MERLOT From the Vineyard

Issue 4, April 2005

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From Your Wine Steward
Gerry Hanley

We're looking forward to seeing you in Nashville to celebrate at the MERLOT International Conference, our 5th anniversary as a nationwide consortium! MERLOT continues to mature as a community and the upcoming Editors' Council Meeting and Project Directors' Meeting reflects the growing wealth of experience and vision around how to serve faculty and students' teaching and learning needs better.

I believe the Editors' work in reviewing and selecting the MERLOT award winners reflects a fundamental principle of MERLOT: Recognizing the people whose work exemplifies a deep understanding of quality learning and teaching as a "good" method to excite and instruct faculty in improving their own teaching. The Project Directors' work in planning MERLOT's priorities and initiatives reflect our fundamental principle that MERLOT is a leadership community that learns, plans, and acts together and by doing so, produce better plans and outcomes. I greatly appreciate the time and efforts that the Editors and Project Directors will be spending at our upcoming meetings and so will the hundreds of thousands of MERLOT users each year.

MERLOT is also maturing in its relationships with other organizations and companies. The Open Source Blackboard Building Block for MERLOT Search reflects one strategy for getting the good work of MERLOT Editorial Boards out to the faculty users around the world. This increase in awareness of MERLOT can become a way to find more "like-minded" faculty who can join your efforts in making MERLOT better. The Open Source nature of the technology will enable the entire LMS and MERLOT community to improve and freely share these improvements. To view the press release, please go to, http://biz.yahoo.com/iw/050412/084405.html

I look forward to seeing many of you in May. My best wishes for a successful completion of your spring 2005 semester or quarter.

Meetings of Note

Project Directors' Council Annual Meeting
On May 4 – 6, the MERLOT Project Directors will be holding their annual planning meeting at the Fashion Institute of Technology. In the next Vineyard, we'll be sure to include photos of the outfits that were modeled! All teasing aside, the Project Directors will be engaged in several days of in-depth review of MERLOT's past year and planning for the upcoming. Thanks to Peter Shea and SUNY for hosting this meeting!

Editors' Council Annual Meeting
On May 13 – 15, the MERLOT Editors' Council will be meeting in Rapid City, South Dakota. At this meeting, the Editors review and select the Editors' Choice Awards. This is also the time the Editors work together on improving the peer review process, community building processes, and discuss how to help MERLOT grow. If you have ideas or suggestions, be sure to let your editor know what they are so that he or she can pass them on. Thanks to Kurt Cogswell and the great State of South Dakota for hosting us!

Update on MERLOT

MERLOT International Conference – July 25-28, in Nashville, Tennessee

http://conference.merlot.org/conference/2005/

The MIC is fast approaching and so is the creation of the final program. This year, well over 180 proposals were received! Unfortunately, there's only so much space available, so we were able to schedule: 7 Workshops, 8 Panels, 5 Design Review sessions and 48 Concurrent Sessions. Every year, the competition grows –the program truly reflects the best of the best!

Of special note – this year we will hold a **special workshop for Editorial Board members on Monday, July 25 from 8:00 am to noon.** The workshop will focus on the role of the editorial board, how it's changed and where it's headed in the future. We will look at new aspects of the peer review process, e.g., reusability and what we've learned about potential effectiveness in teaching. We'll also examine the other work editorial board members do from recruiting and training volunteers to making presentations. We'll review many of the new services offered by MERLOT, the portals, snapshots, and Virtual Speakers Bureau. This workshop is free to all members of the boards and we invite you to attend. The editors are helping to plan this workshop, so if you have suggestions or comments, be sure to pass them on! Watch your email for more information on how to sign up.

JOLT – the Journal of Online Learning and Teaching

Co-editors, Tracey Penny-Light and Ed Perry report that they have received their first articles and are reviewing them for release of the first issue in June 2005. If you have an article 'in the making' be sure to contact Tracey or Ed to learn about how to publish in JOLT at: tracy@temagami.uwaterloo.ca or eperry@memphis.edu. Look for the Call for Papers soon to be found on the MERLOT home page. Lynda Tran of the CSU Chancellor's office created the JOLT design.

