

# MEMBER profiles

Lud Braun

## Ed Tech Evangelist Will Not Throw in the Towel

One of ISTE's original members has been a tireless advocate for using computers in instruction for decades. "I have been a member of ISTE since long before there was an ISTE," Braun says. "I joined Dave Moursund's Oregon Computing Teacher ... in about 1973."

Since then, Braun has retired—six times since 1987, he says. He spent most of his adult life as a university professor, and more than 30 years as "an evangelist for computers and kids." Recently, he and colleague Bill Kiley (Long Island University, C.W. Post Campus, where Braun retired from most recently) wrote a paper arguing that handheld computers are the solution to the digital divide. (Braun considers handhelds his "pet technology.") The white paper, posted on the ISTE

Web site in the SIG for Handheld Computing's online community, lists his reasons, a few of which include their interoperability with desktop and laptop computers and the vast amount of probeware available for student scientists.

*(Editor's note: Read more about SIGHC below.)*

Braun's bio posted at the People's Computer Company alumni page (<http://www.svipx.com/pcc/>) shows a lack of conceit. Recounting his story of presenting at a mid-1970s computer fair, he says, "On the plane flying out there, I prepared my remarks, one of which was a prophecy that within five years, we would have a microcom-



puter available for under \$1,000. I got off the plane and went to the convention center, where Commodore had a booth with its PET microcomputer for under \$1,000. That ended my career as a prophet."

His colleagues have no such sense of humility where Braun is concerned, though.

Reflecting on Braun's long career and contributions to the field, handheld expert Elliot Soloway says, Braun is "a hugely caring and sincere person, without an ounce of gile to his name. Combine those qualities with a child-like intellectual playfulness that is coupled with a totally penetrating mind, and what you have is one of the finest academics I have ever met."

ISTE SIG

## SIG Forms to Increase Communication among Handholders

Handheld computing is the focus of one of ISTE's newest special interest groups. It came about, according to chair Mark van't Hooft, as a result of discussions he had with Elliot Soloway and Cathie Norris.

"We all had noticed an increased interest in handheld computing at NECC since about 2002 or so. However, we also felt there was a disconnect between the major stakeholders in this area, (i.e., teachers, technology coordinators, and administrators, university faculty and researchers, and the handheld computer and software companies). We wanted to do something to bring these

groups together to support the use of handheld computers in classrooms and promote best practices."

The online community is the primary vehicle for bringing stakeholders together, van't Hooft says. "We'd like to initiate



some thought-provoking discussions and keep our members updated on a regular basis on important handheld-related news, such as new hardware and software, grant initiatives, curriculum, and research."

This first year, van't Hooft says, the SIG leadership will be focused on establishing a solid foundation for the SIG. Building their membership is the top priority, but they are also looking forward to having "a strong presence at NECC 2006 in San Diego, with high-quality presentations and workshops."

Want to get involved? Contact van't Hooft with your ideas.

**Chair:** Mark van't Hooft (mvanthoo@kent.edu)

**Vice Chair:** Mark Yehle (myehle@successlink.org)

**Secretary:** Debbie Bordelon (Debbie.Bordelon@wca-hsv.org)

**SIG Board:** Elliot Soloway (Soloway@umich.edu) and Cathie Norris (Norris@unt.edu)

## At Riverdeep, Success Means Passion and Partnership

Ten years after its founding, Riverdeep is the fastest growing educational software company in the world, producer of the Destination line of curriculum software; Learning Company titles such as Reader Rabbit, Carmen Sandiego, and Oregon Trail; and the Brøderbund suite of products. According to Jessica Lindl, vice president of marketing, collaboration with schools is key to the company's success.

"Riverdeep works in close partnership with schools and districts to help them effectively integrate Web-based tools in their education environment, provide secure, flexible accessibility to information, and maximize their investment with lower cost of ownership—all while inspiring teachers and engaging students in learning," Lindl says.



**Riverdeep**

<http://www.riverdeep.com>

Gail Pierson, Riverdeep's chief education officer, agrees. "We've developed a true partnership at the district level," she says. "We've established a way of partnering with districts that lets us find an answer to complaints and confusion. Collaboration has become our dynamic."

Despite the recent decline in the educational software market, Riverdeep remains active.

"We have come of age much later in the game, using the latest technology, the Web, handhelds," Pierson says. "We stay current with methodology and pedagogy. Parents and the home market continue to look for things to provide another way to learn, and we're right there."

"Riverdeep is very positive about the future of educational software," Lindl adds. "We'll continue to help transform education by making it

more personalized, relevant and inspiring in order to have the greatest educational effect for each individual learner. Our 2006 product line will include an extension in science as well as a reading intervention offering."

"Those of us who've been working for years know and appreciate the kind of awareness and acceptance that allows us to be successful," Pierson says. "We credit ISTE for that flow of information to schools and educators. I think that that's helped to anchor and inform the industry. It's created a rallying point for educational leaders."

"At Riverdeep, we're proud of our original products, and we've continued to lead the charge," Pierson concludes. "We hope that we're remembered for our software, obviously, but mostly for leveraging the medium. We've been so passionate for so many years, and we're proud of what we've accomplished."

## Alaskan Affiliate Features Family Feel

The Alaska Society for Technology in Education (ASTE) is a professional organization whose mission is to promote access to technology, connectivity to information resources and technology integration for all Alaskan learners. ASTE is composed of nearly 500 individual members who represent the state's 54 K-12 public schools, the branches of the University of Alaska, and the educational business community.

ASTE president David Piazza says ASTE is a strong organization, with dedicated and knowledgeable members. "Alaska is more than oil fields and scenic summer vacations," Piazza explains. "New teachers to the state can be assured that quality local opportunities exist to learn and build

their educational technology integration skills. Not only is ASTE an avenue for veteran teachers to share their knowledge, but opportunities abound for their 'life-long learning' of advanced educational technology skill.

"With Alaska's geographic isolation, relatively small population, and geographic expanse ASTE enjoys its affiliation with ISTE to help to bridge the gaps and stay current with advances in national educational technology policies, procedures, and practices."

Although the relationship between the organizations remains strong, Piazza does feel it could be improved.

"In the early years, ISTE was always in attendance at our annual conference, and I believe that the general membership knew who ISTE was and what ISTE stood for. Currently, from my perception, I don't get the sense that our new membership even knows we are affiliated, nor what ISTE has to offer with the exception of the books it publishes."

"Both organizations need to do a better job promoting what ISTE has to offer (instructional technology standards, training, policy making, political clout). We need ASTE members to be ISTE members. ISTE needs to become a household word within our schools and educational community again."



<http://www.aste.org>