

# IS&T

News about Information Services and Technology throughout MIT

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*Inside! Schedules of Hands-on Training Courses and Free Computer Events*

On the Move: Mobile Partners User Group ..... **2**

**Software Spotlight**

Internet Explorer 7 Offers Fresh Face, Tighter Security ..... **3**

**Network Notes**

IS&T Renovates Data Centers in Buildings 24, W91, and W92 ..... **4**

**Bits and Bytes** ..... **4**

**Safe Computing**

Tips for Traveling Safely with Mobile Devices ..... **5**

Cultura Spans Continents for Cross-Cultural Learning ..... **5**

**Tech Tips: Internet Explorer 7** ..... **6**

2007 Getfit Web Site Shows Muscle of Its Own ..... **6**

**Telephone Talk**

Improved NameConnector Streamlines User Experience ..... **7**

Catch Up on Your Computing Know-how during IAP ..... **7**

**Getting Help** ..... **8**

**Surf Sites: Tools for Delivering Podcasts** ..... **8**

**Podcasts a Resounding Success in Foreign Language Classes**

• James Cain

**F**or almost two decades, MIT's Foreign Languages and Literatures (FL&L) section has developed innovative learning environments and tools for the classroom (*A la recontre de Philippe* 1989, *Star Festival* 1995, *Cultura* 1997, *Berliner sehen* 1998, *España de cerca* 2002). Recent projects have relied on emerging Web technologies and multimedia capabilities. This past year, with help from the Language Learning and Resource Center (LLARC), FL&L began exploring ways to use podcasting and mobile media players such as iPods in foreign language teaching. (A podcast is an audio or video broadcast you can subscribe to via the Web, that automatically downloads to your computer or mobile device through a syndication mechanism called RSS.)

Since January, LLARC computer specialist Joshua Aresty has been supporting faculty and students in planning, creating, and using podcasts. Five professors in FL&L have now incorporated podcasting into the curriculum. Three of these – Tong Chen, Kurt Fendt, and Margarita Ribas Groeger – actively used podcasts this past fall.

**Immersion**

The common theme in all these projects is immersion – enabling students to hear and speak as much of a foreign language as possible in the course of a

semester. Given the ubiquity of mobile devices (e.g., cell phones, mp3 players), students can now experience many types of media in nontraditional surroundings 24 hours a day. They can fit in a few minutes of language learning while riding the bus, walking the dog, or exercising in the gym. Podcasting, as a distribution medium, has changed the learning landscape, providing many more opportunities for immersion.

With the availability of free, authentically spoken material online and the ability to stitch together (“repodcast”) various podcast sources into a coherent narrative, LLARC has found that it can create effective instructional tools for coursework. Not surprisingly, new technologies also present new challenges. Some of the issues involved in using podcasting in courses include

- locating appropriate material and making it accessible
- organizing material into rational contextual chunks
- managing the accessibility of copyright-protected material.

**Repodcasting**

Tong Chen is a Lecturer in Chinese at MIT. He is using podcasting in several courses to prepare students for in-class presentations and assignments. Listening at their convenience, they gain a deeper understanding of class material. As background for a class on the Chinese New Year, for example, students listened to a relevant episode

*continued on page 2* ▶

## ▼ PODCASTS

continued from page 1

in the course podcast from ChinesePod, a web site for learning Mandarin. This and other relevant material were shared using Google Reader.

In addition, Chen has recorded short paragraphs as podcasts. Students transcribe this audio material into Pinyin with tone marks. After they receive corrected transcriptions, students re-record the same material and send the new audio clips to Chen for another round of correction. Other listening assignments include filling in the blanks and true-false questions. Chen used a free service at blip.tv to upload course assignments. These, along with other feeds, were aggregated through Google Reader and cleaned up using Feedburner to create a podcast for the students.

### Video to Go

Kurt Fendt is Research Director in FL&L and Comparative Media Studies. His upper-level German Culture, Media, and Society class is taught entirely in German. This fall, the course focused on recent German short film productions and radio plays. Much of the content came from recent film festivals and

radio art programs which, due to copyright restrictions, were made available as streaming media through the Meta-media framework and on iPods provided by LLARC.

Students further subscribed to at least five German podcasts from a variety of public radio and TV stations and other sources. The primary goal was to explore emerging forms of media convergence and how traditional German media institutions seek to incorporate user-created content into new forms of programming.

