

THE INTERNET

The explosion of options has led to personal risks as well as a lawsuit from an overload of customers trying to log on.

Beware of who may lurk in chat rooms

The College Press Service

NEW YORK--After weeks of exchanging messages over the Internet, chatting about their favorite movies and books, they finally decided to meet face-to-face.

He was a 30-year-old doctoral candidate at Columbia University; she was a 20-year-old Barnard College student.

After dinner at a Manhattan restaurant, she felt comfortable enough with the Ivy League computer whiz to go back to his apartment. Once there, prosecutors say he proceeded to torture her for 20 hours, tying her to a chair, burning her with candle wax, and threatening to dismember her.

"Chat" rooms, where Oliver Jovanovic and the female student met last fall, are among the most popular features of the Internet. They're also the most danger-prone, experts say.

"The medium is really a playground for manipulative kinds of people," said Gail Thackeray, a Phoenix prosecutor who has been tracking computer crimes for more than 20 years. "The Internet is a magnet for...sociopaths. There's always a danger."

The technology makes it easy for people with similar interests, from metaphysics to Maya Angelou, to find each other and begin an online relationship. But it also makes it easier for a troubled stranger to gain the trust of a person who might ultimately become his or her victim.

Jovanovic was charged with



kidnapping, assault, and sexual abuse, and awaits trial. He has pled not guilty to the charges, and Jovanovic's attorney said the sexual encounter was consensual and that the two continued to exchange messages over the Internet after their meeting.

In another bizarre case, a Virginia woman discovered four months into her marriage that her spouse, whom she first met in a "chat room," was actually a woman.

Margaret Anne Hunter, 24, said she and Holly a.k.a. "Thorne" Groves, 26, exchanged daily e-mails, then daily phone calls, then eventually met in Mexico. Groves, who Hunter still refers to as "he," had the appearance of a man and claimed to have AIDS to avoid intimacy.

"He wasn't after my money, because I don't have much," Hunter told the Associated Press. "I know that what he did was incredibly hurtful and cruel and fiendish. As to why he did it, I don't know. I don't think Thorne knows, either."

Thackeray says people who are wary of meeting strangers on the street are far less cautious when they get to know someone in a chatroom.

"People arrive at intimacy through this medium much faster than they would in a relationship," Thackeray said. "You can be sitting there [getting to know someone] with your hair messed up and your jammies on. You've got this very warm, intimate feeling of this continuing online relationship."

The problem, Thackeray said, is that it's a false sense of intimacy.

"You only know the virtual identity that you've been permitted to see," she said. "They're controlling the information you learn about them."

Prosecutors use the term "grooming a victim" to describe how a disturbed person uses charm and conversations to gain a victim's trust. Chat rooms categorized by passionate interests make "grooming a victim" that much easier, Thackeray says.

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AOL sued by users unable to get on line

By Alexandra Dummer
Staff Writer

In the month of December, America Online, the world's biggest computer on-line service, offered its customers a flat rate of \$19.95 for unlimited use. The question users are now asking is, what is AOL offering unlimited use of?

The number of people who subscribed to the flat rate was more than AOL had anticipated, causing customers to encounter busy signals when trying to connect, sometimes for hours at a time.

Last week, customers filed class action suits in the states of California, Illinois, New Jersey, and New York accusing the company of selling a service that it could not provide. The New York suit also accuses America Online of breach of contract, deceptive practices, deceptive advertising, and unjust enrichment. Thomas F. Pursell, senior counsel for the Minnesota Attorney General, told *Business Week*, "If somebody advertises a service and charges for it, but people can't use it, it's a potential legal issue."

Despite the complaints, AOL has gained 1.2 million customers in the past month. Members now spend an average of 35 minutes a day on line, up from September's 14 minutes a day.

Many customers use the service as part of their businesses, which makes getting e-mail critical and quitting the service nearly impossible. According to *Business Week*, Steven

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Dr. King honored for his contributions to history, religion, law

By Whitney Larrimore
Assistant Editor

On Jan. 20, Methodist College celebrated the life and works of Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. with a panel of speakers discussing King's "Letter from Birmingham Jail."

King, a leader for African-Americans and an advocate against segregation and racial injustice, traveled across the South addressing audiences and marching for equal rights. In 1963, King traveled to Birmingham, Alabama, to speak against segregation and try to bring about social change for the benefit of African-Americans. In the

process of speaking against social prejudices, King wanted southerners to look beyond the color of skin. While in Birmingham, King rallied the people and decided to march even though he had no permit. Because King had no permit, local officials arrested him and put him in prison. While in prison, King wrote a letter to fellow clergymen which came to be known as the Letter from Birmingham Jail.

The service honoring Dr. King was centered on this letter and its significance. Three speakers presided over the service: Dr. Peter Murray, head of the History Department, Dr. Richard Walsh, head of the Department of Philosophy and Religion, and Ms. Cheri Beasley, a public defender in Cumberland County.

Dr. Murray, the first speaker, focused on the historical aspects of King and his work. Particular attention was given to the events occurring near and during the time at which King wrote his letter from Birmingham Jail. Murray said King had a significant impact on history

because "he was able to provide unity for African-Americans. He was their most eloquent speaker [appealing to] Christian teaching and American political ideals that white Americans found compelling."

