
Institute for Research on Learning Technologies

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1. Background and Mandate
The Institute for Research on Learning Technologies (IRLT) has a broad mandate to engage in systematic inquiry, discussion, and information sharing related to the uses of technology in teaching and learning. Originally established in 1987 within the Faculty of Education as the Centre for the Study of Computers in Education (CSCE), the Institute became a university-based research unit in June 2001 and was re-named. IRLT encourages the formation of links with faculty members across the university and with schools, other universities, government, and industry to provide collaborative, multidisciplinary approaches to research problems and issues. More specifically, the goals of the Institute are as follows:

- To engage in research, study, and public discussion of issues related to the pedagogical uses of technology and to the moral, ethical, and educational implications of its use;

- To develop projects that make innovative uses of new technologies in teaching and learning;

- To maintain an active program to disseminate findings of its projects, its activities, and developments in the field to educators and other interested parties;

- To foster collaboration between academics, educators, and industry and government personnel on research and development problems and issues of mutual concern and interest.

During the 2005-06 academic year, IRLT members developed and approved a six year plan. We began with an ambitious vision: to strive to become, within six years, one of the premier university-based research institutes in North America focusing on the study of teaching and learning with technology. Eight strategic goals were adopted to help achieve this vision. These are listed below together with brief comments on achievements in each area.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>STRATEGY</th>
<th>ACCOMPLISHMENTS DURING 2006-07-08</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Form Special Interest Groups (SIG) in Focus Areas</td>
<td>▪ One SIG entitled <em>Digital Culture and the Arts</em> was formed, renamed <em>Digital Dimensions: The Arts and Virtual Culture</em></td>
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| Increase Our External Profile | ▪ Increased efforts made to identify faculty as IRLT members when publishing/speaking  
▪ IRLT website was completely redesigned |
| Initiate a Visiting Scholars Program | ▪ One scholar agreed to visit during 2006-07 but cancelled out |
| Influence the Hiring Process | ▪ Submissions made to AVP (Research) and to Graduate Programme in Psychology for a position in the Learning Sciences |
| Establish an External Advisory Committee | ▪ Established in spring 2006 |
| Restructure Executive Committee | ▪ Coordinators of SIGs are members of the Executive. |
| Raise Funding for Infrastructure | ▪ Digital Futures Fund for faculty/staff donations is operating.  
▪ A submission was made to the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation. We received funding for a specific project (see Owston grants below) |
| Obtain Secure Support Services | ▪ Funding agreement worked out with AVP (Research) for 1/3 clerical support person to be shared for 2008-2009 with the Faculty Support Centre. |

2. Organizational Structure and Staffing

*Personnel*

Because IRLT is a university-based research unit, the Vice-President (Research and Innovation), appoints a director who manages IRLT. The current and founding director is Professor Ron Owston (Education). York University provides release time and an administrative stipend according to the YUFA collective agreement. Professor Mary Leigh Morbey (Education) has been Associate Director since 2001 (except during her sabbatical in 2004-2005 when Professor Renate Wickens, Fine Arts, assumed her responsibilities).

IRLT employs Herb Wideman full time on annual contract as Senior Researcher, while Kathryn Cook (a faculty member at Georgian College) occasionally works part time as a Research Assistant and voluntarily manages the IRLT website. Joseph Ratnasigham from CNS is employed as a clerical assistant on a 1/3rd time basis. Typically, the Institute hires four to five students annually as Graduate Research Assistants on various research projects.
In 2007-2008 the IRLT Digital Dimensions: the Arts and Virtual Culture Special Interest Group co-chaired by Mary Leigh Morbey and Caitlin Fisher was awarded a York Seminar for Advanced Research grant to support the group’s research and presentations engaging 14 Ontario University researchers, including four Canada Research Chairs.

**Governance**

The Executive Committee is responsible for setting strategic priorities and policies for IRLT. Its membership consists of the following: the Director, Associate Director, two Members-at-Large, SIG coordinator(s), and a Graduate Student. In 2007-08, Professor Suzanne Macdonald (Health), Richard Jarrell (Science & Engineering), and Christine Brown* (Education graduate student) filled the latter three positions. Professor Morbey filled the Associate Director and the Digital Dimensions: the Arts and Virtual Culture coordinator positions. The Members-at-Large and the graduate student members are approved annually by the membership; the others are ex-officio voting positions.

Our Advisory Board met two times during the 2007-2008 academic year. The terms of reference for the Board are as follows:

- To provide an external view of IRLT activities and outputs
- Advise on strategic directions and opportunities
- Raise the profile of IRLT with external communities.