Discipline Portals

Portal Editors have been working very hard, readying their portal pages for posting. CUDA has been working hard with the editors to make sure all the 'clicks' and links work like well oiled machines. Check out the new Biology and Business portals. Look for Health Sciences, Teacher Education, Music and World Languages soon! These folks have worked long and hard on this very important project – Kudos to everyone involved!

Technical Update #1: Searching MERLOT

The MERLOT hit list page has a new look to better support searches! Now you will find category matches displayed at the top of the search results page along with the material matches. A user clicking on a category match can see the materials that fall within that topic, without having other materials that happen to have the word in it (like statics and electrostatics). This alleviates the problem users previously had when they were presented with a list of materials that 'happened to' have the search term in it, whether or not it fit the category. The hit list page user interface has been substantially altered to support this change. We are confident that you will find it to be a step forward for searching.

Technical Update #2: The "New" MERLOT

The development team has been putting forth a huge effort to create a new version of MERLOT with many important changes and improvements. Most recently, they have begun to focus on the Workflow functionality for peer reviews. Barbra Bied Sperling will be showcasing some of the changes and improvements at the Editor's meeting in May.

We are on track for delivering the new MERLOT at or around the MIC this year. When complete, the new version of MERLOT (completely rewritten and rethought from the ground up) will incorporate many improvements suggested by you, our community, and an up to date technical architecture designed to grow with us in the future. Thanks to the development team for all of their efforts!

MERLOT Virtual Speakers Bureau

The Member Directory page now links to a VSB search of members. It also discusses the benefits of participating in the VSB and how to locate or become a guest expert listed in the bureau. (http://www.merlot.org/person/VSBDirectory.po). The search results only lists those MERLOT members who have voluntarily identified themselves as Guest Experts in the Virtual Speakers Bureau. To highlight details on their areas of expertise, VSB members can also add the titles of their presentations.

Help use spread the word about the VSB service – it's a great virtual resource!

Getting to Know our Editors

Bernd Schröder, Associate Editor, MERLOT Mathematics Editorial Board and Professor of Mathematics – Louisiana Tech University
http://www2.latech.edu/~schroder/

Bernd joined the MERLOT mathematics discipline team upon its inception in the summer of 2000. One of his motivations for joining MERLOT was his involvement in the design of integrated engineering and science curricula at Louisiana Tech University (http://www.latech.edu/tech/engr/). What better way to find high quality on-line learning materials than by reviewing materials submitted (and thus already found to be useful) by faculty and other trained professionals? Bernd finds the materials he reviewed have had a positive impact on his classes; as a result, he is always happy to point people to MERLOT as the place to take the 'hit-and-miss' out of looking for high-quality applets!

Currently, Bernd is writing an integrated precalculus-calculus-differential equations text with some statistics. The development of these texts turned his research focus from pure mathematics towards education at a very practical level. With print-on-demand, Bernd says this project has great potential for rapid improvement and adaptation to individual needs. As the high intensity text development winds down, Bernd looks forward to getting back to his research in ordered sets.

Louisiana Tech University has been very supportive of his educational focus. It's a unique place where an interdisciplinary approach is implemented as part of the culture. For someone like Bernd, who started out in physics (almost in engineering or computer science), then was drawn to mathematics and who always liked to explain things, it is the perfect environment. Professor Schröder is the Program Chair of Mathematics and Statistics and holds the Edmondson/Crump professorship.

Editorial Board Changes

We are sad to report that Terry Ortiz (St. Petersburg College) has notified us that at the end of this summer she will no longer be able to lead the Information Technology Editorial Board. Terry has led the Information Technology board since its inception and has been an active member of the Editors' Council. Her insights, suggestions and creativity will be missed. Please join us in wishing Terry good luck with her new challenges. Terry, we send you a toast with a virtual glass of Merlot!

Out and About with MERLOT

Honors, Awards and Grants

Bill Paquette, MERLOT History Editor has been awarded an NEH Summer Institute Grant to participate in "American Cities and Public Spaces." The Summer Institute will be held at the Library of Congress in Washington, DC. Professor Paquette has also been awarded an NEH Landmarks of American History Workshop Grant for study of the Alamo.

