

ITS NEWS

SPRING 2006

- PAGE 1: TIPS & TRICKS**
PAGE 2: SECURITY BASELINE/WHO'S NEW
PAGE 3: STAFF PROFILE
**PAGE 4: EMERGING TECHNOLOGY/
PASSPHRASES/REASON TIPS**
**PAGE 5: SEEING NUMBERS/
NEW DATA CENTER**
**PAGE 6: WEB ACCESSIBILITY/
SPAM STRATEGY**

CONTACT INFORMATION

Computing Assistance for
Academic Faculty and Staff: **x5999**

Computing Assistance for
Administrative Staff: **x4547**

Computing Assistance
for Students: **x4040**

www.carleton.edu/campus/ITS

ITS News, Volume 3 - No. 1

Editor: Phoebe Larson

Contributors: Joel Cooper, Lauren Garrison,
Jaye Lawrence, Sande Nissen, Andrea Nixon,
Sue Traxler, Nathan Westlake

Photographer: Nathan Westlake



TIPS & TRICKS

WORKING WITH MULTIPLE TABS IN FIREFOX AND MOZILLA

Some people visit a number of Web sites daily. In this case, it is helpful to use bookmarks and Firefox's tab functionality to open them at the same time. The following steps will accomplish this:

1. Open the first site you want to add to the list (e.g. www.bbcnews.com).
2. Go to Bookmarks and Bookmark This Page.
3. Create a new bookmarks folder in which to put the bookmark. To do this, click on the small downward-pointing triangle next to the list of bookmark folders. This will expand the window into a list of bookmark folders and an additional button that says New Folder. Click on New Folder and enter a suitable collective name for your sites (e.g. News). Click add.
4. Repeat steps 1 and 2 for the other sites you want to bookmark. Add these bookmarks to the folder you created in step three.
5. Whenever you need to open all the sites in the bookmark folder at once, go to Bookmarks on the menu and then right click on the bookmark folder you created. Select Open in Tabs. Firefox will open all the sites in the bookmark folder in separate tabs.

Useful keyboard shortcuts for working with tabs in Firefox and Mozilla

- **Function:** Switch from one tab to the next
PC: Ctrl + tab
Mac: control + tab
- **Function:** Switch from one tab to the next in reverse order
PC: Ctrl + shift + tab
Mac: control + shift + tab
- **Function:** Close a tab
PC: Ctrl + w
Mac: apple + w
- **Function:** Open a new tab
PC: Ctrl + t
Mac: apple + t

An alternative to these methods is to set a group of pages as your home pages. They will all open in tabs every time you open a new browser window. You can simply read and close each tab without bothering with a slew of URLs. To do this, open the group of pages in your browser that you want to set as your home group. Go to the Tools menu and choose Options. In the General tab under the Home Page(s) section, click the Use Current Pages button.

That's it! Note that you can see in the text box above this button the URLs of the pages you have chosen, separated by a vertical bar | (e.g. www.slashdot.org|www.nytimes.com). The order of the tabs is the same as the order of the URLs, but they can be rearranged to fit a user's preferences.

USEFUL AND EASY SHORTCUTS

An old-fashioned way to cut, copy, or paste is using the Edit menu. This method can be irritating if you have to perform it repeatedly. Fortunately, there are keyboard shortcuts that will cut, copy, paste, and undo typing. First highlight the text that you want to edit. To cut it, use Ctrl+x. To copy, paste, or undo typing, use Ctrl+c, Ctrl+v, or Ctrl+z respectively. On a Macintosh, use the Apple key in place of the Control key.