The Board consists of three external members as well as the Executive Committee. The external members in 2007-08 were Marty Keast (Pearson Canada), Lynne Zucker (Sun Microsystems Canada) and Robert Martellacci (Mindshare Learning).

In Fall 2007 IRLT underwent a successful five year review adjudicated by two external examiners, Dr. Walter Archer of the University of Alberta and Dr. Rena Upitis of Queen’s University, and one internal examiner, Dr. Wenona Giles. IRLT was applauded for its truly transdisciplinarity across York University and beyond, its strong engagement of faculty and students, the employment of wide ranging information technologies, its development of the Digital Dimensions Special Interest Group and its accessible and attractive website, and the ability to support research, teaching, and development activities with meager funding. The adjudication team challenged IRLT to broaden and deepen the faculty complement, expand research foci and reach, broaden partnerships and outreach initiatives, expand advisory and executive committees, explore funding opportunities, work towards a stronger support staff, and renovate its physical space. The committee recommended IRLT be granted full renewal.

**Publications**

IRLT publishes a series of technical reports based on members’ research. These reports are made available to the research community at the Institute’s website. A listing of this past year’s reports is below in the *Activities* section.
3. Active Membership List

IRLT has members from all Faculties at York as well as Glendon College. Some IRLT members focus on learning technologies as their primary research interest with all of their publications and grant writing centering on this topic; others have it as a secondary or joint research interest and publish less regularly in this area; while still others are mainly interested in improving their teaching through the use of technology, receive teaching/project development grants, and/or write conference papers about their teaching with technology and more generally support IRLT’s goals. Membership is voluntary and members are not formally reviewed. York faculty membership for 2007-08 was as follows:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Name</th>
<th>Affiliation</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Alison Griffith</td>
<td>Faculty of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ananya Mukherjee-Reed</td>
<td>Department of Political Science, Faculty of Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Avi Cohen</td>
<td>Department of Economics, Faculty of Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Bill Found</td>
<td>Faculty of Arts/Environmental Studies</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Caitlin Fisher</td>
<td>Department of Film, Faculty of Fine Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Carolyn Steele</td>
<td>Career Centre</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dalton Kehoe</td>
<td>Division of Social Science, Faculty of Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Evelyne Corcos</td>
<td>Department of Psychology, Glendon College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Francoise Mougeon</td>
<td>Department of French Studies, Glendon College</td>
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<tr>
<td>Gareth Morgan</td>
<td>Schulich School of Business</td>
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<tr>
<td>Graham Orpwood</td>
<td>Faculty of Education; York/Seneca Institute for Science, Mathematics, Technology, and Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Heather Lotherington</td>
<td>Faculty of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Ilo Katryn Maimets</td>
<td>Steacie Science Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>Jean Adams</td>
<td>Schulich School of Business</td>
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<tr>
<td>Janet Murphy</td>
<td>ABEL Program</td>
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<td>Jennifer Jenson</td>
<td>Faculty of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Karen Anderson</td>
<td>Dept of Sociology, Faculty of Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Laurie Wilcox</td>
<td>Dept of Psychology, Faculty of Health</td>
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<tr>
<td>Margaret Sinclair</td>
<td>Faculty of Education</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary Leigh Morbey</td>
<td>Faculty of Education; Associate Director, IRLT</td>
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<tr>
<td>Mary Louise Craven</td>
<td>Communication Studies, Faculty of Arts</td>
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<tr>
<td>Monique Adriaen</td>
<td>Dept of French Studies, Faculty of Arts</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Niamh Hennessey</td>
<td>School of Social Sciences, Atkinson</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peggy Warren</td>
<td>Reference, Scott Library</td>
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<tr>
<td>Peter Roosen-Runge</td>
<td>Department of Computer Science, Faculty of Science &amp; Engineering</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Poonam Puri</td>
<td>Osgood Hall Law School</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Radu Campeanu</td>
<td>School of Analytic Studies &amp; Information Technology, Atkinson</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Razika Sanaoui</td>
<td>Faculty of Education</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Renate Wickens</td>
<td>Fine Arts Cultural Studies, Faculty of Fine Arts</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Richard Jarrell  
Division of Natural Science, Faculty of Science & Engineering

Richard Saunders  
Department of Political Science, Faculty of Arts

Roberta Sinyor  
Department of Languages, Literatures & Linguistics, Faculty of Arts

Ron Owston  
Faculty of Education and Director, IRLT

Ron Sheese  
Department of Psychology, Faculty of Arts

Ros Woodhouse  
Centre for the Support of Teaching (CST)