Dr. Walsh addressed the religious aspects of King's letter. Walsh compared King's letter to New Testament language in the Bible. Walsh presented evidence that King's letter was a Christian epistle in its language and was in the standard Christian letter form, context and purpose as in the New Testament. "He was and is a symbol of the Civil Rights movement," said Walsh. "As that kind of symbol, he [had] an impact on history." Walsh also said King was "a virtual hero of the southern Black Christian and Protestant liberals."

Cheri Beasley focused on legal action taken during King's advocacy against segregation and racism. She said that at the time, people were supposed to have "separate but equal rights," but that rights were not equal. She recounted court cases in which African-Americans were excluded from theaters, restaurants and other public facilities. She said segregation had been so severe that laws were written for everything from housing to playing simple chess games.

Beasley said King challenged these segregation laws, called Jim Crow laws, to change them. Murray summed up the tribute to King by saying that King was a man for everyone and that King's message got to the heart of the human experience. "Whenever we do something to bring less racial divide, we honor King, whether on his day or any other day," he said.

Bike patrol part of new community policing program

By Yvette Williams
Contributing Writer

The current bicycle patrol is part of a new campus security effort known as the Community Oriented Policing Program (COP). Director of Campus Safety and Security Dave Reece discussed the program and its benefits.

Q: How was the COP program started? Whose idea was it to implement it on campus?

A: The Methodist College campus is ideal for the COP program. It is necessary for community relations. There is a need for everyone to know that security is here for the campus. The concept of COP goes beyond patrolling from a car; officers need to communicate with the community.

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Methodist RA's discuss challenges, rewards of job

By Mike McDermott
Editor

Editor's note: The resident advisors interviewed for this story asked that their identities remain anonymous.

A recent study by the *Chronicle of Higher Education* found a significant rise in the number of homicides on college campuses. The increase in campus crime has forced the role of the resident advisor to evolve into much more than being a peer counselor for resident students. Resident advisors are expected to enforce school policies in an environment which studies have shown to be much more volatile than in the past. The national survey showed students to be uncooperative with the authority imposed upon them by the presence of the resident advisor.

Methodist College resident advisors seem to be an exception the rule, however, as they feel very much in control of the situations in which they are placed. Several senior R.A.s were interviewed, and all seemed to enjoy the opportunity to serve in their positions.

One female R.A. said, "You have to come into the job being a people person. It cannot be a power trip, because you have to spend a lot of time with your residents and you have to take care of them. I love the job very rewarding...I really love it."

A male R.A. said of his job, "The privacy of my room is nice, but I really like the fact that the other students look up to me, not just because

"I enjoy the sense of community that being an R.A. has given me. Being an R.A. has given me the opportunity to make an impact on the lives of many people."

of my position, but because I had to be a standout to get the job. I like helping people and this job allows me to do that. I feel like I am a role model for my residents."

He was joined by a female R.A. who said, "I enjoy being of service to the students...I feel like I am setting an example for them."

Another male R.A. stated, "I like being an R.A., not just because of the free room, but that helps. I enjoy the sense of community that being an R.A. has given me. Being an R.A. has given me the opportunity to make an impact on the lives of many people." Having an effect on the lives of fellow students seems to be the most common objective of the resident advisors.

Life as a Methodist College R.A. is not all roses, however, as the R.A.s questioned related several problems that they feel need to be dealt with regarding their authority over the students as well as school policies that they feel can be changed.

One female R.A. said, "The Student Life Office needs to back us more. They need to be more professional with the students."

She was joined by another female R.A. who said, "Tickets are a joke to some students. They can afford to keep paying the fines, so they keep on breaking the rules. The school is too lenient on repeat offend-

ers. Students should be kicked off of campus after being given a certain amount of tickets. Otherwise they won't learn a lesson."

In response, Dean of Students Mike Safley said, "I am not aware of any tickets being overturned, unless it was possibly done by the student court. Anything that has crossed my desk has been handled. Sometimes things happen in the dorms that the R.A.'s see, but do not report. If it is not documented, it cannot be handled. They have to help us, also."

Another issue that was addressed was that of overnight visitation. Most of the R.A.s surveyed agreed that upperclassmen should be allowed overnight visitation, provided that it does not interfere with a roommate.

A female R.A. said, "I hate the visitation policy for upperclassmen. Juniors and seniors have proven themselves, so they should be given overnight visitation privileges if their roommate is not there. If they set aside dorms for women and men upperclassmen, then we could enforce the policy a lot easier."

Regarding the visitation policy, Safley said, "The student government is looking into the visitation issue right now. Once they come up with something, visitation may be changed."

One male R.A. brought up

the topic of R.A. training, when he said, "I think that there is too much training. The classes get redundant after a while."

He was joined by a female who said, "most of the training is simply common sense. I think that they need to use more common sense about our training."

If training is ever redundant, Safley responded, it is sometimes necessary. "Some of the training is repeated because everyone does not do their jobs right," he said. "If everyone did their job, then some of the training wouldn't have to be repeated. I like to think of some of the classes like basketball practices, though. The more you do it, the better you get at it."

Other complaints included staying up late on duty the night before exams, and perhaps the most common issue of the females, "We need to get more money for what we do."

Although they felt that there could be some changes made, all of the R.A.s interviewed stated that the positive aspects of the job outweigh the negative. They all agreed that although there could be some changes made that would make their jobs easier, they enjoy their work and are happy to have the opportunity to serve the student body.