Pg. 1

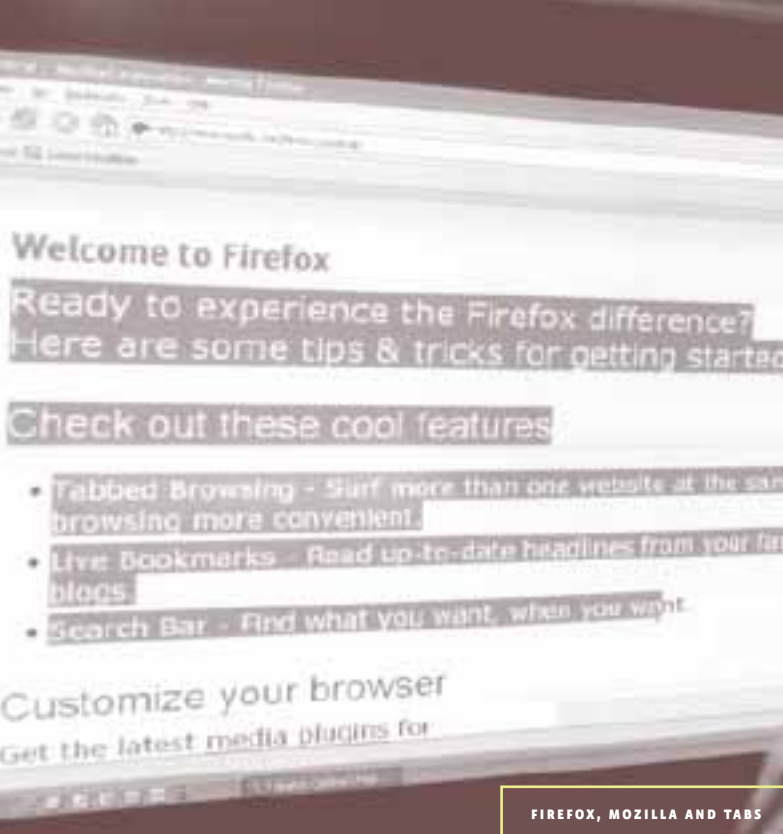
INTRODUCTION

ITS has had a busy winter, cooking up strategies against spam, developing tips for common sense security, and moving to the new data center, which is fully completed and equipped with a non-water based fire system.

Meanwhile, Gould Library and ITS staff members teamed up to offer insight into data visualization tools (pg. 5), and Tips & Tricks provides suggestions for working with tabs in Firefox and Mozilla.

The Web services group offers advice on Reason and Web accessibility, and we meet Nathan White, Carleton's new Web application developer in Who's New (pg. 2). Julie McFadden, systems engineer, and Patty Olson, ITS user support specialist, are featured in Staff Profiles (pg. 3).

We hope you'll take some time to read and enjoy this latest issue of ITS News.



FIREFOX, MOZILLA AND TABS



KEYBOARD SHORTCUTS



NATHAN WHITE

CLOSING OR OPENING WINDOWS

When you are working on a Word document or browsing the Internet, one method to close the window that you were using is to click on the 'x' on the top right hand side of the window. An easier way to close the window is by pressing Alt+F4. This will immediately close the window that you were using. If you need a new window when you are using any of Microsoft's office software or an Internet browser, Control + N will bring up a new window.

Sue Traxler is associate director of administrative computing.

SECURITY BASELINE

In order to remain secure, home computers must be kept constantly up-to-date. Brian Livingston at WindowSecrets.com publishes an evolving security baseline that offers new hardware and software recommendations every month. While his advice is specific to PCs running Windows, his security principles apply to any personally owned computer.

Livingston's first Security Baseline article, which explains his thinking, is available online at <http://windowssecrets.com/comp/050113/#top1>. His latest recommendations are always available at www.windowsecrets.com/current. Choose the Security Baseline link from the Index on the right.

The following is an excerpt from his first article, which describes the basic hardware and software applications needed to protect one's home computer.

These are the minimum hardware devices and software applications that are currently needed by any individual or company that connects a PC to the Internet:

1. Hardware firewall to make your systems invisible to "port scans" by hackers;
2. Software firewall to prevent worms from sneaking in or communicating out via your Internet connection;

3. Antivirus program to detect and eliminate infected files and e-mail attachments;
4. Antispam filter to prevent obviously bogus e-mail messages from reaching your Inbox and tempting you to click links to crooked Web sites;
5. Anti-adware scanner to delete adware, spyware, and browser hijackers in your system and prevent them from getting control in the future.
6. Update-management software to handle today's constant stream of patches and upgrades, whether the choice is Windows Update for individuals or a small-business or corporate package to handle 5 to 5,000 PCs.

