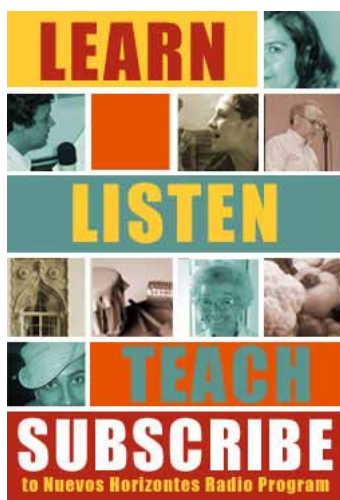


VOICES

Summer 2009 Vol 2 Issue 1

The Newsletter for the Community Informatics Initiative at the University of Illinois

New Horizons Media Initiative Builds New Campus Partnerships



Co-investigators Ann Bishop and Ben Mueller of the New Horizons Media Initiative (NHMI) have completed the first year of their successful collaboration. NHMI is a multi-sponsor initiative to establish a unique Spanish-language educational, research, and communication resource for the UIUC campus, east-central Illinois, other U of I campuses, and communities across the country. With support from the UIUC Office of the Chancellor in 2008-09, New Horizons integrated and expanded its high quality, Latino-oriented multimedia communications services, with a special emphasis on Latino family health and well-being. Other support was received from the UIUC Center for Latin American and Caribbean Studies, and the Offices of the Vice Chancellors for Public Engagement and Research, the College of Media (WILL-TV-AM-FM), Latina/o Studies, Extension, and the National Center for Rural Health Professions. The radio program also brings in revenue from those using its offerings in the classroom.

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Black Studies and Information Communication Technology

Dr. Abdul Alkalimat, faculty member in African American Studies and Library and Information Science at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign, was the featured speaker on a panel at the American Library Association conference in July 2009 in Chicago, organized by the African-American Studies Librarians Section. Professor Alkalimat spoke about how technology is impacting the field of Black Studies. A panel discussion that preceded the keynote focused on how technology supports research efforts in Black Studies programs nationwide and highlighted innovations and strategies that programs and departments are using to disseminate scholarship within the field. Companies that are developing databases that serve the needs of various Black Studies departments were represented by panelists Sarah Brechner, Senior Product Manager, ProQuest, and Stephanie Garrett, Editor, History and Black Studies, Alexander Street Press. Elaine Westbrooks, Associate Dean, University Libraries, University of Nebraska-Lincoln moderated the panel.



Dr. Abdul Alkalimat

Professor Alkalimat's keynote focused on the details of his work, "Information Technology and Black Studies," supported by funding from the Ford Foundation and institutional support from the National Council for Black Studies (NCBS) and the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign.

More information can be found at: <http://connect.ala.org/node/76037>

São Toméan Convergence

For the third consecutive year, several community informatics research projects will converge in Africa. The Community Informatics Initiative (CII), the Graduate School of Library and Information Science (GSLIS), the Illinois Informatics Institute (I3) and the East St. Louis Action Research Project (ESLARP)—all at the University of Illinois, Urbana-Champaign (UIUC)—are collaborating in the summer of 2009 on seven interrelated and extended efforts.



- One Laptop per Child (OLPC) with five undergraduate interns from UIUC, 100 laptops, and a server
- Citizen Participatory GIS with the Polytechnic Institute and three GSLIS graduate students prepared by GSLIS Professor Jon Gant
- Martin Wolske's GSLIS course on networking systems set up a computer lab with the Teachers College
- With CII Director of Networking Paul Adams, maintenance of computer labs set up previously
- Research issues of information and communication technology (ICT) sustainability in developing nations
- Groundwork by Martin Wolske for a new Community Informatics Studio course
- Dr. Ian Brooks, UIUC National Center of Supercomputing Applications, preliminary work on malaria control on the island nation

From the group's blog: "The team quickly found that electrical power and the Internet should not be taken for granted. Both are often not functioning. The team is learning to shop for groceries every day at the local markets. There are fresh vegetables and fish readily available. Fresh bread from the local bakery is also a pleasure. The team has found that if one of our São Toméan friends accompany us [to do the shopping] the price is much lower. The team is eager to get started but we have been introduced to the local custom of *lev lev* (slow slow) which describes how things get done. *Lev lev* would be similar to our phrase of "catch as catch can" or "it will happen when it happens."



