

Technologies for Communities

This workshop was held at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute on April 5 and 6, 2002. The goal was to bring together faculty and graduate students at Rensselaer and the University at Albany who actively study how technology and the built environment can be developed to make cities, towns, and other regional communities more just, healthy, green, and/or democratic. Examples of research programs include communities and information technology, media, urban transportation and design, food systems, health, urban environmental issues, and other areas. The term "community" is understood here broadly to include neighborhoods, cities, and regions.

The workshop began on Friday afternoon, April 5, 2002, with a graduate student roundtable of students from Rensselaer and SUNY Albany. Presentations by faculty and guest lecturers took place on Saturday, April 6, 2002.

Friday Afternoon, 3-5:30pm Graduate Student Regional Roundtable

Heffner Alumni House Dining Room, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute.

The graduate student roundtable involved short (5-minute) presentations from graduate students at Rensselaer and the University at Albany about their current research (in progress or planned) having to do with technologies and communities. Presentations were informal. Students came from a variety of programs, including Arts; Language, Literature, and Communication; and Science and Technology Studies at Rensselaer; and Education, Information Sciences, and Geography and Planning at the University at Albany.

Program:

Friday, April 5, 2002

Graduate Student Presentation

Goksenin Caknak, Management Information Sciences/Albany, GIS systems in the built environment

Maggie Cusack, Information Science/Albany, effects of technology on transportation planning

Jesse Day, Geography & Planning/Albany, New York Bicycling Coalition

Virginia Eubanks, STS/RPI, popular technology education and social change

Nicole Farkas, STS/RPI, dissertation work on science shops in the Netherlands

Ken Fleischmann, STS/RPI, simulation and local knowledges

Myriam Hammani (Arts/RPI), software/ video education for African American teens in Schenectady using favorite or family fables of their heritage to re-enact and incorporate in their video-storytelling.

Bandana Kar, Geography & Planning, U Albany, pre-disaster planning using remote sensing (RS) and GIS for hurricane affected areas

Andrew Lynn, Arts/RPI, MFA work on the ARK, the "Whirl-Mart" project, and community projects including the BIKE/MEDIA Youth Project.

Jeremy Magliaro, STS/RPI, work at Rocky Mountain Institute on decentralized water infrastructure

Virginia Martin, LL&C/RPI, Ph.D. work on how history and heritage can be used to build and enhance community at the local level

Kirsten McClaid-Cook, Geography and Planning/SUNY, extractive reserves in western Amazonia

Torin Monahan, STS/RPI, dissertation work on IT in Los Angeles schools

Victoria Moore, STS/RPI, using participatory and user-centered design methods to create a web-based community information system and a user community that will be able to take on ownership of the system to keep it viable in the future.

Jason Steven Murphy, Arts/RPI, on video exchange program between students in the Dominican Republic and at the Ark

Sreekumar Nampoothiri, Geography and Planning, SUNY-A, urban planning responses to global climate change

Richard Pell, Arts/RPI, on his work with the Institute for Applied Autonomy

Sean Rintel, Communication, SUNY-A, how ethnomethodology can inform the design of interpersonal computer-mediated communication systems.

Erich Schienke, STS/RPI, on geospatial mapping technologies and pollution

Lori Shirley, Geography and Planning, SUNY-A, food security and local food policy

Jeanette Simmonds, STS/RPI, dissertation work on regional seed banks for sustainable agriculture

Padam Singh, Geography and Planning/Albany, geodemographics for small communities, through web-based GIS

Sarah Smiley, Arts/RPI, on virtual beret project

Naomi Ture, Arts/RPI, educational technology, cultural awareness, community access, 3D animation

Dehui Wei, Geography and Planning/Albany, land use model review

Ashley Williams, LL&C/RPI, Developing an Information Resource for Kids in a Local Community: Participatory Design of a Complex Multi-Purpose System

5:30-7pm. The STS Department will provide a buffet dinner in the dean's suite, 5th floor Sage Building, for all graduate students who presented and all faculty who are participating in Saturday's events.

7pm-7:40pm: Guest Lecture One (Sage Building 3510, RPI)

Michael Gurstein is a visiting professor at the New Jersey Institute of Technology. He will give a guest lecture on "Perspectives on Urban and Rural Community Informatics: Theory and Performance."

7:40pm Questions and discussion

Saturday Morning (Sage Building 3510, RPI)

9am-9:40 Guest Lecture Two

Ann Margaret Esnard is an assistant professor of City and Regional Planning at Cornell. She will speak on "Partnering and Environmental Justice in Regional and Virtual Communities"

9:40am-10:00am Questions and discussion.

