

# The Welcomer

Collegiate Information and Visitor Services Association

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News and Information from the  
Collegiate Information and  
Visitor Services Association

## Emerging Technologies in Information and Visitor Services

by Jim Stapleton

As professionals in the information and visitor services field, we are constantly looking at ways to improve our operating efficiencies while also enhancing the collegiate experience for our inquirers and guests. One approach is to consider emerging trends in technology that make such improvements possible. A topic that cannot be avoided when discussing technological advances is wireless networking. This is a great tool that allows people to be connected to information in ways that were never possible a couple of years ago. I would like to take an opportunity to briefly discuss several new and exciting possibilities regarding this topic that could affect CiVSA members and their operations.

Neglecting to mention cell phones when talking about advances in wireless technology would be a major oversight. As we all know, the popularity of cell phones has skyrocketed over the past couple of years. According to the *Pew Internet and American Life Project*, 62% of American households reported using cell phones in 2002 (up from 24% in 1996). For many of us, this could be an untapped resource in terms of information dissemination. Current cell phones have the capability to receive text messages – a feature that can be important when communicating timely information or updates to our communities. At Rutgers University, we are working on rolling out a cell phone emergency text message alert system that can be used for campus closings or class cancellation notifications. The benefit of such a system is that you can deliver a message to subscribers regardless of their location and without them actively seeking the information.

Another interesting item worth mentioning is the implication of wireless technology on tour programs. A fascinating development is the introduction of location-based devices that can make use of wireless networks and the global positioning system. An example of this type of technology is a system that the company Node produces and also research that Columbia University is conducting on mobile augmented reality systems. Basically, you can incorporate audio and video into a campus tour. This would allow the guest to actually see and hear important moments in campus history, tied to the exact location where they are standing on a tour utilizing a portable media player.

*continued on next page*

*Emerging Technologies, continued from previous page*

Such devices are still a couple of years away from entering the cultural mainstream, but once they become commonplace they will significantly alter the way that tours are conducted.

*Jim Stapleton  
Rutgers University*



**From a Customer Service Standpoint,**

## **What's Wrong with this Picture?**



*See answer on page 4*

## Brigham Young University hosts CiVSA's Twelfth Annual Conference!

From June 4-7, 67 CiVSA-ites from 41 different colleges and universities gathered for the annual conference. I think everyone involved would say that this conference was a great one!

The opening speaker, Kevin Giddins from [Who Moved My Cheese?](#) was full of energy as he challenged us to recognize how change (both personal and professional) affects us. Do we actively seek change? Are we ready for change when it inevitably occurs? Do we fear change? Everyone completed a Who Moved My Cheese? workbook to help us recognize the Sniff, Scurry, Hem, and Haw in each of us.

There were nine sessions full of informative ideas, covering everything from CAS standards to athletics recruiting to writing a mission statement to using the internet to working with students. We also had five concurrent roundtable discussions, which provided an even easier way to collect and share ideas with colleagues from all over the country. Another huge thank you to all the session presenters and roundtable leaders! Notes from these sessions will appear in this and future editions of the Welcomer.

This conference had several trips as well – up to the touristy shopping haven of Park City; to the beautiful Sundance Resort (where we rode the ski lift!); to Salt Lake City to hear the Mormon Tabernacle Choir sing; and to Utah Valley State College, where every building is connected (and wouldn't that be handy in the winter!).

The food was amazing; about half this year's conference attendees were new to the organization; we officially hired Ryan Leigh Runyon to run CiVSA's headquarters (be sure to note the new phone number and e-mail address on page 6). As always, the conference gave everyone the chance to meet amazing people from all over the country. Thank you Troy, Tami, Chelsy, and all the BYU students for making it happen!

*Jennifer McGowan*  
*University of Michigan*



*President LeAnn Stroupe (on right) presents Denise Mericer of Florida State University with the Nick Award. Named for the "Father of CiVSA," Nick Kovalakides, the annual Nick Award recognizes an individual who has shown above-and-beyond dedication to CiVSA.*

# What's Right with this Picture?



No matter if you are leading a campus tour, greeting someone from behind a visitor center reception counter or just chatting informally with a friend, wearing dark sunglasses inhibits your facial expressions, which are critical in getting your point across.

*From Nick Kovalakides  
(with thanks to Kelly Cox and tour guide Whitney!)*



*The Welcomer* is a quarterly publication of the Collegiate Information and Visitor Services Association. Please send comments, suggestions, or photos to:

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Ann Arbor, MI 48109-1308  
734 764-2526 (phone)  
mcjen@umich.edu

Have you visited the CIVSA website recently?

There's a wealth of information available, including a member directory, past issues of the Welcomer, and much more!

