

HUMPHREYS COLLEGE

NEWSLETTER

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“EXPLORING CONTINENTS OF CONNECTIVITY”

An Interview with Fabian Echevarria



Stanislav Perkner

While larger colleges hire ever-expanding teams of computer specialists to maintain their computer infrastructure, Humphreys College’s own Fabian Echevarria provides an invaluable service to us all on a one-man basis. Humphreys College is happy to have him working behind the scenes.

What led up to your arrival at Humphreys College?

Before arriving at Humphreys College, I worked for about four years in the corporate records department of what was then the nation’s fifth largest mortgage bank, at which time I earned a certificate in Mortgage Loan Servicing from the Institute of Financial Education. Working at the mortgage bank proved to be a rewarding experience, both personally and professionally, as it eventually led into an equally rewarding job in the Financial Aid Department here at Humphreys College in mid-1996, a welcome duty that lasted until the closure of the Sacramento campus.

Financial Aid seems quite removed from the computer field, so how did you come to be in your current position?

Well, even though I had assisted with various systems for sometime before, it wasn't until late 1998 that I began "officially" assisting with some of the information technology operations at the various campuses as I'd had a fair amount of experience having been a computer hobbyist since my early youth. It's that early experience that allowed me to accumulate a modest amount of knowledge by active participation in the computer technology field since the beginning of the "personal computer era." A year earlier, in 1997, I had created a website with information and instructions regarding enhancing Internet performance for the average user. In early 1999, I rewrote it for Maximum PC magazine, which they published in the July issue. That same year, I wrote another article for Maximum PC, which was published in the November 1999 issue. I think those articles perhaps served as my vindication, since shortly after I was offered the computer position here at the College. The same magazine later chose both of the articles I wrote for them to appear in their "best of" issue, published in late 2000.

To what extent have computers changed our lives?

I feel I've had a unique perspective on how computers have changed themselves and the world over the years—which I'd recently heard termed as the "computer revolution." Though I think "second wave of the computer's evolution" would seem more appropriate. While the paperless office has yet to arrive, I believe the computer continues to be a boon to the operation of any business, even more so with the proliferation of networked systems which provide an almost limitless spread of information, discussion and freedom to work and explore as a functional group rather than individually. It wasn't too long ago when only one, possibly two computers at any office had access to e-mail, the Internet or business information, but now that businesses have begun to see that a network allows resource and information sharing on an expansive level, those islands of connectivity have been replaced by continents of connectivity. This has benefited most businesses by reducing the total cost of operation since—for example—an individual printer is no longer needed on each desk, allowing a release from the purchase and maintenance of multiple pieces of similar equipment to the purchase and maintenance of one or two.

Humphreys College offers various classes related to both the understanding and the practical use of computer technology. How do you think the Internet has changed or augmented those goals?

Integrating the Internet into the curriculum and striving to increase the infrastructure used to access the vast stores of information available via the College's computer network and the introduction to the varied business uses of the computer will prove to be the lasting legacy in the education of students in many of our programs. Though I defer to the better judgment of our professional educators to plan out exactly how that will be accomplished, I simply maintain the infrastructure.

To which extent are computers influencing your private life?

While I truly enjoy working towards those future goals with the College, my own personal goals are far less lofty. I do spend a fair amount of my free time using a computer, but perhaps not exactly the way you would envision. My hobby time is spent working on the creation or editing of various computer picture files (a.k.a. “graphics”), the College’s website logo is an example of the graphic manipulations I perform in my spare time—when I originally received the logo for the College website it was plain black and white, similar to what is on the cover of the college catalog.

Many of us, Humphreys instructors and administrators, have benefited from knowledge and experience. We appreciate your gift to explain the secrets of your trade in lay terms. Have you ever thought of a teaching career?

While the thought is intriguing, I’m certain my lack of formal training in the field would limit any such career opportunities. (Despite the fact that I’ve probably forgotten the majority of it, my education dealt strictly with the finances of mortgage loans.)

What is your life credo?

I don’t follow any singular credo; instead, I try to follow the best advice from those who have traveled the path before me. I’ve a lot yet to learn. Hmmm, I guess that could be taken as a singular “life credo.”

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POETRY CORNER



*For Better or Worse
By a poetic parishioner
--a fable for our times
Michael Duffett*

*Jane and John were equal
They were both the same.
They looked around about them
And saw all as a great game.*

*“We’re as good as anyone,
We stand firm and tall,
We don’t look down and we don’t look up
To anyone at all.”*

*James and Genevieve were different,
As different as chalk and cheese.
They looked up but never down,
Spent time upon their knees.*

*They knew they had a lot to learn
Though they were nobly-born.
They looked up to their betters,
Treated nobody with scorn.*

*So where does all this looking up,
Unequal and so odd,
End, you may be wondering?
It ends, of course, with God.*

*He looks down upon us
And the ones he truly sees
Are those of us who are looking up,
Praying on their knees.*

GUEST EDITORIAL

First Lady Laura Bush

Rowena Walker

The more I see of her, the more I like her. First Lady Bush has surprised many of us—me included. My admiration for her has nothing whatsoever to do with politics nor with any idea that I might ever had had regarding the role of first ladies. Nor does it have anything to do with her husband and the stressful position he finds himself in so soon after becoming president. (Certainly, her husband has more on his plate than he probably ever bargained for, and the rest of us are pretty nervous about the very things that are on his plane.) But Laura Bush has become more visible than many people ever thought she would, especially since we were told that she does not particularly like to speak before crowds and is by nature rather quiet. Nevertheless, she has defined a role for herself, and I believe it is especially suitable for these unusual times. It is also especially suitable for those of us in the world of higher education—professors and

students alike—who are wondering what we can do to focus our attention in ways that are not only constructive, but somewhat soothing and calming.