### Podcasts by Phone

For her Intermediate Spanish class, Lecturer Margarita Ribas Groeger wanted to give her students more opportunities to improve their fluency in speaking. Using student-created podcasts seemed like a good way to accomplish this task.

Looking for a simple way for students to create their own recordings, Groeger found an application, Gabcast, that lets the students post audio assignments to a class blog – on the WordPress site – by dialing a toll-free number and recording a message. This obviates the need to transform audio files to mp3s or upload them to the blog.

In addition to written assignments, Groeger asked students to describe

orally a favorite location, comment on a film, or respond to a news article – in Spanish. These recorded messages were available for the rest of the class to listen to, opening up the possibility of online audio discussions. Other assignments, also using Gabcast, helped students with their pronunciation and intonation.

Even though all the students' recordings were accessible on the Gabcast site, having a blog allowed Groeger and her students to add written comments, pictures, and other links to the audioposts.

At Groeger's request, LLARC is investigating tools that would allow for an oral threaded discussion, in the style of a regular online forum.

### Technology Watch

LLARC's Aresty is continuing to explore tools and services that better organize podcast materials from different sources. For an extended look at these tools – also used in courses developed by FL&L Professors Ellen Crocker and Ian Condry – see "Projects in Foreign Languages and Literatures Using Mobile Media Units" in *Ed Tech Times* at

[edtech.mit.edu/times/](http://edtech.mit.edu/times/)

To check out some of the tools firsthand, refer to Surf Sites on page 8. ☉



### On the Move: Mobile Partners User Group

The new MIT Mobile Partners User Group (MPUG) welcomes participants who are interested in software

and services for various mobile devices and PDAs. Initially, the group will gather input from the community on what mobile options are desired, and work closely with IS&T to develop a strategy for future mobile support. Due to the vast and rapidly changing nature of the mobile world, IS&T may not be able to accommodate everyone's needs or preferences. It will, however, work with MPUG to develop appropriate solutions that will meet most of the community's needs in this area. Currently, IS&T officially supports only mobile devices and PDAs running Palm OS; however, with help from MPUG, it is evaluating the MobilePC platform, among others.

### Meetings and Mailing List

MPUG meetings are held the third Friday of each month at 2 pm in the N42 Demo Center. For details, see the Mobile Partners User Group page at [web.mit.edu/mobilepartners/](http://web.mit.edu/mobilepartners/)

MPUG maintains a mailing list ([mobilepartners@mit.edu](mailto:mobilepartners@mit.edu)) for discussions, meeting announcements, and information of interest to mobile users. This list is for members of the MIT community only. To join or remove yourself from the list, go to [mailman.mit.edu/mailman/listinfo/mobilepartners](http://mailman.mit.edu/mailman/listinfo/mobilepartners)

If you have questions or suggestions about mobile options, contact Andrew Yu, the IS&T Mobile Devices Platform Coordinator, at [<andrewyu@mit.edu>](mailto:andrewyu@mit.edu).

### Other Technology User Groups

IS&T sponsors many IT user groups on campus – from the Brio/Data Warehouse group to one for web publishers. For the full list, go to [itinfo.mit.edu/usergroup.php](http://itinfo.mit.edu/usergroup.php) ☉



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### Managing Editor

Robyn Fizz

### Writer/Editor

Lee Ridgway

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## Internet Explorer 7 Offers Fresh Face, Tighter Security

• Lee Ridgway

On November 1, Microsoft began distributing Internet Explorer 7 (IE7) through Windows Automatic Updates. IE7 is the first completely new version of the Windows native browser since IE6 was introduced in 2001.

### Compatibility with MIT Sites

IS&T testing of IE7 on Windows XP SP2 turned up no major incompatibilities or conflicts with MIT and ECAT vendors' web sites; updating should not cause any serious problems for the MIT community. Updating from IE6 to IE7 preserves user settings and options, bookmarks, and MIT certificates.