Look for further advice and comments to these security points in regard to the Carleton environment in the next issue of ITS News.

Sande Nissen is PC and network systems administrator at Carleton.

WHO'S NEW?

Spotlight on New Employees

NATHAN WHITE

Nathan White, a native of Stillwater, Minnesota, arrived at Carleton last November, joining the College Relations department as Web application developer. He attended Grinnell College in Iowa, where he majored in American studies with a concentration in technology studies. "I've always been interested in whether or not technology is usable by people and the ethics of who has access to technology and who doesn't," says White. This concern led him to work in a Minneapolis program teaching technology skills to recent immigrants to the United States. More recently, he worked at Oregon Health and Science University in Portland at the Northwest Americans with Disabilities Act and Information Technology Center, where he coordinated the accessible information technology program.

White recently moved to Northfield. His two cats, Brutus and Stryder, don't appreciate Minnesota's cold weather. When he's not working, White enjoys traveling, fishing, billiards, lucid dreams, and yo-yoing.

Lauren Garrison is a senior at Carleton.



JULIE MCFADDEN



PATTY OLSON



STAFF PROFILE:

JULIE MCFADDEN

Julie McFadden, systems engineer, has been part of Carleton's ITS team for five years. Web development is one of her many interests. She also enjoys competing in in-line skating marathons and has competed in more than a dozen marathons to date, traveling as far as Montreal for races. A studio art major in college, McFadden jokes about her "accidental career" in ITS.

What brought you to the field of Internet and technology?

I developed an interest in computing through a series of jobs I held with Funco, Inc., a new and used video game and video game hardware company based in Minneapolis. I started there in the merchandizing department, and because I had a general knowledge of computing, I began working with an early version of desktop publishing. From there I went into point-of-sale technology support and finally into management information systems. Before coming to Carleton, I worked as a network administrator for the St. Paul public schools. My career path evolved to where I am today.

What does your job at Carleton entail?

My current role is related to Windows server administration and project management, and I perform the Windows server administration. I research what type of hardware the servers

need to build security, I build the actual systems, and I work with the departments once they're up and running to troubleshoot any problems. Everyone on campus uses the Windows server without realizing it. Inter library loan and e-reserves, the Office of Admissions' recruitment program, facilities work requests, financial aid, and food service all run on Windows servers. The new one-card system will also run on a Windows server.

What do you like most about your position?

I like the problem-solving aspects. This position allows me to use some of the creativity I have from my art background. I look at every problem as a puzzle. They all have solutions; it's just a matter of how to go about it.

What do you find most exciting about technology?

The merging of media technologies is fascinating right now, especially given how it is being used in classroom technologies. Everything—voice, video, and music—is starting to come together on a common interface. In a couple years we'll have one device that serves as our palm pilot, cell phone, computer, and iPod. We're verging on the Star Trek age.

Interviewed by Phoebe Larson, a writer and editor at Carleton.

STAFF PROFILE:

PATTY OLSON

Patty Olson, ITS user support specialist, grew up in southern Minnesota and attended Mankato Commercial College. She came to Carleton in 1973 as a recorder in the Office of the Registrar. Six months later, she transferred to the data processing department where she worked as a computer operator.

What does your current position as user support specialist entail?

I assist administrative clients who use Colleague by helping them with processes and reports. For the last few years I have also been supervising approximately 30 student workers.

How has ITS changed since you've been at Carleton?

In 1973 there were about 1,600 Carleton students, and only seven employees in the data processing department. Key punch and cards, a sorting machine, and a collator were used to input and process data. Reports were printed on continuous form paper and a burster was used to separate the pages. I've seen a few changes!

What do you enjoy most about your job?

I enjoy working with the student workers, Colleague clients, and the ITS staff. I also enjoy the variety of day-to-day tasks I perform. There's always a new application to learn.

