

COMPUTER LABORATORY

KNUT BOEHMER

The past year has seen a few large updates to the building's IT infrastructure that were exciting to plan and implement, as well as some interesting collaborations with other teams on campus and beyond. Besides that, as always, my goal was to ensure the best user experience when it comes to computers for everyone working in or associated with the building, as well as pushing the technical barrier and come up with new ideas what my colleagues would benefit most from.

Renovations/AV Upgrade Breasted Hall

Along with major renovations to floor, lighting, and seating, the entire AV system in Breasted Hall was replaced with a modern setup. Using the updated features allows us, among other things, to record and even live stream lectures, podium discussions, and other events happening in the room. As of April 2019, all Members' Lectures that happened have been live streamed to YouTube, allowing those who could not make it to the talk in person (or are located outside of Chicago) to attend virtually. While previously, camera recordings had to be processed and uploaded several weeks later, the new technology allows viewers to watch the entire event immediately after it ended, or even pause the live stream and pick up where they left off. As a next step we will attempt to drive audience engagement even further, including the option for online viewers to send in questions to be answered during the Q&A at the end of the lecture.

Hybrid Classes/Live Streaming

Following the constant aim to improve our Adult Education classes, a very solid system was developed to allow most classes to be live streamed and to allow for off-site participants to be involved in the running class, making comments and asking questions in near-real-time. The façade renovations the building is undergoing this summer made it necessary to move the class streaming to Breasted Hall, but the new AV system there has been very reliable as well.

From July 2018 to June 2019, a total of seventy-one classes have been live streamed to very positive responses.

Assisting with 3-D Printing for Afghanistan

As a very exciting project this year, I assisted our team in Kabul with a wonderful project to help schools in Afghanistan: in collaboration with the 3-D scans that the team at the National Museum of Afghanistan had created, Brendan Bulger and I worked with the university's Materials Preparation and Measurement Laboratory to re-create the objects as 3-D prints to be used as learning materials for children who could not travel and see the original objects due to financial reasons or travel hazards. As a bonus, I was able to combine hobby and work when I had the opportunity train the Kabul team's field director Alejandro Gallego-Lopez in how to use an airbrush during a visit to Chicago, so that the blank prints could be made more lifelike.

Network Upgrade

In spring of 2019, extensive changes were made to the network backend in order to prepare for a future campus infrastructure upgrade. Most notably, many of the network jacks were upgraded and provisioned with new cables, a few Wi-Fi dead spots on the second floor were removed, and cables were rerouted to ensure the best possible connection for everyone working in the OI.

Technical Assistance in Creating the OI Centennial Website

With the OI centennial being the major event of the upcoming year, the decision was made to create a satellite website that was targeted toward audiences unfamiliar with the OI and events around the centennial. I worked closely with Kiersten Neumann of OI Communications and assisted with any technical questions that came up during the decision phase on the partner hired to realize this project, as well as the concept, realization, and implementation phases, and I will continue to support and monitor the website.

Collaborating with IT Committees across Campus

Since the OI relies on cooperating with other IT departments across campus, I represented the building and my colleagues in several IT committees and working groups. The IT leadership council, a group of IT directors from all UChicago parts, is probably the most influential of these, but I also express the interests of the OI at FACT, in the Travel Security and the Storage Solutions workgroups, as well as several others.
