



Chris Turner, who graduated from Truman in 2006, spent the last year building Regator, a blog search engine. Photo courtesy of Regator

Alumnus devises Web site

BY KELLY KIESEL
Staff Reporter

He could be the next Larry Page or Sergey Brin, Google co-founders. Truman alumnus Chris Turner created Regator, a blog search engine that landed on a top 10 list of major technology sites in early August. Turner's work began in October of last year with the help of his sister, Kimberly Turner, and brother-in-law, Scott Lockhart. Chris used his five years of computer science experience to assist him, as well as his degree in painting to create the mascot for Regator — a cartoon alligator. Regator has been compared to Google and DIGG, although the difference is that Regator works strictly with blogs, Chris said. A blog is an online journal in which the owner maintains and continually adds entries. Regator first limited its site to real estate blogs, but then decided to add to it to attract more people. The self-funded site currently contains about 3,400 blogs from a range of categories. Once the team learned the basics, the ideas began to invent themselves, Chris said. Starting out with open source software was key in maintaining a low budget for his new business. Jon Beck, professor of computer science, said software like that used by Regator should be available to businesses that want to create Web

sites without paying fees for the program. "The idea behind open source software is that it should be freely available to be used, copied and modified by anyone in society," Beck said. As Editorial Director, Kimberly determines which blogs to present on Regator. She searches for blogs that are well-written, contain few spelling errors and are updated frequently. The blogs must also be topical so that they easily can be placed into a current category. "One day I may be searching for outstanding blogs about astronomy, the next day I could be reading about beekeeping or celebrity gossip," she said. "There's a lot of variety, and it keeps me on top of what's going on in the world." Students also are targeted by the newly redesigned site, Kimberly said. One blog section is designated for academics and includes subjects such as linguistics, astronomy and sociology. She said these and other topics provide students with research opportunities. Regator also has advanced features that allow users to share what was written, post information to Facebook and even listen to music, Kimberly said. With almost 500 topics to choose from, Chris said the site has something for everyone. Chris said one of Regator's main goals is to have a variety of features that attract people

who are good with technology while staying user-friendly for new visitors to the site. "We are all about high quality because we hand-pick our blogs. We are doing things that other people aren't doing and that makes us different," Chris said. A yearly voting contest for the Open Web awards, sponsored by Mashable, a top international technology site, has given recognition to Regator. Chris said Regator has made it through the first, second and third rounds of voting in its category and currently is in the running to become the winner. With coverage by sites such as Mashable, Regator has come to the attention of users in other countries as well as within the United States, Chris said. About half of Regator's traffic is international. This four-month-old site has had a lot of success as the user base has increased dramatically, Chris said. Currently, the site has almost enough users to be able to send out advertisements. As the site continues to grow, they will be able to target certain people's interests through selling ads, he said. These ads will then generate revenue. "It is a good time to do what we are doing," Chris said. "All it takes is an idea and action. For us, it was just three people in a house, and we got great results."

Contractor strikes pipe, causes gas leak

BY SARAH SCOTT
Staff Reporter

Gas in the southern portion of Kirksville and all of La Plata was turned off Wednesday when a contractor hit a gas pipe south of town. Steve Green, manager of public affairs at Atmos Energy, said they were not able to repair the line without shutting off gas to the southern part of the town. He said about 800 customers have been affected.

"We're calling in crews from Iowa, Illinois, Kentucky and southern Missouri that will be there working tonight [Wednesday] to get the people's gas turned back on," Green said. The gas leak was repaired by 6 p.m. Wednesday. Green said they didn't know how long it would take, but he expected it to be into Wednesday night before people had gas again.

"With the temperatures like they are, we will be working until we turn everybody on," Green said. He said Atmos wants customers to leave their porch lights on so the company knows the residents are expecting them. When they turn the gas back on, the company will have to go to each customer's house, turn each meter on, then go inside and light the customer's appliances and make sure everything is safe, Green said. "It'll be kind of slow," Green said.