Sam Lanfranco  
School of Analytic Studies & Information Technology, Atkinson

Shelley Hornstein  
Art/Architectural History, Department of Visual Arts, Faculty of Fine Arts

Stan Shapson  
Vice-President (Research & Innovation); Faculty of Education

Stephen Chen  
School of Analytic Studies & Information Technology, Atkinson

Suzanne McDonald  
Dept of Psychology, Faculty of Health

Tom Johnson  
Osgoode Hall Law School

Zbigniew Stachniak  
Dept of Computer Science & Engineering, Faculty of Science & Engineering

There are 42 York members in total excluding staff and graduate students; in addition, several Seneca College faculty are also affiliated with IRLT.

4. Member Activities
Listed below are selected (a full list would be too extensive) articles, chapters, and books of members, as well as conference papers, reports, awards, and technology development activities of members during 2007-2008.

Selected Articles, Chapters, Published Conference Proceedings, and Books (IRLT members indicated in bold, graduate students with *)


**Selected Conference Papers/Talks/Invited Addresses**


Brown, C*. (April, 2008). *Putting a Face to a Name - The Effects of Meeting others Involved in a Discussion Board Setting*. The Canadian Network for Innovation in Education International Conference, Banff, Alberta.


consumo (The City in the Era of Globalization: Pilgrimmages in the spaces of memory and consumerism), University of Bologna, Italy.


**Lotherington, H.** (2008, May). *Multiliteracies Caught in Web 2.0: Epistemological Inquiries, Pedagogical Possibilities, and New Story-telling Directions in a Dynamically Interactive Communications Environment*. Pre-CSSE LLRC Conference (Language and literacy researchers of Canada), University of British Columbia, Vancouver, B.C.


**Murphy, J.** (2007, October). *Lessons Learned from Offering a Technologically Mediated Job-Embedded Professional Learning Program to Teachers*. e-Learn Conference, Quebec.

**Murphy, J.** (2008, June), Keynote Speaker at the Ontario Public School Board Association (OPSBA) Annual General Meeting.


Other Selected Member Activities: Projects/Course Development/Grants/Awards/Media Appearances

Adams, J. (2007-08). Case study written by Faculty Support Centre titled Provocation & Response: How Clickers Make Thinking Possible about the pedagogical innovation in my undergraduate business course where interactive technology (i.e. “clickers”) is being used to engage students and promote critical thinking.

Adams, J. (2008-2010). Received a grant of $150,000 from HP Technology for Teaching Leadership research grant awarded to further pedagogical innovation aimed at deepening, broadening and accelerating individual and collective learning in management education: e-Powering Tomorrow’s Leaders.

Adams, J. (2007-2008). Received a grant of $70,000 from the Canadian Council on Learning (CCL) Adult Learning Research Grant for a project involving 400 Scotiabank employees in a program designed to explore: Blended Learning for Soft Skills Development: Testing a four-level model integrating work & learning to maximize personal practice & job performance (Collaborators include IRLT member Denys Lupshenyuk and Kathryn Cook).

Chen, S. taught two courses on introductory programming at the University of Cape Coast in Ghana and introduced several learning objects with mixed success in both courses.

Chen, S. is working with a colleague at UCC on analyzing the African Virtual University - in particular how students rejected from UCC went on to greater success as AVU students.

Cook, K. (2007, September) Developed and launched a new online general education course at Georgian College called Understanding the Web.

Corcos, E. (2007). Received a grant of $50,000 from the Social Sciences and Research Council – Image, Text, Sound and Technology Grant for my project – A Web-based Social Skill Intervention Program, and subsequently received an additional $40, 800 from the same agency, for the project Templates and content for web-based social skills intervention.


Hornstein, S. (2008). Received a grant of $10,000 from the International Research Linkage program (IRL), International Association of Canadian Studies: *Metro Millennium: Toronto, Bologna, Denver & Berlin* to be held May 1-2, 2008 at the City Institute, York University, Toronto, Ontario.

Hornstein, S. (2007-08). Received the Walter L. Gordon Fellowship, York University


Lotherington, H. (2007). Received grant of $2,500 Seed grant, VP, Research and Innovation, York University *Senior Scholars Seminar on Digital Literacies*.


Murphy, J. (2008). Received a $25,000 grant from Inukshuk Grant: *GOT Game with TEACH Magazine and WeroCreative*.


Murphy, J. (2008). Literacy and Numeracy Secretariat, ($6,000) June 2008 Consulting Services for Webcast *Teaching Today’s Learner for Tomorrow’s World*.

