

Entrepreneur provides technology solutions for his community



Pat Flynn and his associate Laurie Pettit stand ready to help both business and household customers in the Racine area to log on to the Web. They're the core of the management team at Racineonline.com.

By Joel Bradtke

RACINE —“It's all in the name,” says entrepreneur and Internet service provider Patrick Flynn. For the last 15 months he has been proprietor of Racineonline.com and a half dozen other community-oriented Web sites.

Even though Flynn had more than 15 years of business experience, he attended a Small Business Development Center (SBDC) business planning course.

“It totally gave focus,” says Flynn. “When you write something down, including expenses, it's hard not to be successful. We learned from lawyers and accountants who

taught us about taxes. In the class, I talked with real people who struggled. I would take their stories and feed off of that.”

One of Flynn's concerns was to find a way to finance his new venture. Racineonline.com was an offshoot of a “parent” business he opened in 1996, Advantage-Promotions.com, which deals in advertising specialties and promotional printing. But, according to his SBDC counselor, Joan Larson, Flynn was able to finance his Web-based enterprise from its own income. Larson works at the Racine County SBDC, one of two SBDC offices attached to University of Wisconsin-Parkside.

Flynn started Racineonline.com on Jan. 2, 2000. He had taught him-

self about computers, supplementing his knowledge with a Web-site design course at a local college.

During a year that saw the bottom fall out of hundreds of dot-coms nationally, Flynn methodically worked through the business plan he crafted while attending the SBDC program. The Web domains he has registered were created to make his portal the definitive online point of entry to Racine's consumer and business-to-business markets.

Flynn is dedicated to helping local businesses with their online marketing needs. He and his staff offer “turnkey” Web site hosting and development services to a growing number of clients.

Business impacts

Flynn accomplished these impacts while operating Racineonline.com its first year:

- ✕ Registration and ownership of six community Web domains for business customers, community members and visitors.
- ✕ More than 150,000 “hits” to his flagship portal Web site.
- ✕ Four jobs created.
- ✕ Business expansion financed with current business income (no debt).

Reforging the Links: The University Digital Business Partnership Project

By Chris DuPré

As a new era in technology dawns, two University of Wisconsin-Extension organizations are leading the way in distance education.

Wisconsin Public Television's WHA-TV and UW Learning Innovations were the centerpieces of Reforging the Links, a national effort to get university-licensed public television stations to renew historic ties with their campuses. The effort, financed through the Corporation for Public Broadcasting's Future Fund, brought public broadcasters and distance educators from across the country to Madison in 1999 and 2000.

Broadcasters and educators partner

The project found that broadcasters and educators could accomplish more together than separately. Public broadcasting will

need more content in the age of multi-channel digital TV, while distance learning can only profit from sharing the audience that broadcasters already reach. The hard part is figuring out efficient ways for the organizations to work cooperatively.

“Over time, we in public broadcasting have drifted away from our roots in education,” says Byron Knight, director of Broadcasting and Media Innovations. “In the near future, when we'll have the opportunity to provide more material than ever, renewing those educational ties will be good for the stations and for those providing distance learning.

“Reforging the Links helped us lay the groundwork for creating these new materials and getting them to the people who will use them,” he says.

Exploring the future

Director of Learning Innovations Mike Offerman says the case study has been good for his organization in several ways. “For one, it allowed us to compare notes with similar organizations such as Penn State's

World Campus,” Offerman says. (Penn State's World Campus and WPSX-TV and Washington State's KWSU-TV and Extended Education and Technology Division have been partners in Reforging the Links, although not to the extent of the Wisconsin organizations.)

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Message from the Chancellor**UW Day demonstrates Extension's value to Wisconsin**

Kevin P. Reilly

UW Day, held March 7 in Madison, brought together nearly 2,000 people from around the state to support our state university system. The event highlighted University of Wisconsin-Extension's ability to build a brighter future for Wisconsin.

Our delegation, the largest at UW Day, gathered for a morning rally before the official start of the event. Along with others, I was very impressed at the diversity of our group. Our membership included county board members and community partners, as well as county- and campus-based faculty and staff from each division. It was inspiring to see this broad cross section of Extension stakeholders in one place.

Later, our Extension delegates met in small groups with 85 legislators to discuss the many ways that university programs benefit their communities. In addition, Don McKelvey, member of the Grant County Board and president of the Wisconsin Associated County Extension Committees (WACEC), testified before the Wisconsin Senate Committee on Universities, Housing and Government Operations.