To learn more about the project please visit: <http://saotomeproject.prairienet.org/>

Scribbles of a CI Student, Inka Alasadé

School's out for the summer and I have successfully completed one semester of library school despite my shortcomings: I'm seriously technologically challenged. Be that as it may, I've found my niche in community informatics (CI). CI emphasizes social change through the deployment of information and communications technology (ICT) as an aid in addressing critical socio-political and economic imbalances in marginalized communities. Though captivated by this idea, I am not totally convinced that the ICT piece is all it's cracked up to be. For technology without community development won't stretch the margins far enough.

The CI program here at UIUC, however, is quite fine about defining technology beyond the machine or the hardware to include the mechanisms and materials by which a community represents itself. Through an emphasis on community inquiry—active learning and knowledge sharing, and civic engagement—I have been challenged to explore the myriad ways informatics can be used to promote greater participation in democratic processes and to open myself to the possibilities of ICTs as transformative instruments in progressive struggle. Yet, because universal access to internet connectivity is not an inalienable right and seems more or less a province of the middle classes in many countries, there will always be communities without access to ICTs. Nevertheless these communities will need access to the technological basics due

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to the seemingly ubiquitous usage of ICTs. Services will have to be appropriately improvised in locales devoid of the proper infrastructure in order to promote a level of effective participation in the context of the ever-encroaching information economy and its impact on sovereign states. This is one of the major reasons why I argue for a balanced use of ICTs.

Despite what I found to be the rather dull, uninspiring, but nonetheless useful list of assigned readings primarily by sociologists, supplemented by my own more provocative list, the semester has left me properly grounded in CI theory and knowledge about alternative approaches to communication technologies. As a Pan Africanist and progressive African American woman whose focus is rural Africa and indigenous communities, I do have special requests if not special needs. I would like to see a more international approach to CI in our program and a reading list that would include works by critical race, feminist and third world liberation theorists. The program needs more attention to a critical investigation of historically dominant discourses of power and its impact on the current social milieu. This addition would only complement CI's emphasis on social justice for excluded communities.

I am particularly inspired by the idea of participatory design of ICTs in community informatics. I see this as the discipline's most revolutionary feature, a demystification of the machine whereby control of the tools become accessible to a greater number of people, in turn creating the possibility for the construction of locally-derived communication and information systems. This is crucial for developing countries.

In essence the one-semester journey has thus far been mostly an intellectual "turn on" and I'm hardly satiated. I'm really looking forward to rock'n' the next one.

Summer Research at Chicago Public Library, Chinese American Museum

The Community Informatics Research Lab (CI Lab) headed north in July for a week of ethnographic work at the Chicago Public Library. This opportunity grew out of the annual eChicago conferences organized by the CI Lab. eChicago brings together everyone working on digital inequality in Chicago and facilitates researcher-practitioner connections like the current study.

Cybernavigators are local people hired in each Chicago library branch to help others with the internet, and this study will investigate the relationship between social capital and information technology (IT) use. The Chicago Public Library expanded this program several years ago and wants to share their experience with others. According to CI Lab co-director and GSLIS faculty member Kate Williams, "People have and use social capital, which makes a community strong, but so does the library, and we need to understand that better for digital democracy." Joining Professor Williams in the field, each in their own library site, will be doctoral students Aiko Takazawa and Hui Yan (from Peking University) and two volunteers, Matt Hampel from the University of Michigan and Aysha Marsh from Chicago.