Owston, R. is leading a team of computer programmers who are working on the development of the Virtual Usability Lab (http://vulab.ca), a project sponsored by the Andrew H. Mellon Foundation.

Owston, R. received a grant of $60,000 from Microsoft to evaluate the Literacy@School Program in York Region School District. This program is part of Microsoft's Network of Innovative Schools. He is working with Herb Wideman and Professor Jackie Lynch on the project.


IRLT Technical Reports (available at website)


Graduate Student Training and Accomplishments


Owston, R.
Ron Owston had four graduate students supporting his team on various project during the past year: Sarah Chu, Natalia Sinitskaya, Christine Brown, and Denys Lepshenyuk.

IRLT Speaker Series
To fulfill its mandate of public dialogue and dissemination of research, IRLT sponsors a speaker series each year. In 2007-2008, the events below were held.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Date</th>
<th>Speaker</th>
<th>Topic</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>May 2008</td>
<td>Roger Austin, University of Ulster</td>
<td>Dissolving Boundaries</td>
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<tr>
<td>April 2008</td>
<td>Stefano Moretti, Italy</td>
<td>Altair4 Multimedia Project on Ancient Virtual Rome</td>
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January 2008 | Laurie Wilcox, York University | Personal Space in Virtual Reality  
---|---|---  
November 2007 | Mike Elledge, Michigan State University | 1) An Introduction to Accessibility  
2) Assessing Accessibility  
November 2007 | Michael Longford and Barbara Crow, York University | Mobile Technology Research  

The Digital Dimensions: the Arts and Virtual Culture York Seminar for Advanced Research in conjunction with IRLT hosted two internationally renowned speakers: In January 2008, Adriene Jenik of the University of California, San Diego, speaking about *Playing, Performing and Imagining the Digital Public Sphere*, and in February 2008, Oliver Grau of the Danube University Krems, Germany presenting *MediaArt needs Histories and Archives: Image-Immersion-Emotion*.

5. Measures taken to Promote Equity  
IRTL has a very diverse membership in terms of gender and field of specialization: 60% of its members are female which far exceeds the University’s female representation on faculty; and the membership list above illustrates the variety of fields of specialization from which IRLT draws its members. Also, all three graduate students formally employed by IRLT were female. There are no barriers to membership because the only requirement for membership is an interest in teaching and learning with technology.


7. Budget for Current Year – Attached.

8. Student Activities/Accomplishments  
In Section 4 above students who co-authored papers with IRLT members are indicated with an asterisk. Below additional activities/accomplishments of students during 2006-2007 are listed:

- Christine Brown (PhD programme in Education):
  - Worked with Ron Owston on his Canadian Council on Learning grant on educational games
• SAGE student conference – organizer for 4 online national conferences
• Developed a hybrid course for Ryerson University, Destination Management Systems, Fall 2006.
  ▪ **Sarah Chu** (MEd programme): worked for Ron Owston on the development of the Virtual Usability Lab software (http://wvulab.ca) sponsored by the SSHRC grant on the Simulation and Advanced Gaming Environments (SAGE) for Learning project
  ▪ **Natalia Sinitskaya** (PhD in Education programme): worked with Ron Owston, Heather Lotherington, Margaret Sinclair, and Razika Sanaoui on the evaluation of the Learning Connections project; and did field research on Ron Owston’s Canadian Council on Learning grant on educational games.
  ▪ **Nick Taylor** (PhD programme in Education): worked for Jennifer Jenson on the Simulation and Advanced Gaming Environments (SAGE) for Learning project.

In addition, the **ABEL Program** employed:
  ▪ Dorota Pirzanska – 2nd year student as communication and marketing assistant.
  ▪ Jananeh Asari – computer science student as lead programmer.
  ▪ Two graduate students – Nicole Da Costa – videographer and Miriam Di Pasquale – communications and marketing assistant.

9. **Changes in Physical Space** – No changes in 2007-08.

10. **Contractual Obligations** – None made during 2007-08.

**Internationalization of IRLT** – Ron Owston’s work with his Mellon Foundation grant involves collaboration with universities in the US as well as Cambridge University. Mary Leigh Morbey is working with the National Museum of Uganda, Kampala, conceptualizing its Web 2.0 presence. Renate Wickens is developing a US/Canada/India Technology Enhanced Learning Project with Professor Denise Nuttall from Ithaca College focusing on the Hindustani music of Shubha Mudgal with Sri Aneesh Pradhan.

**Appendix: 2007-08 Budget and 2006-07 Financial Statement**