"It is true that Extension helps farmers grow crops and raise animals, but it also helps us grow our economy and raise healthy families by providing invaluable access to research and custom-tailored educational programs," McKelvey said. "County-based UW-Extension educators form a unique bridge between the University and the people—and isn't that what the Wisconsin Idea is all about?"

He also encouraged legislators to support equitable pay increases for UW faculty and staff, saying, "We will never win the brain drain battle if the first educated people to leave the state are our own professors, community educators and researchers."

At a reception later, participants viewed an array of hands-on demonstrations from each UW institution. Our own exhibit included examples of Extension's high-technology work with interactive television, asynchronous online learning, and distance diagnosis of insects and plant disease in field crops. It also featured examples of our work with schools and local government, as well as educational services available to small-business owners.

As always, I was extremely proud of our institution and pleased that so many of our friends and partners would take time to participate in such an important event. I hope that we can find other opportunities in our daily work to demonstrate the value of our programs and the depth of our support.

Kevin P. Reilly
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The March 2001 issue of *Martha Stewart Living* magazine carries an article on phenology, featuring the work of UW-Madison Extension IPM (Integrated Pest Management) outreach specialist **Karen Delahaut**. Phenology is a field of science concerned with the influence of climatic and seasonal changes on the life cycles of plants and animals. Read Delahaut's article on phenology on the Agriculture/Urban Horticulture Team Web site: www.uwex.edu/ces/wihort/landscape/L_phenology.htm

Internal Communications Survey due April 13

Please take 15 minutes to click your way through UW-Extension's Internal Communications Survey.

You can find the survey at: www1.uwex.edu/survey

If you don't have access to the Web site, call (608) 262-3253 to receive a paper copy.

The UW-Extension communications team looks forward to learning how to improve communications with faculty and staff.

Thanks to all participants!



Peter Mann and Renee Schuh from UW-Madison DolT visit the Serving Adults in a Virtual World conference resource room and learn about WebCT, a Web-based learning system designed to help faculty learn how to put courses online.

By Amy Pikalek

This year's Continuing Education Extension conference, *Serving Adults in a Virtual World*, drew 162

Conference looks at serving adult learners in a virtual world

professionals from throughout UW System to The Pyle Center in Madison Feb. 15-16. The purpose of the conference, the division's fourth, was to learn how e-commerce could impact campus operations, show how other institutions are using the Internet, discover how computing and video will converge, and learn about the University of Wisconsin's virtual future.

Keynote speakers were Don Norris, Ph.D., author and president of Strategic Initiatives Inc., a management consulting firm, and Robert Kvavik, Ph.D., associate vice president at the University of Minnesota. Additional presenters included Ed Meachen, associate

"We are going to transform higher education by using technology to change the nature of our relationships."

—Don Norris, Ph.D.

vice president, UW System Administration Office of Learning and Information Technology, and Byron Knight, director of UW-Extension Broadcasting and Media Innovations.

Reforging the Links:

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"This project also has allowed us to sort out what makes sense and what doesn't as we look ahead to a shared future with broadcasting, especially public television," Offerman says. "We have a strong tradition to build on, and an even brighter future."

Proposal for the next step

The organizations have submitted a proposal for the next step, *Evolving the Links*. That phase would develop actual course materials and delivery systems.

"We in Wisconsin are helping lead the nation and the world in this area," Offerman says. "It's fulfilling, but also somewhat daunting."

For Knight, partnership is the right way to go. "Together we can succeed," he says. "Apart, we'll both continue on in the same fashion. In the new digital world, that would be courting disaster."

News and Ideas more easily accessible to visually impaired

By Vicki Pierce

News and Ideas recently became more easily accessible to the visually impaired.

Past issues of *News and Ideas* have been available on our Web site at www1.uwex.edu/pubs/ni for several years in Portable Document Format (PDF). While PDF preserves the fonts, format, colors, graphics and photos of the printed version, it presents problems for people with vision impairments who use screen-reader software to translate Web content to speech-

synthesis or refreshable-Braille output devices.

To solve this problem, Information Systems staff members Dana Burmaster and Mike Wokasch developed a system that converts PDF issues of the newspaper into documents that screen readers are able to process automatically and quickly into the preferred format.

The new system brings UW-Extension into compliance with the American with Disabilities Act,

which requires information be delivered in a manner that is accessible to people with disabilities.