[www.civsa.org/](http://www.civsa.org/)

If you don't remember the CIVSA member login and password, contact us at [web@civsa.org](mailto:web@civsa.org)

## Newly-Elected Officers for 2005-2006

### President

Nancy Franco  
Yale University  
203 432-2301  
nancy.franco@yale.edu

### President-Elect

Troy Selk  
Brigham Young University  
801 422-7368  
taselk@byu.edu

### Secretary

Tami Tassler  
Florida Gulf Coast University  
239 590-7989  
ttassler@fgcu.edu

### Treasurer

Janey Wheeler  
Oklahoma City University  
405 521-5345  
jwheeler@okcu.edu

### Director of Communications

Jennifer McGowan  
University of Michigan  
734 764-2526  
mcjen@umich.edu

### Past President

LeAnn Stroupe  
University of Missouri  
573 882-6333  
StroupeL@missouri.edu

Have a question for the Executive Board?  
Reach us all at [exec@civsa.org](mailto:exec@civsa.org)

## Update from the President

**A year in reflection:** There is so much that has happened this past year, some seeming to drag on with no end in sight and others just whizzing by; I would categorize my year as CiVSA president in the latter. I can't believe it's been a whole year! As my term is coming to an end, I want to take this opportunity to publicly thank the rest of the executive board; these guys are awesome and I would work with *any* of them, *any* time, *any* place. We accomplished a lot this year, but one of the things I'm most excited about is the hiring of an Association Manager.

This past year or so without a formal headquarters has posed some challenges for the executive board. Even though all of our hearts are in the right place, we often times get bogged down with our daily work, making it impossible to squeeze in anything else, including CiVSA. Hiring a Manager to oversee the daily operations of the organization seems to be a step in the right direction and will tremendously help the organization. The Association Manager position will be able to assist the board in accomplishing its goal of progressing the organization forward, answer various member questions and be available to promptly respond to membership inquiries. The manager will coordinate mailings and various other communications to the membership, respond to member requests and work to improve the overall efficiency of the organization as a whole.

With that said, let me introduce to some and reacquaint to others Ryan Leigh Runyon. She was a long time member of CiVSA, but due to her husband's job relocation, coinciding with the birth of their son, Ryan Leigh chose to stay at home for a few years. During her time in the organization, Ryan Leigh served on the board in several different capacities. This experience will give her a lot of the background and a good solid foundation from which to do the work required of this position. I'm excited that Ryan Leigh is back on our team, and she is thrilled with the opportunity of getting back involved and working with the organization in this new capacity. Please feel free to direct inquiries to her at 336-499-6207 or [civsaHQ@civsa.org](mailto:civsaHQ@civsa.org).

Thanks again for a fabulous CiVSA year! Even though my year as president is ending, I'm excited about my continued involvement and the opportunity to watch this organization grow and develop into an even better resource tool and outlet for our profession.

See you at American!

*LeAnn Stroupe*  
*University of Missouri*

## Welcome New Members!

Carl Baker  
North Carolina A&T State University

Ariadna Coffman  
University of Colorado-Colorado Springs

Kelly Cox  
University of Michigan

Allison Griffin-Walser  
North Carolina A&T State University

Sandra Hayden  
University of Florida

Amy Hays  
North Carolina State University

Patrick Herring  
University of Florida

Nathan Peterson  
Idaho State University

Kelly Terrill  
Texas Tech University

Jason Thomas  
University of Florida

Dana Trujillo  
Colorado State University-Pueblo

Roselle Wilson  
North Carolina A&T State University

## Membership Renewal

Did you renew your CiVSA membership for one more year when you paid for the conference? If not, don't forget that your yearly membership ended on **August 1**. To continue to receive your fabulous CiVSA benefits including access to the CiVSA website, the e-mail group, and first notification about the CiVSA conference, you must renew your membership immediately.

There are five types of membership available:

**Professional Membership** (one person) - \$90/year

**Institutional Membership** (up to three people from the same institution) - \$200/year; plus \$40 for each additional member

**Emeritus Membership** (members who are officially retired from their institution) - \$40/year

**Associate Membership** (up to two people from a non-profit organization that is not higher education) - \$150/year

**Corporate Membership** (up to three people from a for-profit business) - \$350/year

You can visit the CiVSA website to read more details about the various types of membership.

To renew your membership, go to <http://www.civsa.org/application/> and fill in all the required fields. You can pay for membership by check or credit card; just choose the appropriate button at the bottom of the form. If you choose credit card, you will be automatically redirected to PayPal (you do not need a PayPal account to pay). If you pay by check, mail your check and the membership application to our new CiVSA Headquarters:

P.O. Box 971  
Clemmons, NC 27012  
phone: 336 499-6207  
fax: 336 499-3319  
e-mail: [civsaHQ@civsa.org](mailto:civsaHQ@civsa.org)

If you missed CiVSA's 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Conference in June, or if you just weren't able to attend every session of interest to you, fear not. **Janey Wheeler** from Oklahoma City University enlisted a team of other conference attendees to send her their session notes, which she is compiling to share with you in this and upcoming issues of The Welcomer. (CiVSA members are nothing if not generous!)