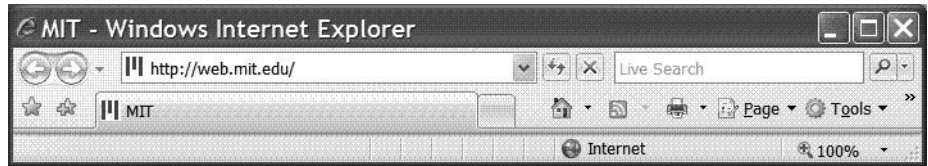
### Distribution

Microsoft is conducting a phased distribution of IE7; users subscribed to Windows Automatic Updates will be notified when IE7 is ready to install, even if their default is to automatically download and install. For subscribers to MIT's Windows Automatic Update Service (WAUS), distribution of IE7 will take place in early January 2007. Subscribers to the MIT WAUS who wish to upgrade before January can download IE7 by going to Microsoft's Internet Explorer home page at [www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/](http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/)

Although MIT's WAUS is not yet distributing IE7 itself, it will deploy patches for IE7 immediately following their release by Microsoft.

### Certificates

Existing MIT personal certificates are carried over from IE6 to IE7 and function properly, although a twist has been added for getting a new personal certificate. The first time you try to get a new MIT personal certificate in IE7, you will encounter a security-related action, Certificate Enrollment Control, which did not occur in previous versions of IE. Handling this requires a few extra one-time-only steps. For instructions, go to *IE7 for Windows XP: Obtaining MIT Certificates* at [itinfo.mit.edu/article.php?id=8225#personal](http://itinfo.mit.edu/article.php?id=8225#personal) and click the **Get the MIT Personal Certificate** link.



In IE7, most of the function icons are now on the right.

### New Look and Feel

IE7 sports a redesigned interface. Instead of menus and a separate bar of icons, there are now just icons for the most common functions. To find out what an icon does, hold the mouse pointer over it for a few seconds; a small text box appears, describing the icon. Some icons have submenus, which you can display by clicking the small down arrow to the right of the icon. If you prefer the familiar menus of earlier IE versions, display them temporarily by pressing the ALT key. To display the menus permanently, go to the **Tools** menu and click **Menu Bar**.

### New Features

Several new features in IE7 will be familiar to those who have used recent versions of other browsers.

- *Tabbed browsing* lets you open pages in new tabs within a single browser window, then switch between them by clicking the tabs at the top of the browser frame.
- With IE7's *instant search*, you can enter a query either in the address bar or in the search box at the top right of the browser window. The default search engine is Microsoft's Live Search, but you can set it to another provider.
- IE7 offers *automatic detection of RSS feeds* on web sites, which are indicated by the illuminated RSS icon on the toolbar. Click the icon to preview and optionally subscribe to a site's RSS feed.
- *Print preview* lets you adjust margins and resize text. IE7 also automatically scales web pages to the width of the paper specified for printing.

### Security Measures

IE7 addresses security concerns through a variety of new protection features. Among the most noticeable is ActiveX Opt-in. This disables nearly all installed ActiveX controls – which provide functions similar to Java applets – to prevent potentially vulnerable

controls from being exposed to attack. You can easily enable or disable ActiveX controls as needed through the **Information Bar** and the **Add-on Manager**.

The Phishing Filter can help protect from phishing attacks, online fraud, and spoofed web sites. (Phishing is when someone masquerades online as a legitimate person or business to gain information for fraudulent purposes.)

To protect your browsing privacy, you can delete temporary files, cookies, browsing and page history, saved passwords, and form information from one place by going to the **Tools** menu and clicking **Delete Browsing History**. You can delete selected categories, or everything at once. The secure-page padlock indicating connection to a secure web page, although not new, now appears just to the right of the web address bar at the top of the browser window; in previous versions of IE it was displayed at the bottom of the window.

Some of the security settings in **Internet Options**, under the **Tools** menu, have changed in IE7. Under the **Security** tab, in the Internet zone, the security level Medium in IE6 becomes Medium-high in IE7. This setting is endorsed for use at MIT. IS&T does not recommend the High setting in IE7, since testing indicates that many secure web sites fail with it. Under the **Privacy** tab, the default setting is Medium, which IS&T recommends.

### Support

To get acquainted with IE7, check out Microsoft's Internet Explorer home page, with its tabbed tour of new features. IS&T also maintains an Internet Explorer at MIT page at

[itinfo.mit.edu/product.php?vid=727](http://itinfo.mit.edu/product.php?vid=727)

It includes links to known issues and system requirements, as well as tips for installing and using the program.