For more information on the technology of the project: Dana Burmaster, webmaster, burmaster@admin.uwex.edu

For more information about accessibility issues: David Dunham, ADA/Civil Rights Compliance, dunham@admin.uwex.edu

The School for Beginning Dairy Farmers combines the technology of the Internet, e-mail, video and CDs to bring learning to dairy farmers around the country.



Technology roundup

University of Wisconsin-Extension uses a variety of technologies to deliver programming to Wisconsin residents and beyond.



4-H Youth tech team member Andy Koffman combines his love of computers with a commitment to community service by teaching elders like Bethel Matthies to use computers. Tech team members also develop Web sites for youth organizations and other community groups.

Staff from UW-Extension's Instructional Communications Systems, along with Tim Cape, Waveguide Consulting Inc., recently hosted a 12-member building team from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC). Cape (right), one of the A/V consultants for The Pyle Center project, points out the wiring infrastructure in the second-floor cable distribution room.



Dairy farmers begin careers with innovative technology

By Jo Futrell

As students in the School for Beginning Dairy Farmers gather for a seminar on the University of Wisconsin-Madison campus, they are joined by others who will participate via the Internet from Illinois, Ohio, West Virginia and rural Wisconsin.

"This is the ideal technology for me," says Stephanie Young, who logs on from her family's dairy farm in Somerset, Ohio. The technology lets her complete the course without interrupting the daily business of the farm.

"I miss being on campus," Young says, "but in the course of my workday, I merely power up the computer and I'm in the classroom."

In addition to hearing live voice-stream during class, distance students have online access to handouts, photographs and PowerPoint presentations and can communicate with instructors by e-mail. Class sessions are video-recorded and a CD is sent to each distance participant.

The School for Beginning Dairy Farmers is the only program of its kind in the country. It combines classroom and field training with farm internships and mentoring by experienced graziers and university faculty. It reaches distance learners who have needs and time constraints particular to dairy farmers and helps them stay on the cutting edge.

For more information: www.wisc.edu/cias/schools/dairysch.html

"The idea behind the software is that it is 'user friendly' enough that local professionals should be able to conduct the analysis themselves."

—Steve Deller, UW-Madison/Extension community development economist.

UW-Extension pair create new software to assess impacts of development

By Pamela Seelman

What are the environmental impacts of building a marina in Two Rivers? How much tax revenue would be created by constructing a new mall in Wausau? How would traffic be affected by building a 200-unit apartment complex in Monroe?

Before now, best guesses and speculation were used to answer these types of development questions. But with the help of new software created by two University of Wisconsin-Extension faculty, planners, local officials and others can assess the impacts of development.

"The software is a process to comprehensively evaluate the consequences of development on a community," explains Gareth Betts, UW-Extension Walworth County community resource development educator. "It provides extensive documentation of the anticipated economic, fiscal, environmental, social and traffic-related aspects and impacts of a proposed development."

The software makes use of existing information where possible to determine potential impacts of development. It also employs techniques to gather additional, new information when necessary. It is anticipated that the software will be ready for sale in early 2002.

For more information: Gareth Betts, (262) 741-3190

Young techies teach elders to use computers

By Mary Ellen Bell

Computer-savvy kids who belong to a 4-H "tech team" spent a recent Saturday sharing their passion with their elders.

These high school-aged technophiles organized a computer class for older adults, arranged to borrow a computer lab at their school, and organized the curriculum. This class gave a dozen or so older adults their first opportunity

to sit down in front of a computer screen and handle a mouse.

By the end of the session, the class had learned to write and send e-mail to family and friends and to navigate the Internet to find information.

"They picked it up pretty fast," says Andy Koffman, a Winnebago Lutheran Academy senior and tech team member from Fond du Lac.

The Pyle Center wins national praise

By Amy Pikalek

When a team from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) wanted to gather ideas on how to best update their 50-year-old distance education facility in Atlanta, one of the first places they stopped was University of Wisconsin-Extension's distance education and conference facility, The Pyle Center.

"We're interested in the innovation of the building's design and how successful you've been at blending a physical learning environment with the vision of virtual learning, so anyone, anywhere can benefit," says Dennis McDowell, director of the Division of Professional Development and Evaluation and the Public Health Training Network. "We're building our own facility, and we wanted to see one of the best facilities, with the very best equipment and a building very modern in design."

The CDC's Global Communications and Training facility will feature conferencing and training facilities, digital broadcast production facilities, an information resource center and a museum.

A couple of people were a little scared of it at first, but they ended up really liking it." Koffman says the students learned to find Web sites for organizations they belong to, how to buy an airplane ticket online, or where to go to download a knitting pattern.

