

Duke Office of Information Technology

Duke OIT – Inbox December 2007

The OIT Newsletter

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blackwell interactive

[Digital tools for Duke: Blackwell Interactive](#)

Without wood and bristle—the traditional components of a paint brush—there would be no Mona Lisa. Without servers, web developers, interactive media support, programmers and a host of other tech services, there would be no digital tools and resources at the fingertips of Duke faculty, students and staff.

To serve Duke's many digital needs, OIT has launched Blackwell Interactive. Its mission: to help especially those parts of Duke that don't have the time or resources to build and maintain their own digital services and media—whose efforts go into using digital media rather than building them. "There's a very distributed technology environment at Duke," says Stephen Toback, senior manager at Blackwell Interactive. That is, the extremely talented groups at Duke that provide technology support and development are spread across the university. This means there may also be gaps. "Blackwell will be a part of Duke's Web and interactive media community available to provide hands-on help to any part of the university that needs it." That help will include:

- Website and custom application development
- Web- and video-conferencing
- iTunesU tech support and programming
- Streaming video
- 3-D learning-space development and support

Blackwell Interactive provides services at varied rates depending on the scope of the project. Toback says the group is also interested in starting a service that will update Web page content for busy content managers around the university. Blackwell grew from WeST, the Web Solutions Team of Arts and Sciences and Trinity College, and Digital Media Services, a unit already within

OIT, WeST, OIT and other tech-services offices had received numerous requests for help and support from around the university and medical center over the years. The creation of Blackwell as a centralized resource became the best response to those requests. WeST staff moved to OIT's office at the American Tobacco Campus, and Toback was hired to direct the new effort. Toback came from Walt Disney Studios in Burbank, Calif., where among other things he helped develop technologies that enabled animators to draw by hand and have their work instantly turned into digital form. The adaptation of WACOM Cintiq digital tablets supported the artists' traditional skills while turning the results into versatile digital formats. One of Blackwell's goals at Duke is to work with university technology partners in such groups as CIT to help develop tools that will allow the talented staff, students and faculty at Duke to explore new approaches to their work utilizing digital applications and media tools. For more information about Blackwell Interactive, please email blackwell-applications@duke.edu. More information about Web and multimedia services through OIT can also be found at <http://www.oit.duke.edu/web-multimedia/index.html>. And about that wood and bristle—the bristle most commonly used came from a long-haired hog. This information was found by browsing the Web, which was built and is maintained and nurtured by legions of tech professionals.

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[Apply for spring '08 Duke Digital Initiative projects](#)

The Duke Digital Initiative (DDI) is now accepting applications from instructors, students and departments for spring 2008 projects. New programs for the 2007–08 academic year include:

- Exploratory Projects, for ideas suggested by applicants
- Audio and Visual Capture Program, which captures classroom presentations
- Virtual Collaborative Worlds Exploration, through which educational projects can be established in the virtual world “Second Life”
- Wimba Voice Tools, which allow instructors to integrate audio recordings into almost all areas of their Blackboard course

These and other DDI projects—such as assigning audio/video production projects to students—can be found at <http://www.duke.edu/ddi/>, the DDI website launched at the start of fall semester 2007. Applications for spring 2008 proposals can be found there or at the DDI pages on the website of the Center for Instructional Technology (CIT) at <http://cit.duke.edu/help/ddi/index.html>. Case studies and examples of earlier projects can also be found on the CIT website. The initiative is managed jointly by the CIT and the Office of Information Technology, <http://www.oit.duke.edu>. Staff from both offices will help faculty members learn how to use the technologies available. The DDI was launched in fall 2005 as an outgrowth of the Duke iPod First-Year Experience, which

started in fall 2004. The goal is to foster innovative and effective teaching, curriculum enhancement, infrastructure development and knowledge sharing.

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OIT launches WebFiles: Save and share files online, avoid heartache

OIT has launched a new service that can save Duke faculty, staff and students computing heartache. WebFiles is an online file-storage and file-sharing application. When your computer dies, your files will still be safe, reachable and shareable on WebFiles.

WebFiles not only increases a Duke network user's storage but also makes it easy to store digital data. The application enables anyone with a Duke NetID account to store and retrieve documents and images, including video streamed directly from Duke servers. WebFiles also provides a shared space for group collaboration that includes ready-made group space for courses and allows sharing media with the broader community.