Note that IS&T does not support IE7 for the Macintosh. If you need help with IE7 on your Windows machine, contact the Computing Help Desk at 253-1101 or <computing-help@mit.edu>. ☺





## IS&T Renovates Data Centers in Buildings 24, W91, and W92

• Jag Patel

Information Services and Technology (IS&T) maintains four major data centers on the MIT campus, which together provide critical network and data services. Three of the four facilities are being renovated to ensure IS&T's continued ability to provide a world-class IT infrastructure for the research and educational needs of the Institute.

These renovations will expand and improve key components of the physical infrastructure, including power, cooling, and backup systems.

### Buildings 24 and W92

IS&T data centers in Buildings 24 and W92 provide core network services to the campus, including external connections to the Internet outside MIT. These centers host switches, routers, and name servers to manage network traffic.

Additional services from these centers include email services (IMAP post office servers and spam screening devices), central web services (web.mit.edu and MIT Google), and the next generation of communication services, such as Voice over IP (VoIP).

### Building W91

The data center in W91 provides physically secured and environmentally controlled facilities to house and manage MIT's enterprise computing services, including SAP, Library services, Alumni services, desktop and server backups, and central print services.

W91 also offers co-location services for MIT clients who wish to locate servers in the data center for reasons of space, power, cooling, or network connectivity. These co-location services include high-power clusters (HPCs) for research computing. The IBM Blue Gene supercomputer is among the hosted research computers.

### Staying Cool

Data centers have significant electricity needs, for the computers in place and for year-round air conditioning to cool the room and the devices. Even when temperatures have been relatively cool outdoors, temperatures in MIT's data centers have occasionally reached above 95 degrees, which places undue stress on the computing equipment.

According to The Uptime Institute ([www.uptime.com](http://www.uptime.com)), "While the floor space required for a fixed level of computing work has shrunk (technology compaction), the energy efficiency of equipment has not dropped at the same rate. As a result, the density of power consumed and the heat dissipated within the footprint of communication and computer hardware products has increased significantly." As technology improves and services are added, better infrastructure is needed to power and cool each data center.

IS&T's cooling system upgrades in W92 and 24 will use glycol cooling units, which are more cost effective than the existing systems. When temperatures are lower outside, the glycol cooling system can provide "free cooling" by bypassing areas of the cooling system that require additional power to run. This reduces the overall energy requirements of the room.

### 24/7 Availability

The upgrades will provide more reliable redundant electrical power and battery backups. In W92, if commercial power is lost from NSTAR, an on-site backup generator can power the data center for up to 30 hours based on load in use. Two uninterruptible power supply (UPS) units provide battery backup power during the transfer period, to ensure that power transfers cleanly between the commercial source and the backup generator.

Network services between Buildings 24 and W92 are redundant: in the event of a network failure in either data center, there are fiber connections between them to allow the network to continue to function in both areas.

### Renovations to Finish in Spring

The renovations in Building 24 were phased; the power upgrades and battery backup systems were installed in late 2005, and redundant cooling systems will be added by Spring 2007. The renovations in W91 are expected to be complete by January 2007, with a follow-on project to expand the cooling infrastructure (chillers and cooling tower). The renovations in W92 are expected to finish in February, with significant work taking place between the Christmas and New Year holidays. ☺



*This column presents announcements about IS&T-supported software. For more information about recent releases, see [web.mit.edu/swrt/](http://web.mit.edu/swrt/)*

## IS&T and IT Colleagues Prepare for Release of Microsoft Vista

To prepare the MIT community for Microsoft's Windows Vista operating system, IS&T has worked with IT colleagues across campus and at other schools to outline a phased release process and support strategy. At this time, IS&T strongly recommends that community members wait to upgrade to Vista until their Department, Lab, or Center (DLC) is ready to make the transition. IS&T anticipates that most software vendors will have Vista-compatible versions available by Summer 2007, but some will lag.

IS&T will make Vista media available as soon as possible to the DLC Software Liaisons. The current estimate from Microsoft is that IS&T could have media in hand by February. IS&T also plans to make a download option available around the same time. To find out who your DLC's software liaison is, visit

[web.mit.edu/ist/services/software/msca.html](http://web.mit.edu/ist/services/software/msca.html)

In the meantime, IS&T has reached out to IT colleagues in the DLCs and will continue to work with them to evaluate Vista in their various computing environments at MIT.

