital, which when complete, will provide a far better quality of service than in the past. However, as they change each channel or block of channels, they try to ensure the new channels are performing adequately before removing the older analog channels. They do then remove the analog channels without sending any further notifications to subscribers. Their recommended solution is (a) patience, as they hope to have this work completed by early May, and (b) use the "Auto Program" or "Auto Scan" feature on your TV to re-scan all available channels, thereby ensuring your TV is finding the new channels and deleting the old ones. That process may take anywhere from a few minutes to over half an hour depending on your TV, so doing it once every couple of weeks should be adequate until the work is complete in May.

The second issue, also related to the upgrade, deals with quality of signal. Some are finding pixilation, stuttering, or pauses/skips in signal on the new digital channels. These are tuning issues at WOW and will disappear as their work on the upgrade continues.

## New IT Planning and Advisory Committee

IT has utilized a number of committees for various areas of operations, including ACTAG, Instructional Technology Advisory group, Banner advisory group, and others. The roles of these groups, as well as their meeting frequency have varied, but one thing is certain – the dedication and hard work of those serving on these committees have been greatly appreciated and have made a difference.

In today's world, one of the factors that all IT organizations struggle with is the convergence of technologies – no longer can we clearly segment one technology – or support organization - from another. Today, and even moreso in the future, technologies are being designed to integrate or interface tightly, providing greater opportunities for users, and challenges for IT.

It is also important that we have a planning and advisory structure that provides the depth of experience and needs for each individual technology, but also can come together to examine the impact and priority decisions that must be made when the technologies converge. Therefore, a new IT Planning and Advisory

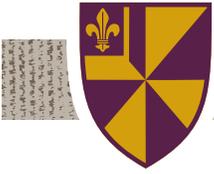
Committee is being formed that will include faculty, staff and students for examination of overall institutional technology priorities and plans. However, this group will be designed so it can also break into specialized sub-committees when in-depth analysis is needed.

While the approach needed is clear and a role/mission statement is being drafted, the specific membership will be discussed with College leadership. If our goal of making this a two-way communication vehicle is to be realized, it is important that membership be constituted in a way which provides some representation of as many perspectives, disciplines, and needs as possible – while still keeping the size of the group workable.

So, while the former advisory committees are released from duties with the appreciation of IT for the valuable insight, we look forward to a new, more comprehensive and integrated structure. With the summer fast approaching, we are hoping to have possible appointees to the new committee identified soon, although a first meeting may not be held until the beginning of fall semester.

## TECH TUESDAY

**Our first Tech Tuesday was a success! On April 9 Dr. Ian MacInnes presented and discussed a variety of iPad utilities he regularly uses in support of his classroom instruction and scholarship. Ian's sharing prompted discussions of other technologies faculty are using on campus. We are hopeful that further dialogue regarding the various uses of technology for teaching and learning will take place during the upcoming fall semester, as we continue the Tech Tuesday forum.**



# Network Bandwidth Growth

At colleges and universities across the country, schools struggle to keep ahead of the seemingly insatiable demand by students for increased network bandwidth/capacity. Certainly that is also true at Albion College, as we shared the steps we are taking to improve network speed at a recent Student Senate meeting.

First, a little background. We have two network providers, Merit and WOW, which come to campus from different directions on different lines. This arrangement is necessary to help ensure we maintain Internet connectivity even if one of the carriers is experiencing problems, as has happened several times this academic year. The contracts with the providers are due for renewal this summer, and we certainly will be looking for expansion of service and more flexibility. We are examining all options, including trying to encourage other companies to begin service in the Albion area – but certainly, we expect our new contracts to increase total network bandwidth by at least 50%.

As an interim step and in recognition of the frustration many students are feeling primarily during prime student Internet hours, we have been able to negotiate a “burst” mode with one of our two network providers, Merit. This burst mode removes our normal capacity limit and allows our demand to be satisfied at a level far beyond our contracted ceiling. Unfortunately, the burst mode can only be exercised for limited peak hours at a time, and cannot be used on back-to-back days. Therefore, we have negotiated burst mode for Sunday, Tuesday and Thursday evenings.

In addition to new contracts for expanded 7x24 services this summer and the temporary “burst” mode arrangement for three nights a week, there are steps that students can follow to help alleviate some of the problems:

- Note that peak demand hours are usually between 10 p.m. and 2 a.m.. When possible, try to schedule some of your heavier network usage for times outside that block. This will not only help your downloads and traffic to go faster, but it will also help remove some of the congestion in the peak hours and help fellow students.
- Recognize that certain types of Internet traffic (most notably streaming video and downloading audio) consume far more network capacity than other types. When you have a choice of watching TV on a television set or your computer, consider using the television. As one example, data analysis confirmed the tremendous network bottleneck caused by hundreds of students watching NCAA Basketball games on their computers rather than on a conventional television. Other high-volume traffic consumers include YouTube, NetFlix, and other such services. We are not suggesting these cannot be used, but we ask students to recognize that such services contribute heavily to the network congestion during prime hours and impact other students.

We look forward to working with our vendors on new contracts this summer that should dramatically improve student network experiences. Nonetheless, please recall that student fees pay for this increase in capacity, and we are attempting to be good stewards of your fees by (1) acquiring what you need without being wasteful, and (2) trying to keep you informed of ways to keep fee increases in check by using resources prudently.