A related project this summer is a practical experiment in digital cultural heritage with the Chinese American Museum of Chicago, reopening this fall after a disastrous fire at its Chinatown location. Here again, the CI Lab's core concept of social capital is being applied, this time to understand the difference between physical startup and digital recovery.

Social capital involves measuring how resources are shared between individuals and/or organizations in the local community. A stronger community will share more resources amongst its members, and a library is often part of this local network. An important shared resource is help, and anyone using IT relies on some form of help. Past research by CI faculty has found that when this help is 1) available and 2) local, a community can better achieve digital inclusion.

June Symposium on Paseo Boricua

The fifth annual Community as Intellectual Space symposium was held June 12-14, 2009, on Division Street in Chicago's Paseo Boricua neighborhood. The theme of this year's symposium was "Critical Pedagogy and Community Building." Co-organized by the Puerto Rican Cultural Center (PRCC) and the Community Informatics Initiative (CII) at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign (UIUC), the symposium also had significant support from DePaul University, Universidad del Turabo, Northern Illinois University, Pedro Albizu Campos High School, Indiana University, and several other UIUC units. Critical pedagogy is an approach that challenges dominant mainstream practices and beliefs while encouraging students traditionally disenfranchised in the educational system to become critically conscious of their own cultures and histories. The three-day symposium explored how different organizations can come together in solidarity to transform communities through dialogue. This year's symposium was packed with panels and workshops highlighting the importance and the role of critical pedagogy in the Chicago neighborhood around Paseo Boricua.



Chaebong Nam takes notes during her tour of the neighborhood



Antonia Darder and Ann Bishop

Antonia Darder, UIUC professor in the Educational Policy Studies and Latino/a Studies Departments, was the keynote speaker. Darder is a leading scholar in the field of critical pedagogy. Her written works include *Reinventing Paulo Freire: A Pedagogy Of Love* and *The Critical Pedagogy Reader: Second Edition* (co-edited with Marta P. Baltodano and Rodolfo Torres.) Dr. Darder delivered a thoughtful and emotional speech on the importance of critical pedagogy within educational structures.

Saturday morning highlighted the usage of critical pedagogy at the Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School (PACHS) in Chicago. Both students and teachers from PACHS, along with Ida Roldán of the Institute for Clinical Social Work, Troy Harden, faculty member at Chicago State University, John Fritsche, chair of the Department of Education at Illinois College, and Michelle Torrise, a recent graduate of the UIUC Graduate School of Library and Information Science, presented thoughts on the empowerment of critical consciousness and education.

The afternoon session began with two workshops on "Engaging the Community as a Locus of Knowledge." These workshops highlighted several ongoing projects between the Puerto Rican Cultural Center in Chicago and the CII, including efforts to catalog the center's library using LibraryThing. Afterwards, Laura Ruth Johnson and several of her students from Northern Illinois University presented on community-based research practices and experiences on Paseo Boricua. Graduate students in Dr. Johnson's course worked at a local café and learned about traditional Puerto Rican music, for example. The students on the panel shared what they had learned and how community engagement had transformed their research experience.



Laura Ruth Johnson and her students lead a workshop on their experiences in the community

Ann Bishop, director of CII, led a panel on community inquiry and informatics with Victor Benitez and Licia Knight. The panelists discussed their experiences working in and with the Paseo Boricua. A Café Teatro Batey Urbano performance entitled "Crime Against Humanity" followed, rounding out Saturday's events. "Crime Against Humanity" is a play depicting the struggles and joys of several Puerto Rican political prisoners' lives behind bars. The play is based on interviews with released prisoners.

