

## ***INFORMATION FLUENCY IN EVERYDAY LIFE***

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Recently in these pages, Maura Flannery wrote about information fluency as part of introducing students to the world of scholarship<sup>1</sup>. I want to discuss the role of information fluency in everyday life through out the world.

On New Year's Day, *The New York Times* published an article entitled 'Indian Soybean Farmers Join the Global Village.'<sup>2</sup> That article describes how and why Ravi Sham Choudhry accesses the World Wide Web to assist the people of his village to price their soybeans, by checking Chicago futures prices. In pragmatic terms, the work of Ravi Sham Choudhry illustrates the value of information fluency. By understanding the value of information and by developing the skills necessary to access information pertinent to his life, he improves the economy of his village and region.

In another example in Osiengle, in northeastern Cambodia: "Without wires for electricity or telephones, this village of about 800 people has nevertheless joined the online world, taking part in a development project set up by an American benefactor to connect 13 rural schools to the Internet."<sup>3</sup>

Since deployment last September at a new school, solar panels have powered three computers. Each day, an "Internet Motoman" slowly rides a motorcycle by the elementary school. On the passenger seat is a wireless access point. It allows the exchange of e-mail between the box and computers. "Briefly, this schoolyard of tree stumps and a hand-cranked water well becomes an Internet hot spot. ... At dusk, the motorcycles converge on the provincial capital, Ban Lung, where an advanced school is equipped with a satellite dish, allowing a bulk e-mail exchange with the outside world. ... In Phnom Penh, dozens of Internet cafes offer access for 50 cents an hour, and 20 stores sell used computers imported from Japan. About 1,000 Netizens a day log on to the Web site of King Norodom Sihanouk, [www.norodomsihanouk.info](http://www.norodomsihanouk.info). A used desktop computer can be bought for about \$30 - the monthly wage for a schoolteacher - while used laptops can be had for as little as \$50."<sup>4</sup>

Throughout the world, modern information technology has begun to change the way we identify, locate, and retrieve information. These changes will transform our world, making information fluency even more important for all.

*(continued on page 2)*

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<sup>1</sup> Maura Flannery. "Introducing Students to the World of Scholarship." *CTL Newsletter*, December 2003, p. 1.

<sup>2</sup> Amy Waldman. "Indian Soybean Farmers Join the Global Village." *The New York Times*, January 1, 2004.

<sup>3</sup> James Brooke. "Rural Cambodia, Though Far Off the Grid, Is Finding Its Way Online." *The New York Times*, January 26, 2004.

## Dates to Note:



### TUESDAY, MARCH 30<sup>TH</sup>

*What Does the HERI Survey Tell Us About Our Faculty?*

12:15 to 1:15 p.m.  
Marillac 139

### WEDNESDAY, MARCH 31<sup>ST</sup>

*eBooks in Teaching and Learning and Research*

2:00 to 3:30 p.m.  
Library room 412

### WEDNESDAY, APRIL 14<sup>TH</sup>

*Using the Many Aspects of the Library's E-Reserve Service*

11:00 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.  
Library room 411

### THURSDAY, APRIL 1<sup>ST</sup>

*Faculty Research Forum*

11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.  
Bent Hall 277 A/B

### THURSDAY, APRIL 15<sup>TH</sup>

*Reception for Book Authors*

3:30 to 5:30 p.m.  
Academic Commons in the Library

### FRIDAY, APRIL 23<sup>RD</sup>

*Student Research Day: Poster Session, Queens Campus*

11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.  
Council Hall

### THURSDAY, APRIL 29<sup>TH</sup>

*Student/Faculty Research Day: Poster Session, Staten Island Campus*

11:00 a.m. to 2:00 p.m.  
Kelleher Center President's Room

By enhancing our students' information fluency, we empower them both in the academic world and their every day life. As noted in the previous articles, information fluency includes a number of different aspects of information: tools, resources, publishing, technology, and critical thinking<sup>5</sup>. As we teach information fluency, our individual experience and study shapes our knowledge of each of these aspects and thus what we teach and expect of our students.

I ask that you constantly challenge your own view of the constantly changing world of information: How complete is my view of information? What has changed in the way I approach information since the days when I was a student? Do I use the same information skills in my discipline as I do when contemplating the purchase of an automobile. How are my information practices different; how are they similar? For example, if you are a historian describing in class the evaluation and analysis of original sources, consider how your critical process may or may not parallel the young mother evaluating information about infant care.

The need to understand information processes is ubiquitous in today's life. Understanding how information is created, evaluated, distributed, organized, stored, and retrieved is essential to us all in all of our roles—citizen, academic, neighbor, student, consumer, and life partner.