Maureen Hannay, Ron Purser and Cathy Swift won the award for Best Paper at the Troy University Business Research Symposium held at Sandestin, Florida in February 2005. Titled: *The Virtual Team: The Challenges of Building Alliances from a Distance,* the paper was about their experiences building the Business Editorial Board's virtual team.

Presentations and Publications

Susan Moncada –Assistant Editor of Accounting, Carol Jessup and Ingrid Ulstadt – Peer Reviewers in Accounting. (March 2005). *How Accounting Education Can Benefit from MERLOT.* Presented at the North American Accounting Association of the Midwest Business Administration Association.

Bill Paquette and Tracy Penny Light – History Co-Editors. (April 2, 2005). *Teaching Hybrid and Online History Surveys using Merlot's History Portal Page*. Presented at the Organization of American Historians in San Jose, CA.

Phil Moss – Oklahoma Project Director, Bruce Mason – Physics Editor, and Jim Bidlack – Biology Associate Editor. (April 7, 2005). *Collaboration and Technology in Teaching and Learning*. Workshop presented to faculty and academic staff involved in Oklahoma's statewide *Academic Efficiencies* initiative.

Bruce Brown – Management Associate Editor, Idanna Hamilton – Teaching and Technology Peer Reviewer and Laura Franklin – World Languages Editor. (April 7 – 9). *Testimonials on how MERLOT has been used to supplement both their instructional message and collegial relationships at the Virginia Community College System*. Presented at the New Horizons Conference in Roanoke, VA.

Bill Paquette – History Co-Editor. (April 9, 2005). *Teaching Hybrid and Online History Surveys using MERLOT's History Portal Page*. Presented at the New Horizons Conference in Roanoke, VA.

Cathy Swift – Business Editor. (April 15, 2005). *Using MERLOT in the Marketing Classroom*. Presented at the Marketing Educators Association meeting in San Diego, CA.

Neil Kestner – Chemistry Editor, and Flora McMartin – MERLOT. (April 19, 2005). *MERLOT: Collaborative Communities for Resource Sharing.* Presented at THE: Teaching in Higher Education Forum in Baton Rouge, LA.

Upcoming Presentations

April 27, 2005. Gerry Hanley – MERLOT Executive Director, Glenda Morgan – California Project Director and Flora McMartin – MERLOT Membership Services and Evaluation Director. *Beyond Disenchanted Innovation: Using MERLOT to Promote Institutional Change and Effective Technology Use.* EDUCAUSE Western Regional Conference, San Francisco, CA. EDUCAUSE Western Regional Conference, San Francisco, CA.

April 28, 2005. Toru Iiyoshi – Carnegie Foundation, Alyssa LaLanne – MERLOT, and Flora McMartin, MERLOT. *E-Portfolios: Research and Practices.* EDUCAUSE Western Regional Conference, San Francisco, CA. EDUCAUSE Western Regional Conference, San Francisco, CA

April 28, 2005. Ray Purdom – Teaching & Technology Editor – *A Taste of MERLOT.* North Carolina A&T Teaching Showcase.

May 6, 2005. Susan Moncada –Assistant Editor of Accounting. *Web Enhanced Learning - Using the Web in Your Classroom*. A continuing professional education session at the Indiana CPA Society' 2005 Educators Conference

MERLOT Statistics

The statistics reported here are totals as of March 31, 2005

Collection

11,547	# items in Collection
1,669	# of Peer Reviews
24,108	# of Registered Users

Usage Statistics January - March

430,579	# unique visitors
22.4%	Visitor repeat rate
904	Avg. # visits
8	Avg. # pages/visit
5:16 min	Avg. duration of visit

Interested in writing something for *From the Vineyard* or adding news and updates? *From the Vineyard* is published every other month (February, April, June, August, October and December). Getting your information in print is easy. Send your submission to webmaster@merlot.org by the first Wednesday of the month in which you wish it to be published. We appreciate copy ready materials – unfortunately, we can't publish all articles/stories in each issue; if you don't see your story in the issue, we promise to try to get it into the next!