

RESEARCH BRIEFS

How Does Technology Change Who We Are?



Dr. Jim Berger

Jim Berger, an assistant professor in Special Instructional Programs, has been awarded a Regular Faculty Scholarship to do an exploratory study to determine just how adult learners adapt to new technology. Dr. Berger posits that technology is imbedded with cultural values of the dominant culture. As newcomers to the technology attempt to learn and use these technologies, they face the choice of adapting to the scripts, modifying those scripts, or rejecting them. If users follow imbedded scripts, there is potential for users to face pressure to adapt their actions to enhance the performance of the technology. This adaptation carried out over several behaviors could modify thinking and beliefs at the individual level. If users attempt to modify the scripts, they face the dangers of the technology performing

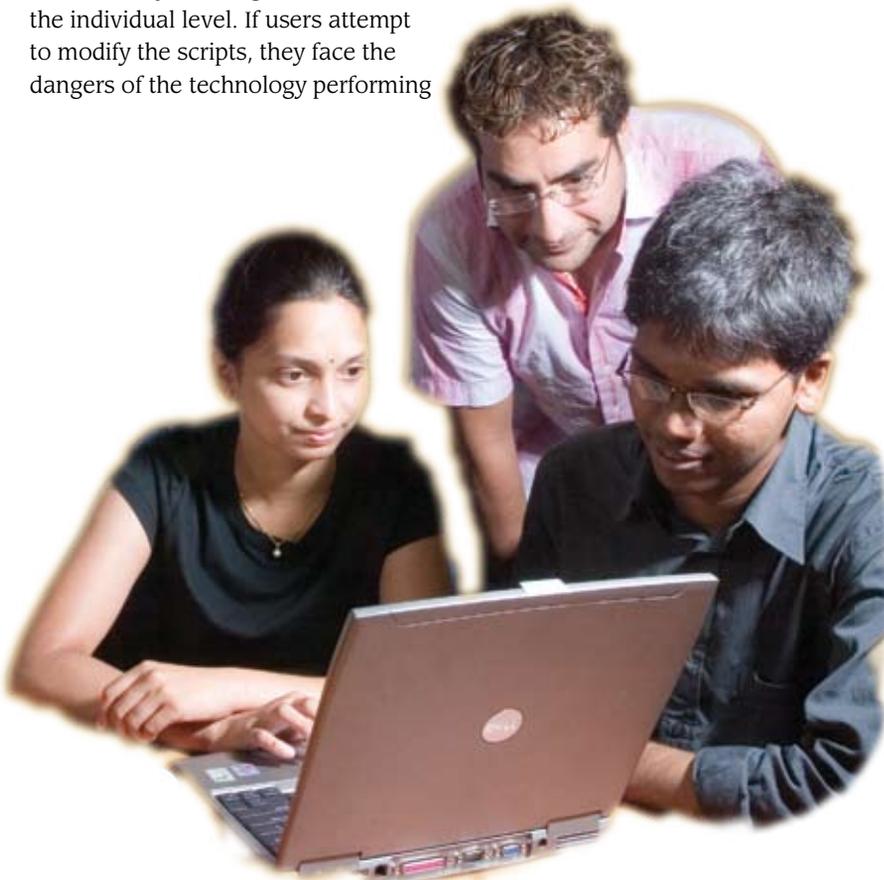
less well than desired, or worse, being dangerous. If users reject the use of the artifact altogether, they face alienation and ostracization from society. Individuals who reject or who are unable to afford the use of such technologies as computers, the Internet, telephones, and cell phones, are often considered to be out of the "mainstream" of society. Dr. Berger believes that his project will add to understanding how groups of people from various cultures are changed by the use of technology, and he hopes to find differences in how members of different cultures view technology's use. This study is timely for adult learners who might be marginalized unless they learn how to use technology for career advancement.



Teacher Discourse during Foreign Language Instruction

WKU's strong international programs require the best in foreign language instruction to give students every advantage when they go overseas as part of their academic programs; and instructors should be familiar with best teaching practices to ensure students are well prepared when they study abroad.

Dr. Carol Wilkerson, Professor and Head of the Department of Modern Languages, is undertaking a research project through a Faculty Scholarship to explore language instruction at WKU, with likely implications for programs throughout the country. Research on her topic is limited. She plans to explore the issues related to teachers' choice of language for instruction and teacher anxiety about language proficiency, and to address ways to encourage teaching in the target language.



International Students' Health Study

Each year, college campuses in America welcome an increasing and diverse population of international students. Grace Larty, assistant professor of public health, is using her Faculty Scholarship award to study factors influencing the health promotion behaviors of these students.

People from different environments and backgrounds have unique ideas and cultures. International students enrich the cultural diversity on American college campuses, increase the revenue of these colleges, and contribute to the development of their native countries. International students speak different languages and have unique social, economic, and health concerns. Hard as they try, often these students are not able to assimilate the culture of the host country. Facilities to promote and improve healthy behaviors are in place on most college campuses but there are no studies indicating how often international students use these facilities.

Having experienced life on an American campus as an international student herself, Grace Larty will conduct



a study of international students' health. Dr. Larty is especially interested in studying the impact of the new culture of the American university upon international students. Variables studied will be nutrition, exercise, and the use of health care services. She will try to determine the barriers and the benefits of healthy practices. International student centers throughout the United States and elsewhere will be interested in her discoveries.



Native Filmmaking and Cultural Protocols

Kristin Dowell, assistant professor of anthropology, will study the incorporation of indigenous cultural protocols within the media practices of Native filmmakers with her Faculty Scholarship award. This new project builds upon her previous research with urban Aboriginal filmmakers in Vancouver, British Columbia. She studies how Native filmmakers, historically misrepresented in mainstream media, reclaim the screen to tell Native stories while strengthening Native cultural identity, community, and kinship off-screen. She is developing a comparative ethnographic research project to analyze the impact of national policy in Canada and the United States on the ability of Native filmmakers to produce and distribute their work.

She is developing a second research site in Santa Fe, the center of Native art production in the United States, to determine how Native

artists, activists, and filmmakers use media to document oral histories and maintain cultural traditions. Research at this site will enable Dr. Dowell to compare the impact of media within the Native art world in Santa Fe with the strong role of media in Vancouver's Aboriginal art world. Much of her evidence will be derived from viewing Native films, speaking with local Native artists and filmmakers, and mapping the spaces of Native media production in Santa Fe.

Additionally, Dr. Dowell is organizing "Sovereign Screens: Global Indigenous Media," an international indigenous film festival to be hosted by the School for Advanced Research in Santa Fe in June 2008. In addition to the Faculty Scholarship Award, Dr. Dowell's research has been supported by the Ethel-Jane Westfeldt Bunting Fellowship at the School for Advanced Research.