The service offers a feature that allows you to create a streaming-video publishing directory. Files placed in this directory are available to share by giving the URLs to friends and colleagues. WebFiles also allows users to create personal websites.

This application gives Duke students, faculty and staff up to 5 gigabytes of personal online digital storage. This is an increase from 70 megabytes for students and faculty and 10 megabytes for staff available from a previous service. WebFiles requires no special software on a user's computer. All you need is a network connection and a Web browser. More than 2,000 users have logged on so far.

For more information, visit

<http://www.oit.duke.edu/comp-print/storage/webfiles/index.html>

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WebFiles: My own personal portable online hard drive

A review by Gene Galin, OIT News and Information

I've tried it, and I've found Duke WebFiles to be a terrific online service that makes it easy for me to store and manage important electronic files. I work at OIT so I'm supposed to like these kinds of services, but I try new applications out to see if they actually make my work easier. WebFiles does. I love the new and improved online storage service—a real advance from the previous online system. The reformulated offering has been caffeinated and has a lot more kick. I can store a DVD's worth of content on my WebFiles space. I use this service to share image files with assorted people and groups within Duke OIT. With WebFiles I deposit the media content into my location. I email the necessary people to let them know the images are available and send them the URL. They can view and retrieve the images as needed. WebFiles also gives me the flexibility to work with files at home, or anywhere else away from

the office. Any changes that I make can be saved to my WebFiles account. In this way, my up-to-date files are available for me to use back in the office. It's great not to worry about carrying around a flash drive or a CD to transport data. Now if only I would stop working at home. Here's how to start using WebFiles: Visit the WebFiles "How-To" page at www.oit.duke.edu/comp-print/storage/webfiles/howto.html. Follow the step-by-step directions to set up a WebFiles account. The directions include screen shots and are easy to understand. You should have your own personal online hard drive up in a few minutes. I believe that everyone should be using online storage. We all create data that needs storing and sharing. The amount of unprotected but hugely important media content on hard drives is growing every day. Take a look at some of my content on WebFiles to see what the service looks like: <http://www.duke.edu/~ggalin/techexpo7photos>.

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[Build a wiki, share the world](#)

Share files across the building, across the campus or across the globe. Keep track of tasks and manage projects.

To do these and a lot more, Duke students, faculty and staff should consider a wiki—DukeWiki. Starting this fall, Duke OIT began offering a wiki specifically designed for the Duke community.

A wiki is a collaborative Web space in which members can freely create and edit content using any Web browser. Unlike traditional Web pages, which only the owner can change, wikis enable timely, group-driven collaboration—any member of a group that has wiki space can add to or change that group's content.

So far, more than 80 groups have set up sites, allowing nearly 300 users to easily share information and collaborate online with no training, no software to download and no special skills required. The Web-based wiki technology allows users to build secure team sites, project management sites, collaboration sites and more—with ease.

Wiki spaces are great for workgroups or other communities that want to share and jointly modify documents like project notes, meeting minutes and lists.

Individual space "owners" control their portion of the wiki site and grant access via Duke NetIDs. You can restrict viewing to certain Duke affiliates or make spaces publicly browseable on the Web. Even if they're made public, however, DukeWiki pages can be edited only by those Duke affiliates whom the owners allow to edit the space, not the general public.

More details at <http://wiki.duke.edu>.

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New WiFi technology comes to East Campus

Century-old Epworth Hall, Duke's oldest residence, this fall became the beneficiary of the world's newest wireless computer network. The network, the first of its kind installed outside the commercial developers' labs, has ratcheted up connection speeds of

laptops, mobile phones and other devices by nearly six times that of current wireless networks, said James Nesbitt, OIT's lead wireless engineer.

Kevin Miller, OIT assistant director of communications infrastructure, said the increase in data-transfer rate—from 54 megabytes per second to 300—will routinely allow users to go beyond emailing and Web-browsing to “far greater use of the wireless network for audio, video and other bandwidth-intensive needs” that have been until now the exclusive domain of wired networks. For example, Miller sees “television over the wireless network as an upcoming capability.”

Those closely monitoring the network's performance also found that the areas covered extended from wireless “access points”—ceiling-mounted devices bedecked with antennas that act as the network's gateway—to areas outside the building. The connection between access point and computer also appears to be more reliable than in earlier networks, they said.