As a librarian, I value dictionaries, encyclopedias, research monographs, and journals, whether they are available in paper or electronically, but they are only part of the information world. Equally important to me are the conversations with colleagues as I walk across the campus and the discussions with neighbors in the driveway of my house.

Perhaps most important to me, is that I never assume accuracy and completeness in any source, whether it is a journal article or my neighbor. My responsibility always includes evaluating the source and the content provided.

No other lesson has been so difficult for me. I want to believe my neighbor, the journal article, the Weblog found through Google, as well as the newscaster. I must not, without evaluating the information critically.

Part of my difficulty is my desire to trust. Perhaps more importantly I often forget that information sources, whether people or publications, exist within social structures with radically different values and "logical" systems.

More than any other aspect of information in every day life, we need to teach a skeptical approach to information. We have almost all learned this lesson, but only partially. We must teach our students to approach information, and the sources that convey it, with questions rather than unquestioning acceptance. No technological skill, no knowledge of books, no data gathering methodology transcends this lesson.

<sup>5</sup> Maura Flannery citing Jeremy Shapiro and Shelley Hughes in *Educom Review*:  
<http://www.educause.edu/pub/er/review/reviewarticles/31231.html>

This newsletter is published  
monthly during the academic year  
by the Center for Teaching and  
Learning.  
Managing Editor: Lisa Getman

If you would like to send an entry to "Faculty News," the deadline for the April issue is **April 13th**. We prefer that you e-mail the information to us at [CTL@stjohns.edu](mailto:CTL@stjohns.edu). But if that is not possible, then send a typed copy of your announcement to our office located in Bent Hall, room 281. We reserve that right to edit all material received.

# FACULTY NEWS

March 2004

**Dr. Ninah Belivsky** (Languages and Literatures, [belivsn@stjohns.edu](mailto:belivsn@stjohns.edu)) presented three lectures: "Existing-Being-Having in Modern Hebrew and in English" at the 48th Annual International Linguistics Association Conference at New York University (April 2003), "Anxiety in the ESL Classroom: Facilitate Anxiety-Free Learning" at the 14<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference on The Role of Imagination in Language Learning at New Jersey City University (May 2003), and "Let There Be Music and Art in Your ESL Classroom" at the International Conference on Imagination and Education in Vancouver, Canada (July 2003); also published an article, "Rekindled Hope," in *Congregation Sons of Israel Newsletter* (April 2003).

**Dr. Victor Cesare** (Chemistry, [cesarev@stjohns.edu](mailto:cesarev@stjohns.edu)) with Dr. Istvan Lengyel (Chemistry) and Tony Taldone (Pharmaceutical Sciences) published an article "A Direct Link Between the Passerini Reaction and  $\alpha$ -Lactams" in *Tetrahedron* (February, 2004).

**Professor Stephannia F. Cleaton** (Communications, Journalism and Media Studies, [cleatons@stjohns.edu](mailto:cleatons@stjohns.edu)) was elected to the advisory board of the Staten Island Chapter of the New York Urban League (February 2004).

**Dr. Maura C. Flannery** (Computer Science, Mathematics and Science, [flannerm@stjohns.edu](mailto:flannerm@stjohns.edu)) published an article, "Birds Across America," in *The American Biology Teacher* (February 2004).

**Professor Diane M. Himmelbaum** (Fine Arts, [himmelbd@stjohns.edu](mailto:himmelbd@stjohns.edu)) has organized an exhibition of work by the faculty of the Department of Fine Arts; 25 works are being shown at The New York Law School in Manhattan (March 2004); this exhibition is sponsored by OIA (The Organization of Independent Artists).

**Professor Stephanie Jacobson** ([jacobsos@stjohns.edu](mailto:jacobsos@stjohns.edu)) is showing artwork at Saks Fifth Avenue in Garden City, NY (March 2004); also did a demonstration for the Long Beach Art Association and in conjunction with this, has work on view at the Long Beach Public Library (March 2004).

**Dr. Gregory Maertz** (English, [maertzg@stjohns.edu](mailto:maertzg@stjohns.edu)) has been awarded an NEH Fellowship for University Teachers for 2004-2005 to work on Nazi Art: Hitler's Invisible Museum and The Last Taboo: The Rehabilitation of Nazi Artists in Postwar Germany.

**Dr. George McCartney** (English, [mccartng@stjohns.edu](mailto:mccartng@stjohns.edu)) presented two keynote addresses: "Helena in Room 101" at the Egypt Waugh Centenary Symposium at Universidad de la Rioja, Logrono, Spain (May 2003) and "Framing Chaos: Evelyn Waugh's Cinematic Imagination" at the Evelyn Waugh Centenary Conference held at Hertford College, Oxford, U.K (September 2003); his study of Waugh, *Evelyn Waugh and the Modernist Tradition*, was re-issued with a new introduction by Transaction Publishers (November 2003); also appointed associate editor of *The Evelyn Waugh Newsletter* and published an article in this publication, "Waugh on Television," in its Winter issue; his film column continues to be published monthly in *Chronicles Magazine* and appears on the journal's website, [www.ChroniclesMagazine.org](http://www.ChroniclesMagazine.org).

