From the Chair

Every month I send out over 7,000 newsletters by e-mail. As the newsletter has evolved and expanded its content those e-mails have continued to increase in size. In some cases, many of you have not been able to receive the newsletter because it is too large to fit into your mailbox or it is deleted by the spam filter. Therefore, beginning this month we will be emailing you a web link to the newsletter. This will allow you to more easily share the link with students, colleagues, and friends. It will also take up less space on your hard drive. And it will provide you with added flexibility for using the contents. The web page will also be printer friendly allowing you to print out the newsletter in its entirety.

If you were one of the people that missed last month’s newsletter it is one you will want to catch up on. That newsletter presented our new CIS poster series. We have had an excellent response from schools requesting copies of the posters for their labs and classrooms. If you want a set for your classroom or lab all you have to do is ask. E-mail me at dw50@txstate.edu. And while you are writing let me know what you think of the newsletter and if there is anything else you like to see.

Thanks for all you do,
In the News
The world of technology is never dull. WikiLeaks hacked Strategic Forecasting, an Austin based security analysis firm for the US Army, and is planning to release stolen e-mails. Ubuntu, the Linux stalwart, is going mobile. Imagine the possibilities. Did you know that daily, we create 2.5 quintillion bytes of data? That’s a 1 followed by 18 zeroes! What does this mean for you? A whole new world of opportunities for those who like technology and/or business. Big-data technologies and new roles like the data scientist will enable companies and their employees to embrace the power of analytics for business growth.

About two-thirds of Internet users belong to social networking sites. Users, especially women and younger members, are managing their accounts better. For one thing, users are cleaning house more. Overall, 63 percent of social networking site users have deleted friends, up from 56 percent in 2009. They’re also getting better about keeping the front door shut. Fifty-eight percent of users say their main profile is set to "private," which on most networks means it's only viewable by an approved list of friends. Nokia unveiled a 41-megapixel phone camera. Mercedes-Benz has invited Siri into its cars. And finally, if you missed using the Oscars app, don’t fret, the Washington Post has launched an app for the Presidential Election.
Career of the Month: Business Analyst

Scott Ambler, the practice leader of agile development for the IBM Methods Group and author of several books on software project management and agile development, says that first and foremost, business analysts (or as he terms it, business systems analysts, or BSAs) are responsible for communication and collaboration between the business and IT.

"The most important responsibilities of a BSA are to act as a communication conduit between the stakeholders and the team, to represent the stakeholder community to the development team if the developers themselves don't have direct access, and to translate the business needs for the team.

Ambler developed a list of eight activities that business systems analysts will usually perform on a traditional software development project:

1. **Scope the system.** At the outset of a project, business analysts may be the only "software development staff" assigned to the project, Ambler writes. And at this point, they work with key project stakeholders and business people to formulate and communicate the business vision for the project, map out initial requirements and the scope of the project. "Their fundamental goal is to get the project focused early by translating the initial high-level vision into something realistic," Ambler writes.

2. **Interpret business needs.** A critical responsibility of business analysts is "to work with project stakeholders to translate their requirements into something that developers can understand as well as to translate the resulting questions that the developers have into something the stakeholders can understand," A key skill needed in this part of the process is the business analyst's ability to distill the differing messages and needs of project stakeholders into a single, consistent vision.

3. **Translate technical issues.** Business analysts also have the arduous task of breaking down technical and architectural complexities so that project stakeholders can easily understand any issues that crop up, such as "why your HTML-based application can't have as slick of a user interface as a Visual Basic application," Ambler writes. "BSAs often explain what the developers are doing and why they need to do it, including explanations of the basis of schedules and estimates."

4. **Spell out the project details and requirements.** "BSAs will often work with project stakeholders to identify, model and then document their requirements and business domain details," Ambler notes.

5. **Put development team in touch with the right people.** "BSAs typically have very good connections within the business community," he writes, "and therefore are in a position to help development teams find the right people to work with."

6. **Political guide.** "BSAs often help project teams through the political minefields within their organizations, particularly when the BSA has worked within the same organization for several years," Ambler notes.

