

Brainify hits the Internet

A new Web site provides the forum for academic social bookmarking

BY MARGARET HOOPER
Assistant News Editor

A new social program will use Web 2.0 to help students achieve a 4.0.

Murray Goldberg, a computer science professor at the University of British Columbia, created Brainify to help students connect and share academic resources. The site, which launched roughly three weeks ago, is modeled after mainstream social bookmarking sites such as StumbleUpon, but limits its membership to those with university e-mail addresses and organizes links based on academic discipline.

Goldberg, who previously developed WebCT, a program similar to Blackboard, said students often are limited to interacting with individuals in their own class or university, even though students around the world are taking the same courses and learning the same material.

"Even with tools like [WebCT], there's very tall walls built around the classroom, which makes it hard for students to connect," Goldberg said.

He said the idea for Brainify developed as he watched his students utilize the Internet with greater frequency and success.

"Students, if they had a question, before coming to me they would go look it up on the Web, and that's good," Goldberg said. "There's so much out there."

With the explosion of academic material on the Web and the popularity of Web 2.0 technologies, Goldberg said he decided to develop a network where students and faculty could interact with each other and amass the most useful sites on the Web in one place.

He also decided to limit the user base to those with an academic e-mail address, at least initially, to help preserve the integrity of the site as it develops. He said that so far, traffic has been heavier than he expected, considering how few people know about the site, and the visitors have been predominately faculty.

"Most of the people signing up so far are not students, they're faculty members, and I think that's because we haven't gotten the word out yet to students," Goldberg said.

He said he hopes to see the site

grow steadily over the next few years because more users means more resources.

"It just works better the larger it gets," Goldberg said. "It would be an incredible success with half a million or a million students."

Instructional designer Diane Richmond said more and more of Truman's professors use Web-based tools, such as Blackboard, in the classroom each semester.

"Roughly half of our faculty currently use Blackboard in ways that range from a place to simply post a syllabus and class schedule to full-out online courses," Richmond said.

In addition to Blackboard, Truman hosts many professor Web sites and offers TruTube, a multimedia conversion tool that allows faculty to embed audio and video clips on Truman's Web pages.

Others look outside the Truman server for Web resources to enhance their classes.

"Many faculty make use of a wide variety of other wild Web-based services such as blogs and wikis, as well as collaborative document sharing as is found in Google-Docs," Richmond said.

She said she has seen professors utilize YouTube, Merlot.org, Linked-In, Moodle and a host of other sites. Some professors even have experimented with Delicious.com and Diigo.com, mainstream social bookmarking sites which Brainify would like to supplant in the academic setting.

"Social bookmarking is an emerging trend here, though of course we don't have good numbers on this as faculty typically do this type of thing on their own," Richmond said. "Brainify looks to be an exciting addition to that playing field as it is targeted right to education."

Sophomore Seth Donaldson said he has used Blackboard and Moodle in classes with mixed results. He said he would like to see students and faculty use Web-based programs more often so that they will run into fewer problems caused by not knowing how to use the software.

"I think it's helpful when the teacher uses it right, but sometimes the teacher will say to use stuff on [Blackboard] and then it won't work right all of the time, so it makes it kind of difficult that way," Donaldson said. "I still think there's a lot more we can do with [Web-based programs], it's a work in progress."

Poetry slam



Junior Amber Jones, diversity chair for the women's resource center, recites her poem "Lost Baby Poem" at the poetry slam last Wednesday. The Poetry Slam, which was sponsored by the women's resource center, offers writers the chance to read their original poetry before a group of their peers. Brian O'Shaughnessy/Index

Congress debates loan limits

BY SARAH SCOTT
Staff Reporter

If Congress passes the American Recovery and Reinvestment Bill of 2009, students will have access to more government loan money.

The House of Representatives passed the American Recovery and Reinvestment plan Jan. 28, followed by the Senate on Wednesday. This bill, which is now headed for a joint committee, calls for \$275 billion in tax cuts and puts \$550 billion in investments into the American economy. If it passes, part of this bill will raise Stafford loan limits.

Financial Aid Director Kathy Elsea said the total amount of Stafford loans used by Truman students was more than \$12 million this year.

