

# ORGANIZATIONAL SYSTEMS RESEARCH ASSOCIATION

ADVANCING RESEARCH IN INFORMATION TECHNOLOGIES, LEARNING, AND PERFORMANCE

Back-to-School Newsletter

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*Computers have lots of memory but no imagination. ~Author Unknown*

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## NOTES FROM THE KNOBS

*Donna R. Everett*  
*OSRA Executive Director*

Greetings from the beautiful knobs of Kentucky! I hope your semester is off to a grand start! Change is in the air for OSRA's 24<sup>th</sup> Annual Research Conference in Dallas. We will partner with FBD for the first time and learn how to change the boundaries of technology and visit the *wide open spaces* of Texas! A new Educator of the Year award is being proposed to be presented at subsequent research conferences. Find out more in this newsletter. Also, many members are presenting the newly revised OEIS curriculum to various audiences. Become part of this caravan by participating in the curriculum panel in Dallas. Please make note of the deadlines for submitting papers to LeAnn Wilkie (wilkie@iup.edu): **September 15, 2004**, for proposals and **September 30, 2004**, for full manuscripts for consideration for the best paper award. This year, the best paper award will be presented at the FBD Dinner hosted by Irwin McGraw-Hill. These deadlines are firm. Please let me know if I can assist you in any way.

## CALL FOR PAPERS

The OSRA Conference Committee invites research paper submissions for the 24th Annual Research Conference in Dallas, TX. Both refereed and non-refereed presentations are sought. Submissions should address topics relating to the application of information technologies. The deadline for submission is September 15, 2004. For detailed information and submission guidelines, go to <http://www.osra.org/conference.html>. See you in Big D!

## PRESIDENT'S CORNER

*Marilyn Chalupa  
2004-2005 OSRA President*

Your previous executive board members have transferred duties to the newly elected board members. The transfer of duties has gone very smoothly and your new executive board will continue to serve the members of the organization in a professional, dedicated manner. It is an honor to serve on the executive board. According to Martin Luther King, Jr., "Everyone can be great, because everyone can serve."

This new academic year may find you teaching new courses or incorporating some courses from the revised OSRA curriculum into your curriculum and working with newly elected board members. One of my many goals this year is to maintain a quality conference or perhaps enhance it more by linking with FBD. Over the past year, there has been much communication between OSRA and FBD to accomplish this linkage. This is only an experiment and we will be seeking your opinions about this joint venture. I challenge each of you to show the FBD members how great OSRA is!

Some of the board members were busy this past summer already performing their duties. Kelly Wilkinson and Marcia James, conference co-chairs, have been seeking business and industry speakers and reviewing menus for meal options for the 2005 Conference in Dallas. Kelly, Donna Everett, and I attended the FBD Conference Planning "boot camp" in Dallas in June to become acquainted with FBD's registration and program process. We met some wonderful people, and as they learned about OSRA and we about FBD, several asked if they could come and hear our speakers and/or join this "fun group" for the Dutch Treat. Elsewhere in this newsletter Kelly will share more details about the upcoming conference and a few changes that needed to take place for OSRA's conference schedule to blend in with FBD. We will still be asking institutions to contribute funds to assist in sponsoring breakfasts. Savory food is expensive in Dallas!

Virginia Hemby and Lucinda Willis have prepared the guidelines for our Small Grants program. Look for those guidelines to be posted soon on our web site. If anyone has won a lottery or feels extra generous or just had a super salary increase, you may want to make a contribution in honor of someone at your institution or in memory of someone important in your life.

If you did not receive a Call for Papers from FBD, please check our website ([www.osra.org](http://www.osra.org)) and/or FBD's website, [www.fbd.org](http://www.fbd.org). You may also want to contact Donna Everett and she can send you a copy. The deadline for proposal

submission is September 15. That date is firm as all information must be sent to FBD by November 15. The program book is similar in size as the one at NBEA. We must meet the deadlines for our conference schedule to be in the program book. Submit your proposal(s) to LeAnn Wilkie. All authors must register for OSRA and FBD to be in the program. Submission guidelines are on our web page.