## Building an Effective Student Team for Information and Visitor Centers

Presented by Jennifer Schufer, Cal Poly Pomona

Jennifer started with some background on her information and visitor center staff:

- Students are paid
- 8 permanent tour guides
- 3 alternates
- Training is conducted once a year

### Recruitment

- Primary mode of recruitment is shoulder tapping. Current student staff are asked to identify 2-3 people each that they feel would be good candidates to work in the visitor and/or information center
- Flyers and mailings are also used
- Career center helps to promote
- On campus marquee
- Put info on webpage
- Interested students are required to attend a preliminary information session in order for their application to be considered

### Evaluation of Candidates

- Student staff is very involved in the selection/evaluation process of potential candidates.
- The professional staff also conducts one-on-one interviews

### Selection Workshop

- Purpose: assess the candidate's group interaction skills and individual interaction skills. This workshop is run by the student staff – which is a great learning tool for them to be able to see what it is like to be the “interviewer”
- The candidate is asked to perform a 60 second commercial to sell the school. They are then assessed on how creative, spontaneous, and calm under pressure they are

### One-on-One Interviews

- Purpose: allows the interviewer to become an “expert” on one candidate in particular. This element helps professional staff gain perspective on an applicant. The individual interviews may be helpful in identifying characteristics that maybe are not obvious in the group interactions.

### Selection

- Those students that are not selected as tour guides are chosen to staff the Visitor Center and Information Center

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*Effective Student Team, continued from previous page*

### Training

- Position Shadowing: Tour guides shadow both individual and group tours
- Student staff are required to sign a contract with GPA, dress code, and other expectations
- In the summer, student staff is sent a handbook (123 pages) with FAQ's, introduction to the tour, tour route, info. about areas of campus, what a typical day is like, etc.
- Official Training (see materials in link below)
- Staff Meetings are held monthly for updated information

Handbook available online (very helpful) - see link below

### “Official Training”

- Purpose: To set expectations for the year, team building and develop friendships, meet key administrators
- The professional staff run the training with help from the returning student staff

### Monthly Staff Meetings

- Give out stats – i.e. the number of tours each person has given
- Talk about weird stories/questions they may have gotten that month
- Guest speakers – on topics like time management, avoiding burnout, etc. (utilize student life staff for these topics)
- Award the person whose name was drawn from the “Values Jar” – a student’s name is added to the values jar whenever a peer feels that they did something good – when their name is drawn they get a reward.

### Evaluations

- Periodic assessment of each other (peer evaluations) – in the Fall/Winter
- If improvement is needed, the student staff member is made aware of needed improvements and expectations for change.
- The professional staff also asks the student staff to evaluate them. Did we as a staff fulfill your expectations? Did your Ambassador experience fulfill your expectations? What can we do different?

A copy of Jennifer’s PowerPoint/Supplementary Materials can be found at

<http://www.dsa.csupomona.edu/visitors/civsa.asp>

*notes taken by Erin Burfield, University of South Carolina*

## Use the Internet to reach your target tour groups!

*Presented by Chris Chipps, The University of Texas at San Antonio*

Summary: This session discussed the UTSA Visitor Center's newly-implemented online customer relationship management program. Chris discussed the reason for the program, its implementation, and the results of using it.

- Reasons
  - UTSA Visitor Center growing too fast for old visitor contact methods
  - No customer management
    - Disorganized
    - Stressful
  - No visitation policy – no coordination between institutional divisions about visitor activities
- Solution
  - Foundation
    - Met with school administration to set a visitor policy
    - Marketed project to current constituents
  - Choosing a Platform – Macromedia ColdFusion
    - UTSA already using it on campus
    - IT staff familiar with it
    - Cost effective
    - Wide-spread industry use and support
  - Design
    - Worked with IT staff
    - Visitor Center provided web content
    - System implemented the visitor policy
  - Implementation
    - Trained Visitor Center staff on use of the program
    - Communicated new visitor's registration system to constituents
- Results
  - 1 ½ year project
  - Increased Visitor Center efficiency
  - Deciding policy most difficult part, technical and content aspects were quick
- System Features
  - Build-a-visit
  - Integrated scheduling
  - Red-flag trouble visitors
  - Stored itinerary for each visitor

*Notes taken by Jacob Haskins, James Madison University*

# Conference Memories!



*Emily Jones and Chris Chipps ride the ski lift at Sundance*



*Yum!*



*Mormon Tabernacle Choir*



*A beautiful view of the Utah mountains*



*A moose in Park City*