Transitioning to Vista is complex – there are new hardware requirements; some critical software does not work with Vista (e.g., TSM, FileMaker, SAP-gui); and it has a new user interface and many new features. IS&T highly recommends that you work with your local IT staff to plan your transition, and remember that they too need time to learn Vista in order to provide robust support.

### Updates

IS&T will share frequent updates on the Windows Vista release with the MIT community. For current information, including the planned phases for the release and known issues, see the Windows Vista Release Notebook at [web.mit.edu/swrt/releases/vista/](http://web.mit.edu/swrt/releases/vista/). If you have questions or comments, send mail to [vista-release@mit.edu](mailto:vista-release@mit.edu). ☺



## Tips for Traveling Safely with Mobile Devices

• Monique Yeaton

Travelers today often take a laptop, PDA, mobile phone, or smart phone with them. Connecting to the Internet and accessing business or school networks when traveling is relatively simple, but can still create some unique security challenges.



Here are a few tips to maintain secure connectivity on the road.

- Use iPassConnect, a service provided by MIT for a small fee to access MIT-net using a dial-up, wireless, or wired broadband connection.

[itinfo.mit.edu/product.php?name=ipass](http://itinfo.mit.edu/product.php?name=ipass)

For advice on ensuring trouble-free connections, see an earlier *is&t* article "Connecting from Off Campus This Summer? Prepare and Test!"

[web.mit.edu/ist/isnews/v21/n05/210509.html](http://web.mit.edu/ist/isnews/v21/n05/210509.html)

- Using WiFi-service in places such as airports, cyber cafés or hotel lobbies is not a secure way to access networks. You should avoid using these venues to connect to password-protected areas such as your email or bank account. If you need to, create a one-time password and then change it as soon as you can, once you're out of the public eye.
- The same rule applies when using someone else's computer while attending an off-site workshop. You may be given an Administrator password that is identical on all computers in the classroom. Any student could install a keystroke logger on the computers, so checking email during class may not be wise.
- To help you make a secure network connection when you find yourself in either of the above situations, MIT provides a Virtual Private Network (VPN). You can download the VPN software from the MIT site at [web.mit.edu/ist/services/network/vpn.html](http://web.mit.edu/ist/services/network/vpn.html)

Other things to keep in mind:

- Encrypt sensitive data to block WiFi and Bluetooth access, whether on your PDA or laptop. Encrypted data requires a password for access. For Palm OS devices, use the built-in Security application to set the password and auto lock. For other mobile devices, contact the vendor for recommended protection products.
- Put a STOP tag on your mobile device to help deter theft. Tagged devices are registered in a worldwide tracking system, resulting in a higher recovery rate, whether they are lost or stolen.

[web.mit.edu/ist/topics/security/physical.html#laptop-resources](http://web.mit.edu/ist/topics/security/physical.html#laptop-resources)

- Create a backup of your laptop's hard drive before you go. Use a compact USB flash drive or other portable storage to copy and carry files that are most critical when traveling.

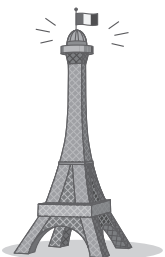
Most of all, think about the risks you are accepting when you access networks while traveling. Awareness is the key to staying safe! ☛

## Cultura Spans Continents for Cross-Cultural Learning

• Rich Garcia and Carter Snowden

The suburbs – quiet, peaceful, well-to-do. But the French word "banlieue," given in the dictionary as the equivalent word, doesn't convey that at all – the suburbs are where poverty and unemployment have recently fueled violence and riots. Lexically, the words are equivalent, but culturally they are completely different.

Teaching cultural differences and similarities is part of the focus of French III (21F.303), using an instructional framework called Cultura. Cultura was developed by Senior Lecturer Gilberte Furstenberg and colleagues, with funding from the National Endowment for the Humanities. In her implementation, a class studying French



at MIT is paired with a class studying English at a French university: both classes are given a set of questionnaires in their native language. While this may, on its face, seem counterintuitive, it gives students at the other end a taste of real idiomatic language usage as they read and discuss the answers, first within their respective classes, then – via online forums – with their overseas counterparts.