Roger Yin, vice president-professional studies, is looking for people who are interested in being on a curriculum panel at the conference to discuss how the new curriculum is being implemented. Contact Roger for more information.

Lastly, we should acknowledge Dawn Woodland, past president, and the previous board members who have worked very diligently for OSRA to have another successful year. Bill McPherson and Linda Szul have planned more OSRA conferences in the past few years than many of us ever will. It is a challenge to continue to meet the high expectations that we all have come to enjoy. They made it look easy and fun! Thank you for your service to OSRA.

This past summer I read *The Secret* by Ken Blanchard and Mark Miller. In the next newsletter, you may learn what "the secret" is if you haven't already read the book. Let's continue to promote OSRA, its curriculum, and the conference. Have a great academic year!

## NABTE AWARD WINNERS

The winners of the 2004 NABTE Review Outstanding Article Award are all OSRA members! Congratulations to **Heidi Perreault, Jensen Zhao, Melody Alexander, and Lila Waldman!** The title of their article is "Distance Education Courses: A Comparative Study of Faculty and Students." The authors were presented with certificates at the last NABTE Institutional Members Meeting held on April 7, 2004, at the NBEA Conference in Chicago.

## DPE AWARD WINNERS



Two OSRA members also earned awards at the November 20-22, 2003, Delta Pi Epsilon National Research conference in Indianapolis, Indiana.

**Catherine Chen** of Ball State University received the Independent Research Award. Her article was summarized in the Winter newsletter. **Beryl McEwen** of North Carolina A&T State University received the Outstanding Paper Award. Her paper is outlined on page 6 of this newsletter.

## CHANGE CAN BE GOOD

*Submitted by Marilyn Chalupa  
OSRA President*

Our 2005 conference will be held at the Hyatt Regency at Reunion Towers in Dallas, March 1-5. The Central Business District, JFK Memorial, arts and entertainment districts as well as Dealey Plaza are near the Hyatt. The conference will be similar as in the past yet somewhat different. Our theme is "Wide Open Spaces—Technology Changing the Boundaries of Business."

1. OSRA Executive Board meetings will start on Wednesday morning rather than Thursday, and again late Friday afternoon.
2. FBD Executive Board meetings are Wednesday afternoon and Saturday morning. Two OSRA representatives would attend these FBD meetings.
3. Awards luncheon, by invitation only, is on Wednesday night.
4. Sessions will begin on Thursday rather than Friday.
5. The Dutch Treat Dinner will continue to be scheduled for Thursday evening.
6. The luncheon will be Friday rather than Saturday. This recognition luncheon will acknowledge several groups—award winners, past presidents, retirees, and other successes and achievements of OSRA members.
7. Depending on food prices, we hope to have daily breakfast foods. Kelly Wilkinson and Marcia James, conference co-chairs, are already busy making contacts to find speakers and get prices to plan meals and other events.
8. Tours/workshops will be eliminated this year. They may return in the future.
9. A modified schedule of sessions is being prepared to fit in with the FBD timeline. Daily breaks are scheduled by FBD from 10:00 – 10:30 a.m. and again from 3:00 – 3:30 p.m.
10. The conference registration process will be a little different and Donna Everett, our executive director, and I are still working on those issues.

We may want to consider another online survey that allows the OSRA participants to give feedback after attending the conference. It will take much discussion among all OSRA members to make a careful and wise decision as to what is best for the OSRA membership. Any ideas or suggestions may be directed to me at [mchalupa@bsu.edu](mailto:mchalupa@bsu.edu). With your input, the executive board and conference planning chairs can then proceed accordingly. We can predict OSRA's future because we all have the power to shape its future.

## FROM THE CONFERENCE COORDINATORS ...

*Submitted by Marcia James  
and Kelly Wilkinson*

Engaging speakers, informative research, and inviting hospitality await you in Dallas, Texas, at the 2005 OSRA Research Conference. Martin Bean, CEO of New Horizons, will open the conference on Thursday. Many of you may have heard him at one of the Course Technology Conferences. His insight in the technology industry, particularly in certification and training, and his humor make for an exciting presentation. Other industry speakers, including a Kimberly-Clark representative, should give us insight about technology and training issues in the workforce.