Senior service technician for Atmos Tim Slaughter said he thinks the gas has been off since about 9:30 a.m. Wednesday. Slaughter said the affected area is from Osteopathy street to La Plata. Atmos has 10 people shutting

down meters in addition to those repairing the line. Residence halls were without hot water last Wednesday when the steam in the boiler room was shut off due to the gas leak. Missouri Hall director Zac Burden said the residence halls are run by different heating systems, and that the older dorms would be more apt to lose their entire heating system, affecting not only hot showers, but the dishwashers in the cafeteria. As of press time, the residence halls

were expecting the boiler system to be turned back on at 10 p.m. Wednesday. Boiler room foreman Raymond Phillips said that after turning the boilers back on, it could take about three hours for heat to be fully generated back into the system. Director of Public Works John Buckwalter said they had to shut off the water to a local building for repairs a

few days ago. He said apartment complexes have this problem fairly frequently because the apartments in the building are on the same line. Buckwalter said problems with pipes happen when there is a freeze and thaw cycle. He said this is more common in the service lines to a house and not the mains. "The wintertime is one of the worst times we have for leaks," Buckwalter said.

Junior Jessica Carr lives in an apartment affected by the gas and water problems. She said the temperature in her apartment is still in the upper 60s and is insulated well. She has electric blankets if it gets too cold. "It shouldn't be too bad by the time they get around to us," Carr said.

Survey reveals concern about computer skills

BY JULIE WILLIAMS
Editor in Chief

In some students eyes, the teaching of tech skills at Truman is behind the times. A computer literacy survey spearheaded by junior David Hayes, academic affairs chair for Student Senate, revealed that 70 percent of respondents did not think Liberal Studies Program classes increased their computer literacy or basic computer skills. The results were split 50-50 when respondents were asked if they thought the classes in their major had improved their computer skills. "Those are the main striking figures we saw," Hayes said. The survey was designed to find out how technologically well prepared students think they are when they enter Truman and how well the University has developed their skills by the time they leave. Hayes said the idea for the survey stemmed from the computer literacy requirement noted in Truman's course catalog. "My [Student Senate] committee is academic affairs, and this year we have been reviewing some of the aspects of the Senate's vision document [Areté]," he said. "One of the aspects

that's addressed in Arété is the computer literacy requirement." Included in the description of LSP requirements in the course catalog is a statement about computer literacy that identifies specific computer skills students should learn, and at what level of their education they should learn them. During Truman Week and New Student Programs, students are introduced to concepts like e-mail, library databases and copyright and privacy issues. In LSP and major curriculum, students should learn about word processing, spreadsheets, information retrieval and the legal and ethical use of technology in research, according to the catalog requirements. "It's pretty vague about how all of this is accomplished," Hayes said, adding that although the catalog recognizes these skills as important, no

specific requirements are set. Hayes said 186 students were surveyed at random in the library, Ryle Hall cafeteria and Student Union Building. "It was not an on-line survey because since it's testing computer literacy, the group thought that you might get a distorted sampling of just the people who thought they were online efficient," he said. The survey was conducted by seniors Harold Kaid and Georgia Mueller, junior Jeff Sanders and sophomore Ryan Adcock, all students in associate professor of statistics Scott Alberts' non-parametric statistics class. When these students complete a final draft of the survey results, Hayes said he intends to present the information to the undergraduate council. He said if the results were to show that many students feel that they are underpre-

pared in one specific area or program, that can be targeted for improvement in the future. After a full semester at Truman, freshman Rachel Strull said her computer knowledge is spotty in some areas. "I still don't really know how to use the library computer system, like Mobius and trying to find books," she said of one of the LSP requirements. Strull said she participated in the library activity during Truman Week but that because it only took about 30 minutes and was just shown to her once, a lot of the information didn't stick. "It was Truman Week, and I was just excited to be here," she said. Strull said she still feels OK about her basic knowledge of computers, including how to use programs like Microsoft Word and Excel. "I'm a pretty fast learner, and if someone can say, 'OK, here's the program you need,'" she said. For Bob Matthews, assistant professor of computer science, it's a concern that Truman students might feel technologically underprepared by the University, but he said he thinks if there's any fear associated with that feeling, it's unfounded.

"I think that any graduate worth their salt should be able to take a piece of software that's necessary for their field and learn it on their own," he said. Matthews said he thinks the most important thing for students to learn regarding technology is the basic knowledge. "I think it's a mistake, especially at a liberal arts college like Truman, to aim for a specific set of concrete skills in our graduates," Matthews said. "We're turning out graduates that have to be able to adapt to a changing workforce." In computer science courses like the ones Matthews teaches, he said students are not so much taught how to use specific pieces of technology as they are taught basic skills that will help them adapt to technology that might not even be invented yet. "The thing about the world of technology is that it changes extremely fast, and it's very difficult for people in the field to keep up, let alone people whose field is not information technology," he said. "... The important thing is to be able to identify the technology that is important in your field and have the ability to learn it and apply it."

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Bob Matthews
Assistant Professor of Computer Science

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