### The Cultura Toolset

As the Cultura method matured, the need for a robust and extendable management tool became apparent. In consultation with Furstenberg, MIT's Academic Computing group built a toolset to manage the workflow associated with

- Collaborative creation and editing of questionnaires
- Publishing the questionnaires online
- Capture, management, and publishing of student responses
- Management of online discussions based on questionnaire responses

In addition, the toolset was built using the widely understood and supported LAMP (Linux, Apache, MySQL, PHP) architecture and is being made available, in open source, to other institutions who wish to become Cultura "hosts." The toolset supports almost any combination of languages. As of this printing, Brandeis, Cornell, and Columbia have begun working with the toolset. The Cultura tools also include a central registration site. Upon registering at that site, an institution becomes available as a potential partner in all host sites.



### Learn More About It

You can browse Cultura's web site at [web.mit.edu/french/culturaNEH](http://web.mit.edu/french/culturaNEH)

To get a student perspective on the learning experience that Cultura provides, see the blog entry at [www.mitadmissions.org/topics/learning/libraries\\_facilities\\_computing/cultura.shtml](http://www.mitadmissions.org/topics/learning/libraries_facilities_computing/cultura.shtml) ☛



This column presents tips about computing. If you have a question you would like to see answered here, send it via email to <techtips@mit.edu>.

For more information technology Q&As, check the IS&T Stock Answers database at [itinfo.mit.edu/answer/](http://itinfo.mit.edu/answer/)

Internet Explorer 7 (IE7) was designed by Microsoft to make web surfing safer and easier. Here are a few tips to help you make the most of this long-awaited browser.

**Q** I want to protect myself against web sites that steal personal information. How do I turn on IE7's phishing filter?

**A** Open IE7, go to the **Tools** menu, select **Phishing Filter**, and then turn on **Automatic Website Checking**.

You can also manually check any web site you visit using IE7 by going to the **Tools** menu, selecting **Phishing Filter**, and then clicking **Check This Web Site**.

**Q** What is the Quick Tabs feature in IE7?

**A** When you have opened multiple web pages using IE7's tab feature, each web page is displayed on a separate tab. The tabs make it easy for users to switch between open web pages. Quick Tabs provides a miniature visual view (called a thumbnail) of all your open tabs. This thumbnail view makes it easier to find the web page that you want to see. To view the thumbnails, click the **Quick Tabs** button to the left of the row of tabs. This button will only display when you have more than one web page open.

**Q** Where can I find a list of useful keyboard shortcuts for IE7?

**A** Microsoft provides a Quick Reference sheet at

[www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/ie7/about/quickreference.mspx](http://www.microsoft.com/windows/ie/ie7/about/quickreference.mspx)

You can download and print a PDF version if you want to keep a copy handy.

**Q** I have added different toolbars and browser extensions that have rendered IE7 unusable. Short of uninstalling and reinstalling, is there anything I can do to make the browser work again?

**A** Microsoft has introduced a new feature in IE7 called Reset Internet Explorer Settings (RIES).

To invoke RIES, go to the **Tools** menu, select **Internet Options>Advanced Tab**, and click the **Reset** button. If IE7 is in a state where it cannot be started, you can access the RIES option from **Internet Options** in the Windows Control Panel. RIES disables all toolbars, browser extensions, and customizations installed by the user.

To use any of these disabled customizations, you'll need to enable them selectively through the **Manage Add-ons** dialog (under the **Tools** menu). For web pages with ActiveX controls, you'll need to approve running specific ActiveX controls just as you did the first time you encountered them. ●

## 2007 Getfit Web Site Shows Muscle of Its Own

• Robyn Fizz

**B**ehind the scenes, [getfit@mit.edu](mailto:getfit@mit.edu) has been getting in shape for its third year. Presented by MIT Medical, with support from several sponsors, [getfit@mit](mailto:getfit@mit) helps participants harness the benefits of positive peer pressure through a three-month, team-oriented fitness challenge. The goal is to foster a healthier MIT by encouraging community members to get out and exercise.



Registration for 2007's [getfit@mit](mailto:getfit@mit) challenge will open in late December through the web site at [getfit.mit.edu/2007/](http://getfit.mit.edu/2007/)

During the registration period, you can download material to help organize your team. The challenge itself starts on Monday, January 22.

### Minutes and Percentiles

Each week during the program, participants track the minutes they spend doing solo or group physical activities. One new option for 2007 is that individual participants can submit their own time totals at the end of each week, though team captains can still handle this task if preferred. Participants can follow their progress online and see the weekly average for their team. This year, instead of displaying team and individual results as a long, multi-page list, the [getfit@mit](mailto:getfit@mit) web site will sort teams and individuals by decile rank.