*Thanks for your help and understanding.*

## New Web Presence Implemented

The Office of Information Technology congratulates Institutional Advancement for their hard work at developing and implementing a new web presence for Albion College, which was put into production on March 22, 2013. This needed upgrade features new and revised content, functionality, and navigation, which are under the auspices of Institutional Advancement, as well as a more reliable and efficient technical infrastructure running it in the background, under the control of Information Technology. While more work on the website still needs to be done, this collaborative endeavor has been a good example of an effective partnership that has accomplished a major feat in a far more cost-effective manner than is typical at other institutions.

### MOST HAVE HEARD OF KILOBYTES, MEGABYTES AND GIGABYTES... AS STORAGE CAPACITIES CONTINUE TO GROW, WHAT COMES NEXT?

- 1 Bit = Binary Digit
- 8 Bits = 1 Byte
- 1000 Bytes = 1 Kilobyte
- 1000 Kilobytes = 1 Megabyte
- 1000 Megabytes = 1 Gigabyte
- 1000 Gigabytes = 1 Terabyte
- 1000 Terabytes = 1 Petabyte
- 1000 Petabytes = 1 Exabyte
- 1000 Exabytes = 1 Zettabyte
- 1000 Zettabytes = 1 Yottabyte
- 1000 Yottabytes = 1 Brontobyte
- 1000 Brontobytes = 1 Geopbyte

# Shift in “Life Cycle Replenishment” Program

For the past few years, computer replacement has been handled through what is sometimes referred to as a “Life Cycle Replenishment” (LCR) program. This was a prudent and wise approach, and has served Albion College and many other organizations around the country very well by replacing computers on a set schedule (e.g. every 4 years).

Different times and situations sometimes call for different approaches. In today’s world, some users may actually need a new computer more frequently than every four years, while others are very happy and continue to work effectively on their current machine for longer than four years. Basically, we at Albion College have purchased very robust computers that can serve many of us well for several years, particularly since much of our growth in needs are associated with enhanced data communications, networking, or work in the “cloud” – rather than actual computer “horsepower” sitting under our desks. In fact, Albion is in the forefront of new approaches by replacing some computers with so-called “virtual” desktop computers or “zero client” devices where without real change

to the user’s experience, their computing needs are being handled on central servers rather than in a box under their desk.

With this background in mind, coupled with the financial reality that we don’t want to spend money on replacing computers that may not need to be replaced yet, IT is planning on a shift in the LCR program. Certainly, users who need new computers to continue to do their work at the 4 year-mark will still receive them, but it will be on a case-by-case basis. Instead, it seems that a greater need exists in our classrooms, where we have devices vital to the pedagogical process that are many years old and of questionable quality and reliability. IT will therefore plan on introducing an LCR plan to bring our classroom technology up to a more consistent and acceptable level – and keep it there – to the new IT Planning Committee this fall.

Until the Classroom LCR program is established, and with Mike Frandsen’s counsel, we will be allocating \$50,000 of our current IT plant funds to begin replacing some of the most outdated classroom A/V equipment.

**IN THE ALBION DATA CENTER, THERE IS AN ONLINE STORAGE CAPACITY ON OUR SERVERS OF 175 TERABYTES (175 TRILLION BYTES, WHICH IS 175 MILLION MEGABYTES). TO PUT THAT IN PERSPECTIVE, ONE TERABYTE COULD HOLD 1,000 COPIES OF THE ENCYCLOPEDIA BRITANNICA. TEN TERABYTES COULD HOLD THE PRINTED COLLECTION OF THE LIBRARY OF CONGRESS.**

**NO STUDENT KNOWS HIS SUBJECT: THE MOST HE KNOWS IS WHERE AND HOW TO FIND OUT THE THINGS HE DOES NOT KNOW.  
— WOODROW WILSON**

## CONTACT

**RICHARD ZERA**  
Chief Information Officer and  
Director of Enterprise Technology  
rzera@albion.edu | 517/629-0960

**PRUDIE DEWATERS**  
Office Manager  
pdewaters@albion.edu | 517/629-0960

**JORDAN RICH**  
Interim Director of Information  
and User Services  
jrich@albion.edu | 517/629-0974

**Diana Hopkins**  
Senior Programmer/Analyst  
dhopkins@albion.edu | 517/629-0965

**Tom Liu**  
Database Administrator  
tliu@albion.edu | 517/629-0979

**Rhonda Rasmussen**  
Helpdesk Specialist  
rrasmussen@albion.edu | 517/629-0479

**Linda Robinson**  
Database Support Specialist  
lrobinson@albion.edu | 517/629-0980

**Rebecca Williams**  
Help Desk Coordinator  
rwilliams@albion.edu | 517/629-0479

**ERIC BEADLE**  
Director Systems and Networking Services  
ebeadle@albion.edu | 517/629-0963

**Eddie Bachle**  
Web Server Administrator  
ebachle@albion.edu | 517/629-0963

**Mitch Kyser**  
Network Administrator  
mkyser@albion.edu | 517/629-0963

**Pam Levay**  
Network Administrator  
plevay@albion.edu | 517/629-0963

**Shahid Malik**  
Technical Administrator  
smalik@albion.edu | 517/629-0963

**Chuck Yates**  
Network Technician  
cyates@albion.edu | 517/629-0963

**ROBIN BRUBAKER**  
Interim Director Instructional  
Technology and Media Services  
rbrubaker@albion.edu | 517/629-0962

**Scott Boulanger**  
A/V and Technology Specialist  
sboulanger@albion.edu | 517/629-0962

**Ralph Houghton**  
Senior Instructional Technologist  
rhoughton@albion.edu | 517/629-0962



# Office of Information Technology