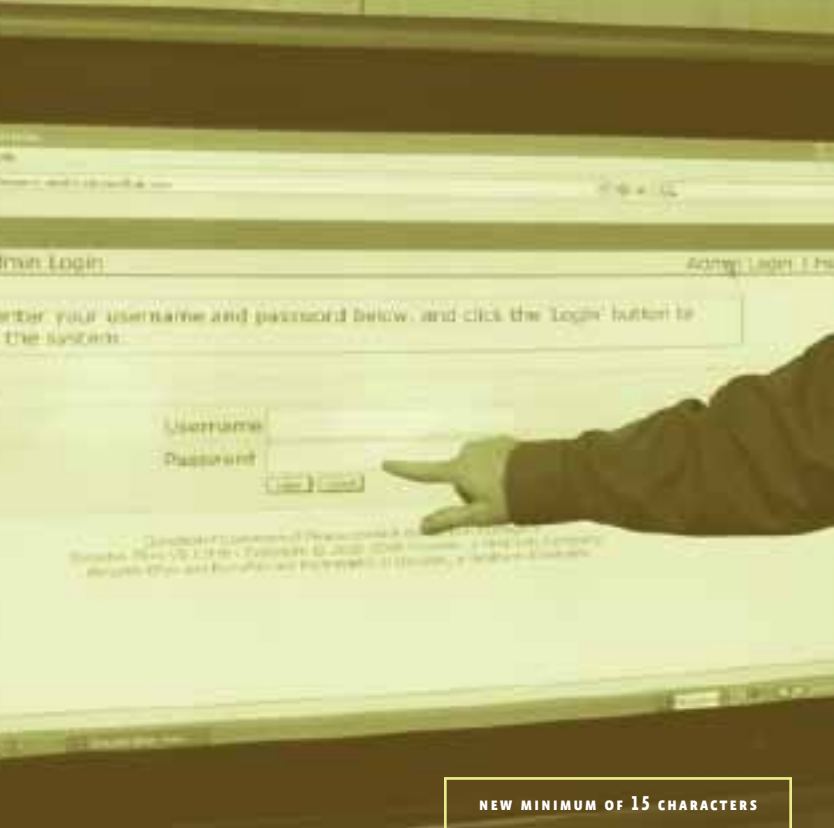
What do you enjoy outside of work?

I have two granddaughters who are the light of my life. At home, I spend my spare time gardening and being outside. During the winter months I also do some needlework.

If you could retire tomorrow, what would you do?

I would travel and perform more volunteer work.

Interviewed by Lauren Garrison, a senior at Carleton.



NEW MINIMUM OF 15 CHARACTERS

EMERGING TECHNOLOGY

UPDATE: COURSE MANAGEMENT SELECTION PROCESS UNDERWAY

This term 20 faculty members have opted to use one of the two course management systems, Sakai or Moodle, that ITS is testing for use on campus. One brave soul has even opted to use Sakai for one course and Moodle for another. This experimentation is an essential part of our selection process. Early feedback looks promising.

During spring term there will be an LTC session in which we will discuss our experiences with Sakai and Moodle. By the end of spring term we will have selected one of these tools as Carleton's course management system.

Andrea Nixon is associate director of academic computing.

PASSPHRASES

News stories about computer hackers and identity theft—frequently involving colleges and universities—are becoming commonplace. At Carleton we pay careful attention to computer and network security and regularly take steps to maintain and improve security.

After careful consideration and consultation with the academic and administrative computing advisory committees, we are now increasing the minimum length of Carleton passwords from 8 to 15 characters.

With the increasingly powerful tools available to hackers, our current 8 character passwords can be compromised in less than three minutes. Therefore, we all need to move from word-length to phrase-length passwords.

Changing Your Password to a Passphrase

The next time you are prompted to change your password, you will need to select a password phrase of at least 15 characters. If you would like tips on selecting a password phrase visit: http://go.carleton.edu/password_tips. To change your password visit: <http://go.carleton.edu/password>.