### A Fit New Look

Part of [getfit](mailto:getfit@mit)'s own pumping up is visible in the web site's look and feel. It's easy to select from a host of tips and tools, from calculators and a tunnel map to a list of MIT resources. A section on the top right features upcoming events such as yoga classes or outdoor group walks. A panel below it highlights the benefits of exercise, perks for participants, and prizes. With a lot more content on the site this year, participants can use the search box to hone in on activities of interest. This well-built interface was designed by staff in

IS&T's Departmental Consulting and Application Development (DCAD) group.

### The IT Connection

The technology that supports [getfit@mit](mailto:getfit@mit) has also been retooled. A MySQL database logs minutes and generates reports. It lives on an xen virtual server that runs Red Hat Linux and is housed in IS&T's data center in W91.

[Getfit@mit](mailto:getfit@mit) uses Word Press blogging software for content management and to provide for more interactivity. This makes it easier for participants to give feedback or ask questions of the [getfit](mailto:getfit@mit) team. On most days, for example, the [getfit@mit](mailto:getfit@mit) web site will provide a tip of the day. Participants can log into the site and comment on these tips: "I did a tunnel walk yesterday and met a colleague I hadn't seen in two years. She's participating too, so we walked and talked together for 30 minutes!"

### Take the Plunge

[Getfit@mit](mailto:getfit@mit) for 2007 is in great shape at the starting line – with a redesigned web site, new options, and more interactivity. Are you ready for the challenge? Join a team and sign up soon! ●





## Improved NameConnector Streamlines User Experience

• Lee Ridgway

If you are a regular caller to MIT's main phone number, 617-253-1000, you may have noticed recent changes to the prompts in NameConnector, the automated voice response system for MIT's switchboard. Parlance Corporation has upgraded MIT's installation of NameConnector to improve and expedite interaction with the system.

### Hands-Free Interactions

The upgrade increases reliability in name recognition by mitigating background noise and by better understanding callers with strong accents. Also, the caller's interaction with Name Connector has been streamlined in ways that make hands-free operation easier.

- The initial prompt has been simplified so that you can immediately say a person's name or that of a department, lab, center, or residence hall; you no longer need to press a button before asking for an individual.

- NameConnector recognizes specific words, such as "ok", "proceed," or "cancel" for controlling the system without having to press any keys.
- If you are familiar with the NameConnector prompts, you can "bargain in" and say a name or control word to complete the call more quickly.

### Variations on a Name

NameConnector can accommodate up to five variants of your name, as it

appears in the MIT Directory. For example, if your "official" name is Thomas Smith-Jones, you can request NameConnector to also recognize

- Tom Smith-Jones
- Tom Smith
- Tom Jones

To get variants added to your listing, send them in email to <nameconnector@mit.edu>, or call 253-1000 and ask to speak to the operator. ☎

### Tips for Using NameConnector

Keep the following in mind to help NameConnector process calls:

- In an emergency, as soon as NameConnector states "You've reached MIT," say "Police" or "Medical."
- When asking for a person, give the name only. Don't include a title, department, or multiple variants to a name.
- Speak naturally and in a normal tone of voice. You do not need to speak more slowly or deliberately, or insert pauses.
- If NameConnector does not recognize the name the first time, say "cancel" and repeat the name again.
- To report a problem or ask a question, say "problem report line."

## Catch Up on Your Computing Know-how during IAP

• Robyn Fizz

IAP is just around the corner and, once again, IS&T is offering a flurry of talks and workshops that cover IT trends and tips for using software. What follows is just a sampling. For a complete listing of IS&T offerings, see [student.mit.edu/iap/nsis.html](http://student.mit.edu/iap/nsis.html)

### Introduction to MATLAB

Multiple sessions, with two tracks: MATLAB on laptops and MATLAB on Athena. Check online for details.

MATLAB is the most commonly used math software at MIT. In this series, topics covered range from programming to linear algebra, from statistics to graphics and visualization. Note that these hands-on workshops require advanced sign-up. Participants are welcome to attend individual sessions; some of the sessions have prerequisites.