7. **Test and validation.** Business analysts work with project stakeholders to "validate their requirements and analysis models via techniques such as reviews, walkthroughs and play acting."

8. **Represent project stakeholders throughout the process.** If project teams don't have direct access to their project stakeholders, which is never a good situation, business analysts have to act as "stakeholder surrogates," Ambler suggests. "Typically developers will treat a BSA as the 'customer' from which requirements, domain information and business priorities are provided. The BSA, in turn, will work with the stakeholders to obtain information and to verify decisions."

For many years, a business analyst would apply general principles to just about every type of company, regardless of the industry affiliation. To a degree, this was often successful, as the basic principles regarding risk management, communication processes, utilization of labor, and process management translate well into just about any business setting. As computer technology emerged in the middle of the 20th century, the IT business analyst emerged as a way to help companies convert to electronic data use rather than relying strictly on traditional methods. Today, many business analysts continue to provide this level of service across the business community, often helping many struggling companies to make changes that put the operation on a better foundation.

**Business analyst salaries in 2008 averaged between $71,000 and $80,000 per year and range from $71,000-$120,000**
Association of Information Technology Professionals

The Student chapter of the Association of Information Technology Professionals is furiously preparing to HOST the 2012 National Collegiate Conference in San Antonio scheduled for March 29 – April 1st. This is one of the main events for the year. At this event college students from across the nation come together to listen to professional speakers, meet with prospective employers, and most importantly, to compete against their peers. Competitions include: Business analytics, COBOL, Database Design, Graphics Communications, Java Development, Mobile App. Development, MS Office Solutions, Network Design, PC Troubleshooting, IBM Enterprise RPG Web design, Security, Systems Analysis & Design, and finally, VS.NET. With this many competitions there is literally something for everyone.

Participating students use this event, and the corresponding regional conference, to set themselves apart. Competing in one or more competitions demonstrates self confidence and risk taking. Seeking out prospective employers, even for freshmen and sophomores, allows students, to identify what skills they need to acquire, what courses to take, and what other activities to get involved in to improve their chance for success. Finally, by starting early, as a freshman, and continuing to develop and hone your skills, students are better able to compete and earn the winning positions. This is important because it tells prospective employers, not only do you know the material, but you have tested your ability to apply it against your peers and have proven your abilities. Every college students should be a part of these events, and every high school students should strive to be a part of them.
Alumni

Last month we provided a picture from a not to long ago AITP National Collegiate Conference. I asked if anyone knew of the event and who the participants were. Phillip Mears filled us in with the information.

The event: 2004 AITP National Collegiate Conference, Omaha Nebraska (May 2004 – ish)
The people: From left to right:
Dr Marcos Sivitanides, Scott Crowder, Philip Mears, Jeff DeMuynk, Donald Berg, Aaron Gadberry,

Adam Awards:
Database Design (74 teams): Honorable Mention, Scott Crowder & Philip Mears
Systems Analysis & Design (37 teams): 2nd Place, Jeff DeMuynk & Philip Mears
C++ Programming (28 teams): 3rd Place, Donald Berg & Aaron Gadberry

Thanks Phillip, and if anyone knows Adam’s last name please fill me in.

This month we have a special treat. Take a close look at these individuals. They a look a little different today. Can you name them?

If you have any pictures from the past that you would be willing to share please pass them along.
Also, keep on the lookout. April the Student Chapter of AITP will be hosting their awards and celebration banquet. So mark your calendar now.
Important People

CIS Advisor: Bethany Mellum to make an appointment call 512-245-1993 or visit http://advising.mccoy.txstate.edu

CIS & QMST Administrative Assistant:
Marjann Warren

Important Dates

Graduation application deadline
Spring Break
Last day to drop class
Registration for Summer I and II
Last day to withdraw
Fall 2012 Registration
Computer Information Systems and Quantitative Methods Department
Texas State Student Chapter of AITP
AITP

March 9
March 11-18
March 22 by 5pm
March 26 – April 5
April 19
April 9-25
http://www.cis.txstate.edu/
http://www.txstateaitp.org/
http://www.aitp.org

For back copies of Bits & Bytes, or for white papers on What is CIS? What are the different types of technology degrees? Why