Self-Service Password Reset for Faculty, Academic Staff Members and Students

ITS staff members have also created a self-service Web page that will enable faculty and academic staff members and students to reset their own password should they forget it. This is similar to services used elsewhere in which you

provide answers to a series of questions. To set up this service for your account visit: <https://apps.carleton.edu/its/passwd/forgot>. We recommend that you set up this service as soon as possible.

Passwords Reset for Administrative Staff Members

Because ITS and administrative staff members have access to sensitive data, the self-service password reset service is not currently available to them. Administrative staff members should continue to contact their computing coordinator or call the helpline at x4547 for password help.

What About My Other Passwords?

Although we are not requiring longer passwords for your other systems at this time, most will accept longer passwords. We encourage you to use good passwords and change them regularly. Using passwords or passphrases longer than 8 characters can help. Please remember, it is important that your passwords are not shared with others.

For more information about our move to longer passwords or about the new self-service password reset page visit: http://go.carleton.edu/password_faq. If you have any other questions or comments, please don't hesitate to contact your computing coordinator.

Joel Cooper is director of ITS

REASON TIPS

Most Carleton office and department Web sites are maintained in Reason, the College's Web content management system. The following are some tips for managing Reason from Carleton's Web services group:

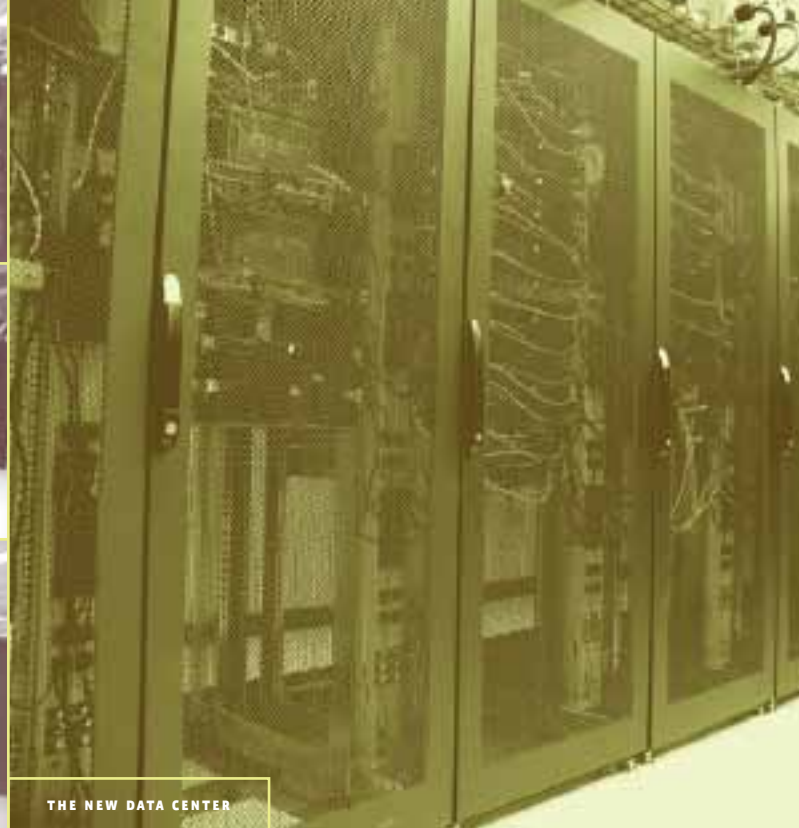
- For best results, do not use Internet Explorer when working in Reason. Use a current version of another browser (such as Mozilla or Mozilla Firefox). Internet Explorer does not fully support all of Reason's content editing features.
- Free your inner artist. A few clicks of your mouse can quickly change your entire site design. Log in to Reason (<http://go.carleton.edu/reason>), click on the site name, then look under Site Tools in the editing menu. The Themes link will open a gallery of available design themes that can be applied to your site. New themes are added regularly.
- Also under Site Tools is a Statistics link that reveals essential facts and figures about your Web site traffic, including the number of page views and visits, most popular pages, and daily and hourly usage patterns.
- If you have a lot of digital photos to upload to your Reason site, you don't need to add them one by one. The Web team is happy to assist you with Reason's batch upload feature.