Session IA: Community Media, IT, and Networks

Each speaker will be asked to present for 15 minutes. Speakers will be grouped around themes and there will be discussion periods after each group.

10:00 Joseph Bowman, is a regent and an assistant professor of education at SUNY Albany, where he directs the Center for Urban Youth and Technology (CUYT). Among the courses he teaches are educational television production, multimedia design, and topical seminars on instructional technology. CUYT develops programs in research, instructional and curriculum design relating to technology and its impact on rural and urban communities.

10:15 Nancy Campbell is assistant professor of Science and Technology Studies at Rensselaer. She is leading a HUD-sponsored COPC grant program for neighborhood revitalization and community informatics in Troy. She and graduate student Virginia Eubanks will present on their research in Troy.

10:30am Ron Eglash is assistant professor of Science and Technology Studies at Rensselaer. His research facilitates the participatory design of information technology in African American, Latino, and Native American communities.

Break 10:45-11:00am

11:00 Ray Fouche, assistant professor of STS at Rensselaer, and Bill McIver, assistant professor at the School of Information Sciences and Policy at SUNY Albany, will discuss some collaborative work on technology and African-American communities.

11:15 Igor Vamos is an assistant professor of Arts at Rensselaer. He is working on alternative, virtual activist networks and is developing the "Tactical Media Lab."

11:30 Branda Miller, Associate Professor of Arts, and Steve Pierce, doctoral student in STS and former president of WRPI. Both have been active in media and arts projects in Troy, including PEG-access cable

television, and they will speak on some of the general insights they have acquired in the course of their work.

11:45 -12:15 discussion

Lunch 12:30-1:45pm Lunch will be provided for participating faculty and grad students (who presented at the Friday roundtable), in the dean's suite, 5th floor, Sage Building.

2:00pm Joseph Sullivan is a lecturer in STS at Rensselaer and a doctoral candidate at SUNY Albany in sociology. He works on the sociology of computerization in the capital region.

2:15pm Jim Zappen is associate professor in the Department of Language, Literature, and Communication at RPI; and Teri Harrison is chair of the Department of Communication at SUNY Albany. They and graduate students Ashley Williams and Victoria Moore will present "Developing an Information Resource for Kids in a Local Community: Participatory Design of a Complex Multi-Purpose System."

2:30-2:45pm Discussion

Session II: Health and Environmental Issues

2:45pm Donna Armstrong, Associate Professor of Public Health, SUNY Albany. Her research on urban community gardens in New York state documents both their general health effects and broader implications for democracy and justice in cities. She will speak on action research and "healthy cities." Her work examines the original concept of healthy cities, which involves transportation, housing, environment, economic development, etc. and the co-opted current use of the term, which just means good health statistics.

3:00 John Erickson and John Gowdy, respectively assistant professor and professor in the Economics Department at Rensselaer. They will speak on "Tools for Envisioning a Sustainable Community." Computer simulation and visualization tools will be presented in the context of goal-setting for sustainable community design at the watershed scale.

3:15pm David Hess is chair of the Science and Technology Studies Department at Rensselaer. He has studied extensively the politics of nutritional and mind-body medicine, especially as alternative cancer therapies. He will speak on some of the relationships between nutritional approaches to medicine and community food issues.

3:30pm Linda Layne is associate professor in the Science and Technology Studies Department and Hale Distinguished Teaching Professor. An expert on pregnancy loss, she has studied toxically assaulted communities.

3:45-4:00 Discussion

4:00-4:30 Break

Session III: Urban Planning and Design

4:30 pm Ray Bromley is chair of the Department of Geography and Planning at SUNY Albany and the author of numerous studies on urban poverty, planning and international development. He will speak on "Losing sight of ecumenopolis: rethinking the era of techno-optimism and high modernism."

4:45pm Frances Bronet is president of the Association of Collegiate Schools of Architecture and an associate professor of architecture at Rensselaer. She and Matt Lindstrom, assistant professor of political science at Siena College, will speak on community design projects in Troy.

5:00pm Jeff Hannigan is an associate professor of Science and Technology Studies at Rensselaer and Director of the Product Design and Innovation program. His most recent design project involved work at Sea Ranch, a "sustainable," planned community in California. He will speak on the relationship between new information technologies, "cybersprawl," and the quality of life in urban areas.

5:15pm Catherine Lawson, assistant professor of geography and planning at SUNY Albany, works on urban transportation issues. Her current work includes intelligent transportation systems for bus systems.

5:30-6:00pm Wrap-up discussion

6:15pm Dinner will be provided to all presenters (both participating faculty and graduate students) in the dean's suite, 5th floor Sage, free of charge and also free of charge to graduate students.