OSRA research will continue to be the cornerstone of the conference. LeAnn Wilkie is ready to accept your proposals. Please note that the September 15 deadline for submissions must be firm. Late submissions will not be accepted. This will ensure that all participants are part of the program. Make sure that your research is presented.

Bring your cowboy hat and boots because we are going to have a Texas-style good time at Gilley's in Dallas. The Dutch Treat dinner this year will include admission into Gilley's and a Texas Barbeque. We will have our own room to visit and reconnect as well as enjoy the Texas hospitality. This is a special year for Gilley's because of the 25th anniversary of the movie, *Urban Cowboy* (remember *John Travolta* and *Debra Winger*). Gilley's also has a great gift shop and bull riding for the adventurous OSRA member.

Please plan to attend the OSRA Research Conference. This is an exciting time for our organization, so come to Dallas and say HOWDY!

## "EDUCATOR OF THE YEAR" AWARD TO BE DEVELOPED

*Submitted by Virginia Hemby  
Executive Vice President*



As we begin a new academic year, many changes are taking place for OSRA. We are working under new conference guidelines for our linkage with FBD. We are under the direction of our new executive board. Some of us have changed institutional affiliations. Any way you turn, you see that change is in the air.

One of the areas that OSRA and the executive board will be exploring this year is the development of guidelines for an "Educator of the Year" award to be presented at the annual conference. As part of the FBD Conference, each affiliate has a top educator who is honored at the Awards Dinner. Since OSRA has not established the criteria for this award, one will not be presented at the upcoming 2005 conference. However, the board would like to see these guidelines developed and implemented so that in 2006, OSRA will have its first annual "Educator of the Year" recognized at the conference.

Marilyn Chalupa has charged me with the responsibility of assembling a small panel of OSRA members to assist me in developing the Educator of the Year guidelines. I am, therefore, issuing a request that any of you who would like to work on this project send me an email message. Many of you have served in a similar capacity in other organizations or at your institutions, so please provide OSRA with the benefit of that expertise. Remember the quote of Joseph Conrad from *Heart of Darkness*, "I don't like work—no man does—but I like what is in the work—the chance to find yourself."

Please send your email volunteering for the OSRA "Educator of the Year" award committee to me at [drhembygrubb@comcast.net](mailto:drhembygrubb@comcast.net). Thank you!

## OSRA MEMBERS IN KRAKOW

*Submitted by Marcia James*

Over 200 delegates and accompanying persons were hosted by Les Priesner, Professor, at the Institute of Science and Technology in Krakow, Poland. Several of our own OSRA members presented at the International Business Education conference. Stimulating keynote speakers and numerous presentations, seminars, and workshops made this conference one of the best. Both delegates and accompanying persons enjoyed a sightseeing tour, a dinner in the 700-year salt mine, an evening of Polish dance and song, and a closing banquet where young and old alike danced and sang from the SIEC songbook. Business visits included Phillip Morris, Motorola, and a steel plant.

Presentations were made by OSRA members Marcia James, Bridget O'Connor, Mike Bronner, Sabra Brock, and Lila Waldman. Of particular interest to OSRA is that Donna Everett and Dennis Gehris presented the new OSRA curriculum model to conference participants.

*Bridget O'Connor and Mike Bronner enjoyed the good weather in Krakow, Poland; after the conference, they went on to Rome, Italy!*



*Donna Everett (right) introduced Marcia James (center) when she presented her soft skills study.*

## USING STANDARDS FOR WEB DESIGN

by Bob Brookshire

Information Technology & Management Science Program - James Madison University

In much of the information technology industry, standards rule. They determine the syntax of programming languages, the interoperability of peripheral devices for computer systems, how data is exchanged between computers, and how e-mail is sent over the internet, to name just a few obvious examples.