The network, known in computer parlance as 802.11n, is based on a technology called MIMO, short for “multiple input, multiple output.” In MIMO, multiple radio signals send and receive data more rapidly and reliably than current single-signal systems.

Many new wireless devices have been manufactured in anticipation of the 802.11n standard, but even those without compatible devices will notice somewhat faster connections while working in an 802.11n network, Miller said. Devices can be adapted to take advantage of this wireless technology, he added.

“OIT is now planning for greater use of 802.11n technology on campus, taking care to track the efforts to finalize the standard,” Miller said. “In particular, Duke is planning for the use of 802.11n as a technical building block for next-generation classroom, library and social spaces.”

Miller and colleagues worked with counterparts from Cisco, supplier of the 802.11n equipment being tested at Duke, to configure the Epworth network. ([See Cisco's video about its work at Duke.](#))

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Top 10 FAQs from the OIT Service Desk

The OIT Service Desk averages about 7,700 contacts a month. Here are the most common questions — and their answers.

1. How do I get my NetID password? • Campus users can contact the OIT Service Desk at (919) 684-2200. • Medical Center users can contact the DHTS Help Desk at (919) 684-2243. In some cases, you may be required to appear in person and show a valid picture ID. Please visit the following link for more information: http://www.oit.duke.edu/netid-security/netid/help_forms/index.html 2. How do I connect to the network? Duke's campus has wired Ethernet connectivity in many locations as well as wireless connectivity in most nonresidential locations. A wireless availability guide can be found here: <http://www.oit.duke.edu/network/wireless/coverage/index> Once connected via wired or wireless to the Duke network you will have to register your machine at <http://netreg.duke.edu>. Please visit the following link for more information: <http://www.oit.duke.edu/network/> 3. My computer is broken. Where can I get it fixed? If you are a student and your computer was purchased through Duke within the past four years, you may drop it off for service at the OIT

Service Desk located on West Campus on the second floor of the Bryan Student Center. If you have a personal computer that was not purchased through Duke, you may contact the OIT Service Desk at (919) 684-2200, choose option 1, to schedule an appointment. Please visit the following links for more information: <http://www.oit.duke.edu/newtduke/undergrad/computers.html>

4. What can I do about all the spam I receive? Duke's email system has built-in spam filtering available. To turn on your spam filtering, please visit <http://www.duke.edu/online>.

5. How do I check my Duke email? In order to access Duke email you must have a valid NetID and password. Duke's IMAP mail system can be accessed using a variety of mail clients, including WebMail (webmail.duke.edu). The most common email clients are listed below:

- Mozilla Thunderbird
- OSX Mail
- Outlook Express
- Microsoft Outlook
- Mulberry

Please visit the following link for setup instructions for each client: http://www.oit.duke.edu/email_messaging/email/setup/index.html

6. How do I use ePrint? To setup ePrint you need to download and install the ePrint client from the OIT Site License Web page. Please visit the following link for more information: <http://www.oit.duke.edu/comp-print/printing/index.html>

7. Where do I access my personal Web space and file storage? The easiest method to access your NetID-based personal Web space and file storage is to visit <https://webfiles.duke.edu/>. Please visit the following link for more information: <http://www.oit.duke.edu/web-multimedia/web/webpage/index.html>

8. Where can I get help with Blackboard? You can request assistance for Blackboard by contacting the OIT Service Desk at (919) 684-2200 and choosing option 1. For detailed documentation on Blackboard, please visit <http://blackboard.duke.edu/>

9. How can I access restricted resources from off campus? If you are accessing information that is restricted to the Duke network, you'll need to use a VPN client or the library's EZ-Proxy system. Information restricted to the Duke network includes the following:

- e-Reserves or other library databases
- departmental IP-restricted servers
- HR/payroll data
- protected health information

Please visit the following links for more information: http://www.oit.duke.edu/comp-print/software/vpn_client.html <http://library.duke.edu/research/remote/ezproxy.html>

10. How do I change my directory information? The online directory page is located at <http://www.duke.edu/online>. From that page you may change certain directory information at any time. However, if you would like to change your name, title or home address information you will need to contact Human Resources.

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Duke Office of Information Technology - www.oit.duke.edu - (919) 684-2200 - help@oit.duke.edu