CRUNCHING NUMBERS



LES LACRUOIX



THE NEW DATA CENTER



- Additional staff members or student workers can be set up as contributors in Reason, allowing them access to make revisions to the site and mark them as pending until their work has been reviewed.
- You don't have to worry about dead links or bad bookmarks if you move pages of your Reason site from one section to another. Reason remembers every page's past address and forwards visitors to the right place.
- Most Reason users can create four basic types of pages, but there are dozens of other page types available on request. Need a form, newsletter, events calendar, blog, or FAQ page? Want your text blurbs to appear on the right or top of the page instead of on the left? Chances are we've already got a page type that will do the job. A quick call to the Web services group is all it takes; we can set it up on the spot.

Individual or small-group Reason training is available on request.

Please contact the Web services group if you have questions or experience a problem using Reason. Visit go.carleton.edu/web for the team directory or e-mail wsg@lists.carleton.edu.

Jaye Lawrence is director of Web communications and development at Carleton.

Pg. 5

SEEING NUMBERS

To quote Edward Tufte, Yale professor emeritus, information design expert, and author, "Often, the most effective way to describe, explore, and summarize a set of numbers—even a very large set—is to look at pictures of those numbers." This winter, Carleton started seeing numbers thanks to a workshop led by academic computing coordinators Doug Foxgrover and Paula Lackie and liaison librarians Kristin Partlo and Ann Zawistoski. The three-day workshop for faculty members demonstrated how familiar and inexpensive tools, such as Microsoft Excel and free Web sites, can be used to incorporate sophisticated data visualization (for example, complex graphs and maps) into simple classroom assignments.

All four of the workshop's leaders had attended an Edward Tufte workshop where they learned about data visualization and tools and advancements in the field. "Sometimes there is meaning hidden in numbers that is not easy to see when you're simply looking at a table," says Foxgrover, who has a fellowship with the Midwest Instructional Technology Center to explore ways to make data visualizations more accessible to Carleton and to a larger audience.

While the technology initially appeals to faculty members in the math and sciences, certain programs can be used across all disciplines. Gould Library recently obtained Graphic Information System (GIS) software, which is used to make maps and analyze geographic information. A

single GIS report can include detailed data about the population of a certain area such as gender, class, race, and age along with other variables such as temperature and roadways. Carleton geology courses have used the software for nearly 10 years. During the last national election, a major television station also utilized the software, which allowed reporters to organize and display voting results with demographic data, and produced maps to help illustrate voting trends for viewers.

Free Web sites such as Google Earth (earth.google.com) and NASA's World Wind (<http://worldwind.arc.nasa.gov>) allow users to zoom in from satellite altitude to any place on earth, yielding complex data quickly and easily. Meanwhile, the U.S. Census Factfinder (http://factfinder.census.gov/home/saff/main.html?_lang=en) offers visual information on population, housing, business and government, and people. "Online tools are becoming more and more available and are easy to use, yet the analysis or discussion one gains from these tools can be very complex and deep," says Foxgrover.

The group hopes to offer more workshops on data visualization at Carleton in the future as more information comes to light and the demand for such tools increases among faculty members and students. For more information visit www.carleton.edu/departments/LIBR/startseeingnumbers or contact Doug Foxgrover at dfoxgrov@carleton.edu or x4037.

Phoebie Larson is a writer and editor at Carleton.

DATA CENTER COMPLETED

Over fall term and winter break, ITS, facilities, and outside design firms hired by the College worked together to build a new location for Carleton's data servers. The new space is large enough to accommodate future expansion of the servers and is equipped with new technology to protect them from the elements and unforeseen events.