In the design and coding of web pages, however, standards are hardly ever used. The results are web pages that look and perform differently on different computers and in different browsers and hours of wasted effort by web designers and programmers as they try to maintain their web sites. The problem arises because although web standards exist, they are not well known by people who develop web pages, and they are not enforced by popular software like Microsoft FrontPage and Macromedia Dreamweaver.

In this article, I describe a few simple steps you can take to make your web sites compliant with international standards. You do not have to be a trained programmer to implement these rules, which can be accomplished using your favorite web development tools.

**Validate your code.** The most basic thing you can do to insure your web site meets web standards is to validate your HTML or XHTML code. This is surprisingly easy to do. Just go to the validation web site of the World Wide Web Consortium (W3C) at <http://validator.w3.org>. You can enter the URL of your web page or upload the code from your disk. Then you simply click the "validate" button, and you will receive a line-by-line analysis of your code that identifies any syntax that is not standards compliant. The following steps help to avoid the most common errors.

- Use a DOCTYPE statement to declare the version of HTML or XHTML in which you have written your web page. Example DOCTYPE statements can be found at the W3C web site, <http://www.w3.org>.
- Specify the character set used for the web page. Again, examples of character set declarations are available at the W3C web site.
- Type all your code in lower case letters.
- Enclose all parameters in quote marks, e.g. `<a href="http://www.w3c.org">`
- Include ending tags for all your HTML or XHTML tags. Do not forget your `</p>` tag at the end of paragraphs beginning with the `<p>` tag, for example. You must also use embedded endings for tags which do not have separate ending tags, like `<hr />` and `<br />`.

**Separate the structure and content of the site from its formatting.** This separation is most easily accomplished through the use of cascading style sheets (CSS). This powerful tool simplifies the web site maintenance process. If a web site's style sheet is stored in a separate file from the files containing the web content pages, simple changes to the style sheet can reformat the entire web site instantly. If several people are responsible for putting content on the web site, keeping the formatting separate allows them to add or change their content without interfering with, or being confused by, the site's formatting commands.

**Use the cascading feature of CSS.** Use an external style sheet for the entire web site. Use a document level style sheet only for formatting that is unique to a particular web page. Use inline style commands only for those parts of the web page that are uniquely different from the rest of the page. Using CSS in this way pays off in the ease with which you can update or change the look and feel of the site and the individual pages within the site.

**Use tables only for tabular content, not layout.** All the effects that web designers get by using tables can be achieved much more easily with CSS. Avoiding tables for layout greatly reduces the amount of HTML or XHTML code on the page, making maintenance much simpler.

**Make your web site accessible.** Just as you can validate your web site's pages using the W3C validator, you can check your site's compliance with the Web Accessibility Initiative standards or section 508 of the Rehabilitation Act Amendments of 1998. These standards make your site accessible to users with visual and physical impairments. Some useful sites you can use to assess the accessibility of your web site include the WAVE accessibility tool at <http://www.wave.webaim.org/> from the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, and Bobby at <http://bobby.watchfire.com>, and the A-Prompt Accessibility Verifier at <http://aprompt.snow.utoronto.ca/> from the University of Toronto.

The use of these simple rules and tools will make your web site more consistently viewable on a variety of computer platforms and browsers and dramatically easier to maintain and update. For more information on web standards, an excellent source is Jeffrey Zeldman, *Designing with Web Standards* (Indianapolis: New Riders, 2003) from which I have derived many of these suggestions. Zeldman also has an informative web site at <http://www.alistapart.com/>.



## STUDENT PERFORMANCE IN BUSINESS AND MARKETING EDUCATION

*By Beryl C. McEwen  
Outstanding Paper Award Recipient  
2003 DPE National Research Conference*

### Introduction

A substantial component of any education program is assessment, aimed at measuring student performance. Enormous amounts of time and other resources go into designing appropriate grade-level and program-area assessments. Unfortunately, less effort tends to go into interpreting the results of such assessments and into understanding the factors that are impacting performance. According to Suskie (2002) the results of assessments should indicate how effectively educational programs are achieving their goals for student learning. As such, they should inform the educator and should lead to improvements in the teaching/learning environment. Assessments cannot be ends in themselves, but should always be viewed as a critical part of the curriculum process.