### IT Overview with Data Center Tour

Jan 9, 2:00 pm–3:30 pm, 10-105  
Jan 23, 2:00 pm–3:30 pm, 10-105

IS&T staff will provide an overview of MITnet services (e.g., wired, wireless, vlan topology, regional fiber network expansion) and a tour of the recently renovated W91 and W92 Data Centers. The tour in W91 will include a briefing on co-location services.

### Image Tools for Teaching and Learning

Jan 18, noon–2:00 pm, 1-150

Image tools are applications that provide access to image collections, usually some form of digital repository. Digital repositories run the gamut from a local file system to a full-featured, server-based application such as DSpace or Harvestroad Hive.

This session will focus on image tools that support (or will soon support) access to heterogeneous repositories. It will identify the features that make these tools useful in a classroom setting, and show examples of how these tools may be used. Related topics of

"fair use" of digital content, metadata, federated searching, authentication, and authorization will also be discussed.

### Effective Practices for Description of Science Content within Digital Talking Books

Jan 30, 1:00–2:00 pm, 3-133

Guest speaker Bryan Gould of WGBH National Center for Accessible Media will present an introduction to digital talking books and to recommended practices for describing visual material within them – with a focus on science, technology, engineering, and math.

### FileMaker Migration Workshop

Feb 2, noon–2:00 pm, N42 Demo Center

Participants may bring copies of their FileMaker v5.x/6 databases (one to three tables maximum; no sensitive data, please), and will be walked through the process of converting them to FileMaker 8.5. Registration is required in advance for hands-on participants. Those who just want to observe do not need to sign up in advance. ☎



If you don't know where to get help for your computer, network, or telephone problems, dial one of the help lines listed to the right.

If you prefer to use email, you can send your questions to the corresponding email addresses on the far right. (When logged into Athena, you can also use the `olc` command to send questions to Athena's online consultants.)

You can also submit a question online via the Request Tracker link on the Getting Help page at [web.mit.edu/ist/help/](http://web.mit.edu/ist/help/)

**For help with...**

**Dial...**

**Or send a message to...**

General computing questions Macintosh, Windows, network/ connectivity, business applications, computer buying advice	253-1101	<a href="mailto:computing-help@mit.edu">computing-help@mit.edu</a>
Academic computing	253-0115	<a href="mailto:et-consult@mit.edu">et-consult@mit.edu</a>
Athena Computing Environment	253-4435	<a href="mailto:olc@mit.edu">olc@mit.edu</a>
Computer and printer repairs	253-0815	<a href="mailto:pcservice@mit.edu">pcservice@mit.edu</a>
Disabilities and computing	253-7808	<a href="mailto:atic@mit.edu">atic@mit.edu</a>
Telephone and voice mail services	253-3670	<a href="mailto:telecom-csr@mit.edu">telecom-csr@mit.edu</a>
Telephone repairs	253-4357	<a href="mailto:3help@mit.edu">3help@mit.edu</a>
Unix/Linux	253-1103	<a href="mailto:unix-linux-help@mit.edu">unix-linux-help@mit.edu</a>



**Surf Sites: Tools for Delivering Podcasts**

MIT's Foreign Languages and Literatures (FL&L) section, in collaboration with the Language Learning and Resource Center (LLARC), has explored many tools and services while figuring out effective ways to integrate podcasts and mobile media devices into its curriculum (see lead article). This is an active area of development, and new tools and services appear everyday.

The links on the right represent a snapshot of tools and services that FL&L and LLARC have tapped as they experiment with podcasting in – and outside of – the classroom.

[Blip.tv](http://blip.tv/) [*Free Podcasting Host*]  
[blip.tv/](http://blip.tv/)

[Del.icio.us](http://del.icio.us/) [*Social Bookmarking*]  
[del.icio.us/](http://del.icio.us/)

[Feedburner](http://www.feedburner.com/) [*Feed Normalization and Tracking*]  
[www.feedburner.com/](http://www.feedburner.com/)

[Gabcast](http://gabcast.com/) [*Podcasting and Audioblogging Platform*]  
[gabcast.com/](http://gabcast.com/)

[Google Reader](http://reader.google.com/) [*Reader for News Sites and Blogs*]  
[reader.google.com/](http://reader.google.com/)

[Reblog](http://reblog.org/) [*Tool for Filtering and Republishing Feeds*]  
[reblog.org/](http://reblog.org/)

[WordPress](http://wordpress.com/) [*Free Blogging Provider*]  
[wordpress.com/](http://wordpress.com/)



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