Mrs. Bush has spoken seriously and genuinely about the plight of women in Afghanistan, and she has appealed to all of us to become informed about world affairs so that we can understand that elsewhere in the world some pretty sobering things are going on that are far removed from the relatively comfortable lives that we are living. She speaks of these things with a calm sincerity of manner—so appealing in these days of flash and glitz. And it is possibly because I know that she is not comfortable in the limelight that makes her seem so genuine and concerned for those women and life in general in far away Afghanistan.

But, while she asks us to be aware of worldly affairs, she invites us into her favorite world—the world of books. A former teacher and librarian, Laura Bush has a real passion for reading. Again, her message for professors and students alike—for everybody—is to read, read, read. She not only goes around to schools talking and reading to school children, but she recently has begun a series of seminars, held in the White House, featuring discussions on American writers. She invites authors, professors, journalists, and others who are particularly interested in American literature to come together for discussions about the unique qualities of our literature; in the audience are adults along with many students from high schools and colleges who are invited to ask questions and participate in the seminar. Just this last week, the seminar featured the life and writing of Mark Twain. Fortunately, it was broadcast on C-Span, and I was able to enjoy the wonderful tribute to Twain and a stimulating discussion about Huckleberry Finn and the greatness of that remarkable book.

While I was watching that Mark Twain seminar, it occurred to me that it was coming at a most appropriate time and that Laura Bush may have decided that now is a good time for us to remind ourselves of the great ideas and enduring values that are found in so many books—not just those of Mark Twain's but of so many other great writers.

Laura Bush knows what all of us in colleges today know, and that is, if we are to know about the world, we need to read about it, and by reading about it, we can know that what is going on in Afghanistan and so many parts of the world needs to be taken seriously, needs to be worried about, needs to be attended to, and that much personal growth and growth as an entire people can take place by reading and understanding.

I believe that Laura Bush is calmly and confidently reminding us of these things.



STUDENT **CONTRIBUTIONS**

Overcoming Stereotypes

Herminia Cruz

In an article by Starr Cline, entitled “Gifted Children With Disabilities,” the author explains that when many of us hear the word disabled, we automatically assume that the person is incompetent in doing certain tasks. When children are gifted and have a disability, identification of gifts presents special challenges. Often schools identify students who are gifted through group IQ; however, as a part of the testing process to identify those who are gifted, the disabled children are often excluded from this process. According to the author, there are a few guiding principles that can aid parents and educators in identifying the gifted students who just happen to be disabled:

- v Focus on assessment of disability. For example, when assessing a child with a hearing impairment, the tester needs to look beyond the hearing efficiency information and look for strengths, probably in the performance component. The person who is also doing the test may look for the child’s creativity, artistic ability, as well as superior mental abilities.
- v Be wary of stereotypic expectations. Because of attempts to compensate for the disability, a child with a disability is often compared to other students and may appear to be “average” rather than having special potential. As a society, we tend to assume that an individual that has a disability is less cognitively able than a person without a disability.
- v Understand the reasons for developmental delays. Children with a disability may not follow a presumed developmental course. For example, individuals with visual impairments may exhibit developmental delays in the type of abstract thinking that typically develops with references to visual images. On the other hand, their strengths may be in vocabulary and comprehension.
- v Recognize experiential deficits. Limited exposure to learning opportunities and varied life experiences may inhibit the expression of unique abilities. For

children with disabilities, critical periods in development may have been interfered with because of the disability. There may be even more limitations when a family or a school system does not have resources to provide compensatory approaches to obtaining experiences. For example, a child whose family does not own a vehicle with a lift may have fewer opportunities for the incidental learning that comes with travel.

- v Narrow views of giftedness. Even while searching for a global intelligence score, theorists have always recognized the existence of specific abilities. Leta Stetter Botting (1931) in her work describes the educational significance of specific talents in individuals with disabilities.
- v Consider disability-specific concerns. Various disabilities impose specific testing limitations. While the child may be able to respond to the questions or express original thoughts, the disability may specifically impact the child's performance on certain aspects of the testing process. Gathering detailed information about the disability will help the tester to assess in what ways testing procedures may require adaptations or accommodations. Adaptations refer to changes that address disability-specific learning needs; for example, a question concerning a color may be omitted from a test for a blind child. An accommodation refers to a change in the testing procedures that will allow for equal access to testing; for example, a child with a learning disability may receive extended time, but the test will not be altered.

Ultimately, the parent's role is a very important one. Studies have shown, according to Cline, that the parents were often the primary individuals to identify special gifts in their children. Among challenges for parents is the intimidation that they may feel from school administrators who refuse to open doors for the child with a disability. Suggestions include learning to be their child's advocate and trusting their own instincts concerning their child's strengths and needs. The Internet is a recommended strategy for networking and communication with other individuals to muster professional and support services. In addition, parents should expose their children to all kinds of settings and opportunities so that hidden talents may surface.