### Conclusions

Business and marketing education programs in North Carolina attract a very diverse group of students. Approximately 50 percent of the students who were tested and produced the data used in the study were classified as "special population," including nontraditional, academically disadvantaged, economically disadvantaged, limited English proficient, disabled, or identified themselves as College Tech Prep students. One might say that the business and marketing education programs attract greater than average percentages of students with special needs and circumstances that might affect their learning and performance.

The percentages of students from special populations who enroll in business education and marketing education courses have remained fairly constant over the two years studied. There were only very modest decreases or increases.

The business and marketing education programs have remained fairly consistent over the two-year period. Thirteen business education and eight marketing education courses are being offered in the VoCATS curriculum. These represent only slight changes in the programs over the two-year period—Computer

Applications III that was offered in the business education program in 2001 was replaced by ECommerce in 2002. Business and Financial Management II, a course that had extremely low enrollment in 2001, was dropped from the marketing education curriculum in 2002.



The courses attracting the most students in business education are: Keyboarding, Computer Applications I, Computer Applications II, and Principles of Business. In marketing education the courses are: Marketing, Small Business/Entrepreneurship, Fashion Merchandising, and Marketing Management. Business education courses attract considerably larger numbers of students than do marketing education courses.

Performance levels of the business education students were considerably high. Approximately 71 percent passed at Level III or higher. Only five percent performed at Level I. The results are much different for marketing education which had only 53 percent passing at Level III or higher and nine percent at Level I.

Student performance in both the business and marketing education programs improved significantly from 2001 to 2002. T-tests showed that improvements in business education was significant at the  $P < .01$  level and in marketing education the improvement in performance was significant at the  $P < .05$  level.

Overall performance in business education is significantly impacted by academic ability (Academically Disadvantaged), English Proficiency (LEP), Disability, and whether students were in the College Tech Prep program. In each case, students in the special populations groups performed significantly lower than the group as a whole. It is difficult to explain why self-identified College Tech Prep students performed below the mean, except that they probably focused their efforts on college admissions courses and gave less attention to their business education courses.

Performance in marketing education was influenced by academic ability (Academically Disadvantaged), economic status (Economically Disadvantaged), and English Proficiency (LEP). It is difficult to explain why economically disadvantaged students performed significantly below the mean in marketing education but not in business education.



## Application for Membership

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Job Title: \_\_\_\_\_

School/Firm: \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Address: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Business Phone: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_ Fax: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_

Home Phone: (    ) \_\_\_\_\_ Internet \_\_\_\_\_

Mailing Preference (circle one)      Work      Home

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### Which of the following best describes your situation? (Please check one)

\_\_\_\_\_ **Individual Membership:** \$55.00. Individual involved in office systems as an educator, manager, consultant, practitioner or one who has an interest in the results of organizational systems research.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Corporate Membership:** \$300.00. Corporations interested in cooperating in the application of research, sharing the results of such research or sponsoring same. Membership includes all individual membership benefits plus one paid attendance at the annual research conference.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Student Chapter Membership:** \$55.00. An educational and research association whose mission shall be to get individuals involved in the organizational systems major.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Retired Membership:** \$35.00. Must have been a former OSRA member.

\_\_\_\_\_ **Student Membership:** \$35.00. Student concentrating in organizational systems or a related discipline.

Faculty signature required:

\_\_\_\_\_ Faculty Member

\_\_\_\_\_ Institution

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### Enclose a check (U.S. funds only) payable to OSRA and mail to:

Dr. Donna R. Everett, Executive Director  
Organizational Systems Research Association  
Morehead State University  
150 University Blvd., Box 2478  
Department of Information Systems  
Morehead, KY 40351-1689

Phone: (606) 783-2718  
Fax: (606) 783-5025  
Internet: d.everett@moreheadstate.edu  
Web: www.osra.org

\_\_\_\_\_ Check enclosed

**OR**

\_\_\_\_\_ PayPal