More than 3,000 students receive Subsidized Stafford Loans, unsubsidized loans or both. Elsea said she thinks more than half of Truman's students use Stafford loans, but that some of them take more loans than they really need.

"They probably don't do strict enough budgeting to say, 'This is exactly what my costs are going to be, these are my resources,'" Elsea said.

She said she's not very concerned about more students taking more loans than they need if the limit is raised.

"Hopefully it will help them not take a private loan," Elsea said.

Elsea said Stafford loans are preferable to private loans because the government does not regulate private loans so the interest rate typically is higher. They require a cosigner and interest accrues on them from the time the loan is received.

"A lot of parents are pretty stretched, financially, right now," Elsea said. "They are unable or unwilling

to take on additional cosigning, that type of thing." She said in addition to Stafford loans, students use approximately \$1.5 million in Parent Plus loans.

"That shows some additional family need," Elsea said. "After people have taken out their Stafford loan limits, there's still some additional need there."

She said parents could take out a Parent Plus loan instead of or in addition to a Stafford loan.

Elsea said the limits were raised an additional \$2,000 for unsubsidized Stafford loans this past summer.

She said the financial aid office sent out an e-mail when this happened to notify students that they could raise their student loan limits.

"That came in handy for quite a few of our students and also incoming freshmen for this year," Elsea said.

She said she doesn't like pushing loan money, but that Stafford loans have more advantages than private loans. Most students pay back their Stafford loans in 10 years, but some take 20 years, she said.

Freshman Tyler McClellan said he has about \$3,000 in loans right now. He said he didn't take the full amount of the Stafford loan he was offered because he received scholarships.

McClellan said he doesn't see himself ever using all of the money he will be offered if the bill passes, but he can see himself using some of that extra money.

Spokesman Keith Beardslee said Sen. Blaine Luetkemeyer (R-Mo.) voted against the \$800 billion spending package last week. He said all Republicans and 11 Democrats in the house voted against it.

"[Luetkemeyer] believes that it is foolish to force mountains of debt upon our children and grandchildren," Beardslee said. "And it is dangerous if we begin supporting the idea that we can borrow and spend our way back to prosperity."

Classifieds

Rates: On-Campus: \$3 per ad/ Off-Campus: \$5 per ad

For Rent

For Rent: Wagner Enterprises rental properties are available for 2009/2010 lease. New units from one to four bedrooms are all within two blocks of campus! Complete with washer/dryer in each, all electric, central heat and air, private parking, and maintenance staff. For more information call: 660-627-5437.

For Rent: Three-, and four-bedroom houses. Within walking distance of campus. All newly remodeled. Available May 1. Contact 660-216-3803.

For Rent: Great one-bedroom apartment right next to campus. \$325. Others just a little further away- \$285. Call 627-2060 for more information.

For Rent: Two-, three-, and four-bedroom houses. Close to campus. Refrigerator, stove and washer/dryer. Call Kevin at 216-6618.

For Rent: One-bedroom apartment with one bath, central air, washer/dryer hook-up, located behind Domino's Pizza on East Patterson. Newly remodeled. \$300/month. Call 660-66-2796 M-F 8-5

For Rent: Two-bedroom apartment available for sublease. May 15 to Aug 15 (can be discussed). Central air, washer/dryer, and close to TSU. \$530/month, but can be negotiated. Call 314-368-8057 for information.

For Rent: Foxfire townhouses Two-bedrooms, all electric, water & trash paid, stove, refrigerator, wall unit a/c, off street parking, \$450 units with w/d hookups, \$475 units with washer & dryer. Leasing now for May, June, July & August 2009. Call Ken Read, Owner/Broker 660-626-5488 or Heritage House Realty 660-665-5638 or view rentals at www.kirksvillerealestate.com.

For Rent: White Apartments- two-bedroom apartments, just two left! Call 627-2060 for more information.

For Rent

For Rent: Nice two- and three-bedroom apartments only \$360 to \$450. Well maintained. Coin laundry on site. Call 627-2060 for more information.

For Rent: Available exceptionally nice four-, five-, and seven-bedroom houses for '09-'10 school term. Beautiful kitchen, large bedrooms. All appliances, including washer/dryer. Walking distance to campus. Pets allowed upon approval. 660-665-3779

For Rent: Three-, to four-bedroom apartment, one and a half block from campus. Central air, washer/dryer, off-street parking. 660-341-1805. Also, two-bedroom apartment in complex.

