

A bit about BITS

If you've been around UM for a few years, you may remember *Grizzly Bytes*, a 12-page newsletter once published quarterly by IT's predecessor, Computing & Information Services.

Bits is a miniature version of *Grizzly Bytes*, designed to keep the campus community informed about technology developments and learning opportunities. It's more compact than the old newsletter because most information is now on the web, but it will also come out more frequently to provide regular updates.

Special edition coming

Look for a special edition of *Bits* in mid-February featuring plans for high-tech classrooms, major campus network upgrades and student email.

February training

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Visit: www.umt.edu/it/training/

Thousands of hours . . . saved

No doubt, the idea sounded simple to legislators.

Create a common course numbering system for Montana's two-year and four-year colleges, and develop a "transparent computerized program that demonstrates transferable courses across the University system."

Implementation wouldn't be so simple.

UM Registrar David Micus and others from UM, including IT's Tim Irmen, met with university system colleagues in September to identify challenges and plan strategy.

"The feeling was that the transition to common course numbering couldn't



Tim Irmen

be done systematically, and that it would be a huge manual process," Micus says.

On the UM campus alone, there were more than 1,000 courses that would have to be converted. The manual process would take up to an hour per course, some estimated.

Oh yeah, and students would start registering for the new courses in six months.

Tim Irmen, now head of the IT group

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New and improved

Campus map

IT web developers Jamie Robertson and Nick Shontz developed a new UM campus map that launched in January. The GIS map features multiple data layers—like places to eat, bus stops, wireless locations and more—that can be toggled on or off.

The map was produced almost entirely with open-source (free) technologies. Check out the map at map.umt.edu, and visit the development team's blog at geogart.com for more information on the process.

IT website moves to CMS

IT migrated its website to UM's new enterprise content management system in January. The new site includes an online web-service request process for campus departments.

New email channel launched in OneStop



A new email viewer channel released in January allows users to view email messages in Onestop, and provides a one-click connection from OneStop to Outlook Web Access, Google's Gmail and other IMAP email platforms. OneStop users can set up the channel by logging into OneStop, clicking on the email icon and entering email login credentials into the channel.

More about OneStop developments is available at

blog.umt.edu/onestopnews

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Thousands of hours . . . continued

that manages the Banner student records system, listened as others argued that the only way to accomplish the task was through thousands of hours of manual labor to input new course data.

“The MSU folks said this couldn’t be done programmatically,” Irmen recalls. “Any time someone says you can’t do something programmatically, I think, why not?”

Motivated by the naysayers, Tim returned to Missoula and dug into the Banner forms related to academic courses. Then he started to program.

“It took me about a week’s worth of work to put together a package that would transfer the old courses to new,” Irmen says.

“Any time someone says you can’t do something programmatically, I think, why not?”

“I thought portions of it could be automated,” Micus says, “but Tim was the one who thought we could do a good bit more. His program will now be used at all of the MUS campuses that are Banner schools.”

“There’s still some manual effort involved,” says John Thunstrom, Assistant CIO for Enterprise Information Systems, where Tim works. “But the program Tim wrote has saved an immense amount of labor. Without it, each course would have to be stopped in Banner and then

a new course would have to be hand-created. Tim’s program automates that process.”

Tim took one more step. Using spreadsheets from the Office of the Commissioner of Higher Education, he collaborated with Jon Adams in the IT web group to build an interactive conversion table on the web. The tool will let students and advisers easily search for old course numbers and find their new counterpart, and vice versa.

“Tim did a fantastic job,” Micus says. “He took it much further than I thought we could.”

Irmen’s assessment is simple:

“If we hadn’t come up with a programmatic solution, we would not have met the deadline,” he says.



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