Currently less than half of the new space is utilized, ensuring room for more servers, as need for them progresses. Servers are arranged in four rows with alternating hot and cold aisles to help with cooling. The room is airtight to protect the servers from outside temperature changes, and is equipped with a new non-water based fire system so that if the servers catch on fire they won't be destroyed by water used to put out the flames. An uninterruptible power supply is another added feature of the space. If the power goes out on campus, the system will have enough power from the added supply to run on a generator for more than a day before the generator needs to be refueled. The cooling system also has backup, as well as access to a fresh air supply so that cold Minnesota winter air can be used to help with cooling.

For more information on the new data center or to take a tour of the new space, contact Les LaCroix at llacroix@carleton.edu or x5455.

Nathan Westlake is a senior at Carleton.



NATHAN WHITE AND WEB ACCESSIBILITY



WEB ACCESSIBILITY

For most of us, using a computer is second nature, but for individuals with disabilities, access to technology may depend on the choices made by designers and developers. Making the Web accessible for every individual provides a unique challenge for Web developers and others in the computing field.

Title III of the Americans with Disabilities Act requires private colleges to ensure that the programs and services they provide are accessible to everyone. Carleton's Web services group works to make sure that Web-based information is as accessible as possible. Accessibility features on Carleton's Web site include structured, bold headers to make the site's contents clear for individuals with learning disabilities, compatibility with screen magnifiers or screen readers (which vocalize the contents of a Web site) for the visually impaired, and giving a Web site the ability to be navigated by keyboard for those unable to use a mouse.

Nathan White, Carleton's Web application developer, works to make Carleton's Web and computing services more accessible. His duties include developing the Reason content management system, which powers many Carleton Web sites and provides an easy way for students and faculty and staff members to create and maintain Web content. "Reason has a lot of advantages for accessibility," White says. For example, Reason requires the Web site creator to include a text description for images uploaded to the Web site. Also, Reason will automatically produce a text-only view of any page, which can be helpful for individuals with certain disabilities. The accessibility features of content created with Reason are important for people with disabilities, but also useful for people with older computers that might not support the latest Web technologies.

White and his colleagues are examining Carleton's Web site to identify any remaining accessibility issues. "Our goal is to have it be as accessible as possible so we're in a position where we've anticipated different types of disabilities and how they might affect someone's use of Carleton Web sites," White says.

For more information on Web accessibility at Carleton contact Nathan White at nwhite@acs.carleton.edu or x7175.

Lauren Garrison is a senior at Carleton.

STRATEGIES AGAINST SPAM

In January, more than 80 percent of e-mail sent to Carleton addresses never made it to inboxes. Approximately 12,000 e-mails reach their recipients on campus each day, but nearly 400 are blocked for viruses, 2,500 suspicious e-mails are quarantined, and 50,000 e-mails are blocked as spam, unsolicited commercial bulk e-mail. Unbeknownst to students and faculty and staff members, Carleton's ITS department works consistently to counteract the increasing volume and complexity of approaches to sending spam.

"When you're fighting a spammer, it's always a moving target," says Les LaCroix, associate director of network services. "They're always changing things so that the mail will get delivered." Not only that, the sheer amount of spam is growing. Last November ITS blocked about 1,900,000 spam messages. In December that number was up to 2,700,000. In January, it reached over 3,300,000.

Carleton's spam protection software, Barracuda Spam Firewall, has proven relatively reliable in combating the problem, and ITS buys blacklists from certain spam prevention companies that list known spammers, common spam urls, and other indicators that a message is spam. Programs designed to analyze content also help to catch spam. For example, if the

content of an e-mail contains suspicious spellings of common words or common spam phrases such as "buy pharmaceuticals online" it could get blocked as spam.

If Barracuda thinks a message might be spam, but isn't certain, it will quarantine it so recipients can look at the e-mails and determine for themselves. Whitelisting an address allows recipients to clear it so that Barracuda doesn't accidentally quarantine it.

Carleton Web-mail users can also help in the fight against spam. When these users click on "report as spam," the message is sent to ITS staff to be examined. Reported messages help ITS staff to train the Barracuda to identify more messages as spam.

For more information on spam and Carleton's preventative measures against this problem contact Les LaCroix, associate director of network services, at llacroix@carleton.edu or x5455.

Nathan Westlake is a senior at Carleton.