**Dr. Jeffrey Nevid** (Psychology, [nevidj@stjohns.edu](mailto:nevidj@stjohns.edu)) presented two invited addresses: "Graphing Psychology: The Effective Use of Graphs and Figures to Teach Introductory Psychology" at the National Institute on the Teaching of Psychology in St. Petersburg, FL (January 2004) and "Evidence-Based Pedagogy: Using Research to Find New Ways to Help Students Learn" at the 11th Midwest Institute for Students and Teachers of Psychology (MISTOP) in Glen Elyn, IL (February 2004).

**Professor Nerissa Palad-Palermo** (Fine Arts, [paladpan@stjohns.edu](mailto:paladpan@stjohns.edu)) is participating in a St. John's Faculty Exhibition at The New York Law School (March-April, 2004).

**Professor Joseph Riotta** (Computer Science, Mathematics and Science, [riottaj@stjohns.edu](mailto:riottaj@stjohns.edu)) presented a workshop, "Telecommunications: Past, Present and Future," at the Society of Hispanic Engineers' (SHPE) Regional Professional Development Program held at Polytechnic University in Brooklyn (March 2004).

**Dr. Eric Reymond** (English, [ericreymond@hotmail.com](mailto:ericreymond@hotmail.com)) has published two poems: "One Iota" in the *New Orleans Review* and "To Ohio" in the *Cimarron Review*.

**Dr. Richard Stalter** (Biology, [stalterr@stjohns.edu](mailto:stalterr@stjohns.edu)) published an abstract in the winter issue of *In Vivo*; has also been nominated for *Who's Who Among America's Teacher* (2004).

## CTL Fellows Program: Applications Due on April 26th

This is a second call for applicants to the Center for Teaching and Learning Fellows Program. The revised program, inaugurated last fall, has several new features, including an application process, a larger number of fellows, and a longer period of participation. The focus is on the use of technology in teaching.

- This program is structured as a **faculty learning community** in which the focus is on assisting faculty in developing the technological aspects of their courses. This program is not targeting those who are technologically savvy nor those at the opposite end of the spectrum, rather the focus is on taking faculty the next step, no matter where their starting point.
- Fellows would serve for **two years**. The first few months will be used to develop their projects. The first group of fellows will also be working to shape the development of the program.
- There will be **ten Fellows**, drawn from full-time faculty throughout the University. For the first year, there are five Fellows, and then five will be selected each year thereafter, so there will always be a mix of new and returning fellows.
- There is a **simple, one-page application form** outlining the course and the technological aspects the applicant would like to enhance.
- The program will begin with a **one-day retreat** in late summer at which the Fellows will develop their plans and discuss how best to structure the program.
- Fellows will meet formally at least **once a month** to explore relevant literature, to discuss plans, to deal with concerns, and to report on the status of their projects. There will also be guests invited to share their expertise in areas relevant to the Fellows' projects.
- Each Fellow will be funded up to **\$2,000** for materials to enhance technological aspects of their course or to attend a workshop or conference to develop their knowledge or skills related to teaching with technology.
- Support from **the E-Studio and the University Libraries** is an essential part of this program. The support is primarily in the form of expertise which the faculty can draw upon to achieve their goals. Specific individuals will be identified as liaisons with the Fellows Program.
- Fellows are expected to make presentations and other forms of "**publication**" so that their efforts are communicated to other members of the faculty, particularly to members of their home departments or divisions. One of the best means to communicate with the larger higher education community would be through **electronic course portfolios**.

### APPLICATION FOR THE CTL FELLOWS PROGRAM

In order to assist the selection committee in making a decision on who might most benefit from the program, we would appreciate it if you would fill in all of the information below and attach a description of your project limited to 300 words. Return your application to the Dr. Maura C. Flannery (Bent Hall room 281) on or before **Monday, April 26, 2004**.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Department \_\_\_\_\_

College \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Phone ext. \_\_\_\_\_

Title and number of course in which you would like to advance your use of technology:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Brief description of how you envision changing your course as a result of your involvement in the Fellows Program (limit of 300 words).

***PEDAGOGY IN THE “REPUBLIC OF ENTERTAINMENT***  
*Basilio Monteiro* ([monteirb@stjohns.edu](mailto:monteirb@stjohns.edu)) *College of Professional Studies*

Neal Gabler, in his book, *Life: A Movie*, has an interesting chapter on the “Republic of Entertainment” in which he traces the history of entertainment in the United States and argues that our frame of reference for everything is entertainment.