Tech teams in several other Wisconsin communities hone their computer skills by offering tech training and by developing and maintaining Web sites for county 4-H programs, school groups and other organizations.

UW-Extension implements new information technologies



By Ron Kraemer
Chief Information Officer,
UW-Extension

Whenever I think about new information technologies, the word *inundated* comes to mind. We are seeing extraordinary advances in computing and networking systems. Wireless technologies are beginning to show promise and innovative networking solutions are becoming more reliable and versa-

tile. Identifying which technologies are ready to implement depends upon a mixture of technical criteria and the institution's readiness to take advantage of the new technology to improve and extend services.

Over the past few years, new technologies have led to the rapid rise (and fall) of "dot-coms" and "e-everything." As is typical in times of massive technological change, the hardware and software advances have come first. Society's understanding and ability to implement business processes to take advantage of these innovations is following more slowly than most would like, and with mixed results.

So what does this have to do with implementing new technologies at

UW-Extension? Our challenge is not so much implementing the newest and most aggressively touted software or the most hyped hardware. Rather, we seek to implement technologies that make our IT infrastructure more reliable, efficient and effective. Our strategy is to invest in technologies that help UW-Extension take maximum advantage of the opportunities that will be presented to us.

As users, you will not generally see these investments firsthand. What you will see is the means to more effectively and efficiently deliver your programs and services to those who use them.

For more information:
kraemer@admin.uwex.edu

During this next year, we will implement technology at UW-Extension to:

- × make our servers and networks more reliable,
- × help us build, modify and maintain better Web applications and more dependable databases,
- × improve wireless services,
- × construct seemingly boundless data storage systems,
- × foster better communications internally and externally.

New video bridge provides flexible videoconference options



By Marcia Baird
Director, Instructional
Communications Systems

You're planning to hold a two-way videoconference with colleagues at a UW campus, a state agency and across the country. One participant wants to use his new video "IP" unit to conference, another says she'll use "ATM," a third says she'll use "ISDN." Can they all be brought together on the same video call?

University of Wisconsin-Extension faculty and staff can now video-conference — across the state or around the world — using a new video bridge managed by Instructional Communications Systems (ICS) at The Pyle Center.

Bridge links more locations and types of video calls

"The new bridge is incredibly sophisticated," explains Denny Gilbertson, ICS associate director, "and that brings many benefits to UW faculty and staff. You can now have more flexibility, both to connect to the bridge in different ways and to include more locations."

The ICS videoconferencing bridge is necessary when you want to link three or more sites together in an interactive videoconference. The new bridge links up to 30 video

"The new bridge is incredibly sophisticated and that brings many benefits to UW faculty and staff."

—Denny Gilbertson,
ICS associate director

locations together in a single conference or any combinations of smaller conferences. More significantly, this advanced tool can also

mix different types of video calls together within a single conference.

ICS supports ISDN, ATM, IP, WiscNet and Internet conferencing

ICS has supported interactive videoconferencing since 1993. "Our first step was supporting University of Wisconsin institutions and state agencies as they began adopting videoconferencing and ISDN (Integrated Services Digital Network/H.320) lines," explains Gilbertson. At that time, ICS managed a six-port bridge for both UW and state agency use. Many of these UW and state agency locations still use ISDN.

The next step, during the last year, has been to add ATM (Asynchronous Transfer Mode/H.321) video bridging. ICS has been collaborating with WiscNet and University of Wisconsin-Madison to deliver and support videoconferencing service across the WiscNet network. UW Colleges is now using the new ICS video bridge and the WiscNet network to offer interactive video courses.

And finally, this year, ICS has begun supporting videoconferencing over Internet connections (H.323). This provides expanded connection options for users. Wisconsin's Cooperative Educational Service Agencies (CESAs) and the Wisconsin Department of Public Instruction are among the early users.

The numbers of videoconferences are also growing as faculty and staff look increasingly to conferencing solutions. According to Ginny Divine, ICS video scheduler, about 90 videoconferences are scheduled each week.

ICS provides comprehensive service and training

ICS staff provides scheduling, site coordination and technical support and resources for ISDN, ATM and IP video connections. In addition, ICS instructional designers and trainers offer both introductory and advanced training and workshops for those who want assistance building effective videoconferencing programs and meetings.

For more information: Ginny Divine, (608) 262-5249, cv@ics.uwex.edu or www.uwex.edu/ics/cv

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