For Rent: Call Kirksville Property Management for apartments, duplexes and houses! We have several available for May and August leases, many close to campus. Visit our new office, conveniently located downtown at 106 E Washington, or check out our listings on our website at www.KirksvilleProperty-Management.com. Call today for your appointment 660-665-6380

For Rent: Three one-bedroom efficiency apartments with stove and refrigerator, water/trash. Close to TSU. Off-street parking. Available Aug 1. Two for \$235/month and one for \$265/month plus utilities. Call 660-216-1952. Broker/owner.

For Rent: Spacious two-bedroom apartment available to sublease for summer 2009. On-site laundry, appliances include dishwasher and microwave. Comes semi-furnished at \$465/month. Other expenses include water, electricity, and internet (if desired). Walking distance from campus in Waterworks building 704. Call 314-808-4766 for more info or a showing.

For Rent: Vista Heights. One- and two-bedroom units still available. Call Kellie Nigh at 665-9224 or 626-3914

For Rent

For Rent: Nice two- and three-bedroom units in the Water Works, Boardwalk, Park Place, St. James, and New York apartments. All within walking distance of Truman. Call Four Horizons, Inc. at 660-665-3400

For Rent: One to two-bedroom apartment approximately two blocks from TSU. All utilities included. No Pets. \$350/month. Available Aug 2009. Call Corey Sanford 660-665-9848 or leave message.

For Rent: Cable included! Washer and dryer included! 2 bedroom, 1 bath, total electric, central Air, dishwasher, stove, refrigerator,, in brick 8-plex close to campus, all for \$450. Call Kirksville Property Management at 660.665.6380

For Rent: Four-bedroom home, two bath/shower, washer/dryer, big kitchen, new appliances. Huge living room and dining room, hardwood floors. Close to TSU. \$725/month. This house is huge. May 2009 lease. Pets welcome. 660-216-1445

For Rent: New two-bedroom duplex apartments. Near downtown. Walk-in closet, washer/dryer, dishwasher, refrigerator, range, central air, garbage disposal, outside storage. May and Aug availability. \$400. 665-2796, M-F 8-5.

For Rent: Cozy two-bedroom, one bath house close to TSU. This home has hardwood floors, carport, washer/dryer, and central air. Available May 2009 for \$425/month. Call Jeff Behrmann owner-agent 660-626-7598 or visit www.housesinkirksville.com

For Rent: Sublease for second semester only. Gather a few friends for exceptionally nice home. All appliances, including washer/dryer. Also, very nice four-bedroom house within walking distance, at discounted rate. 660-665-3779

For Rent

For Rent: One-, two-, and four-bedroom houses and apartments. New carpet, and no pets. 660-342-5585 before 5 p.m. or 660-627-5917 after 5 p.m.

For Rent: Exceptionally nice one-, two-, and three-bedrooms houses for the next term. Some with new cabinetry and carpet. Some walking distance from campus. Pets allowed upon approval. Deposit holds. 660-665-3779

For Rent: Nice house! Four-bedroom, 2 1/2 bath, located near TSU and KCOM on a quiet street. Great for family or rental. \$84,500. Contact 636-734-2140 or 217-553-6154 for more details.

For Rent: Downtown apartment! Four large bedrooms next to the new Picklers Famous. \$800. Call Kirksville Property Management at 660-665-6380

For Rent: Attention professional students: Multiple high quality two- and three-bedroom modern affordable apartments with countless amenities available immediately, currently available for May 2009, June 2009, and August 2009 leases. Locations are all in an established "safe" residential/rent progressive area of the city. This beautiful complex is all electric (no gas price fluctuation or asphyxiation worries) and is geared for professional conscientious individuals who place a high emphasis on safety, privacy, and an attractive surrounding less than 5 minute commute from campus. Please call 626-7695 for details. Student references gladly given on request.

For Rent: Nice two-, and three-bedroom apartments only \$360 to \$450. Well maintained. Coin laundry on site. Call 627-2060

Wanted

Wanted: Would like to lease a horse to mature individual who has an interest in riding and enjoying horses. Reasonable contract. Tina 660-216-0777.