During the last two semesters, I invited my students of “Introduction to Mass Communications” to do a survey among their friends on the impact of mass media on various aspects of their lives. Each student had to interview ten other students. Among other questions, one was related to the study habits of the students and the impact of mass media, particularly of television. The total number of students surveyed was 1800. Among these students, 77% clearly indicated either that they TRY to study with/around their favorite TV shows, and/or put aside their studies to watch the TV. Out of this group, 58% demonstrate some kind of remorse for not studying as they think they ought to.

Whatever might be the significance, or lack thereof, of this survey, I am left with many questions. How do these media-centric students process information? How does one teach effectively in a classroom setting to these students growing up on entertainment as a vehicle of learning? How to use entertainment as a memorable context in a classroom setting?

Increasingly, “good” is equated with “fun.” If something is not “fun,” it is not worth paying attention to; this seems to be the golden rule. Another word that has great currency in the corridors of the University is “boring,” and usually that is a code word for “not good.” Serious discussions are “boring”; therefore, “not good.” This appears to be the current logic.

The introduction of technology in the classroom oftentimes make teaching “fun” under the guise of making it “interactive.”

Are there some common learning styles among media-centric students? If there are different learning styles among the student body in a given class, then how would a professor be able to provide entertainment as a memorable context that would be appealing to all? Does the course content of all the subjects at all times lend itself to “fun” teaching? Does some of the course content, and some of the courses, lend themselves to “fun” teaching?

Will it be possible for a generation that receives almost all its life experience and other necessary life information through the spectacle of mass media and in a “fun” mode to grasp materials presented to them in the classroom setting if it is not “fun?” What is “fun?” What is “fun” teaching? Who is a fun-teacher or what makes a teacher a fun-teacher?

If the responses in the student-led surveys of 1800 students is any indication of their study habits, the challenge is to find pedagogies suitable for a “republic of entertainment.”

***NSF SHORT COURSES FOR COLLEGE TEACHERS***

The “Chautauqua” courses for college teachers provide a wealth of topics and are worth a look. The only charge for each course is a \$50 application fee, and a number of the courses are offered in the New York area. A list of courses and other information is available at [www.chautauqua.pitt.edu](http://www.chautauqua.pitt.edu).

**IMPORTANT NOTICE!!**

***STUDENT RESEARCH DAY FRIDAY, APRIL 23, 2004***

**11:00 AM to 2:00 PM**

**St. John's University**

**Office of Grants and Sponsored Research**

**Newman Hall—Rm. 108**

**Phone: (718) 990-6051**

**Fax: (718) 990-6020**

Please return to: Marylou Curcio Szabo, Ph.D., Office of Grants and Sponsored Research, Newman Hall, Room 108  
or e-mail to: [curciom@stjohns.edu](mailto:curciom@stjohns.edu)

**Please--All information MUST be typed, specific and final for publication in the program booklet.**

**If you e-mail the information you only have to give me the answers and not repeat the specific questions.**

On Friday, April 23, 2004 our annual Student Research Day will be held in Council Hall from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM. Student Research Day provides an opportunity for students and faculty from all of our disciplines to present their original research in poster format. It is co-sponsored by the Women in Science Society (Office of Grants and Sponsored Research); the Initiative for Minority-Student Development Program; and the McNair Scholars Program.

As in previous years, all undergraduate and graduate students representing all Schools, Divisions and Departments of the University as well as the Vincentian Center for Church and Society are invited to participate.

Since we have limitations on space allocated for each poster, and due to the fact that the program must be finalized for publication, it is essential that you respond to us no later than April 2. We are sorry, but due to the high volume of participants, no hand-written forms can be accepted.

As in the past, blank posters will be offered to the students. These will be available in our office after April 10.

[An invitation is extended to your parent/s or other family members to come to this event and see your great research.](#)

Marylou Curcio Szabo, Ph.D.

Grants and Women in Science Coordinator

*Organizer, Student Research Day*

Your Name \_\_\_\_\_

Your e-mail address \_\_\_\_\_

Mentor's Name \_\_\_\_\_ Mentor's College or Department \_\_\_\_\_

College Enrolled in: (check one)  Undergraduate  Graduate

- St. John's College
- College of Pharmacy and Allied Health Professions
- College of Professional Studies
- School of Education and Human Services
- The Peter J. Tobin School of Business
- Vincentian Center
- Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_

Please check one:

IMSD Student  McNair Scholars Program Student  Other \_\_\_\_\_

Exact and Final Title of your Research (this will be the title which will be placed in the program booklet-remember this must be typed!)