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Artist Pablo Marcano addressed the audience on the Sunday morning of CIS

Artist Pablo Marcano, who was visiting from Gurabo, Puerto Rico, opened Sunday's events with a video of a recent art project of his in which the homes in a hillside village in Puerto Rico were repainted with Caribbean colors to reflect the town's heritage. Earlier in the conference, on Friday, Mr. Marcano opened an exhibit of his bold, bright paintings at the Institute of Puerto Rican Art and Culture in Humboldt Park. Mr. Marcano traveled to Urbana-Champaign following the conclusion of the symposium to examine a site where (later this year) he will begin installing a mural.

Sunday's events also included several panels on critical inquiry and community health; critical engagement; critical literacy; and asset-based community service learning. Howard Rosing, Executive Director of the Community-Based Service Learning Program at DePaul University, and Marisol Morales, Associate Director of the Community-Based Service Learning Program, highlighted how an asset-based community service learning model can produce more collaborative and long-lasting relationships among students, faculty, universities, and communities.

The panels were followed by a short documentary, produced by graduate student Alexandra Cavallaro and Ph.D. student Patrick W. Berry from UIUC. The documentary showed how students from Dr. Pedro Albizu Campos High School in Chicago used creativity and life experience to learn in an urban environment.

The fifth annual Community as Intellectual Space Symposium ended mid-Sunday afternoon following a short reflection in which symposium goers were able to share their thoughts and feelings about what they learned and saw over the course of the three days. The symposium brought together about 100 people. While feedback was generally positive, one suggestion for future conferences was representative: set aside time for an "unconference, where the agenda is set by the participants."

Joint Degrees in LIS and African Studies

Beginning fall semester 2009, interested students will have the opportunity to pursue a joint master's degree in African Studies and Library and Information Science. The joint degree matches area expertise with professional education and allows students to earn two graduate degrees simultaneously. Typically, the period of study is shorter than if each degree were pursued independently. Students need to apply to each degree program separately and all admissions decisions are made independently.

The Center for African Studies promotes knowledge about the continent of Africa and African languages and cultures through research, teaching, and outreach. A joint degree between GSLIS and the Center will give students an interdisciplinary perspective on the study of Africa and the management of information. African Studies MA students "explore a multiplicity of issues relative to the continent--historical, political, economic, social, religious and cultural--while they are exposed to a range of methodological and theoretical tools" and this, coupled with training in knowledge management and library science, can uniquely position students who are interested in working extensively in the emerging information economy within Africa and the African Diaspora.

According to Linda Smith, Associate Dean for Academic Programs at GSLIS, "Our M.S. degree program allows students to take up to 12 hours of credit in other departments. Students pursuing the joint degree with African Studies will select these courses so that they also satisfy some of the requirements for the M.A. in African Studies. This is our first such joint degree program and we hope to use this as a model for partnerships with other departments on campus as well."

Current or future GSLIS students interested in exploring the program should contact Associate Dean Linda Smith (lcsmith@illinois.edu) for more information.

CII Goes Mobile

Senior Research Scientist Martin Wolske spent many late nights in the spring of 2009 trying to solve this challenge:

To create a kit that includes many of the common tools used by professionals such as journalists, planners, and scientists. The kit should be relatively easy for beginners to use at a basic level, should be portable to encourage use in the field, should reasonably approximate the quality of professional units, but should be reasonably priced for community organizations.



The result is the Mobile Media Toolkit. The items in the kit provide the tools to do photography, audio, video, and geospatial marking: either an 8 megapixel or a 13.5 megapixel camera, with two- gigabyte SD memory cards; an omnidirectional microphone for audio, along with a headset for monitoring the audio; a compact mini-DV camcorder designed for entry-level use; and a Flip Video camera. The larger capacity still camera includes copy and museum modes for archiving, and a method for including geolocation information directly into images. Headsets include both headphones and a microphone and are ideal for recording voiceovers to add to video, for recording monologues, or for an individual participating in an audio or video conference call. Additional microphones provide options for the user: for example, the operator of the camcorder could interview someone, with audio from each person captured using individual lapel microphones.

Along with all these components, the kit also includes an ultra-mobile laptop computer (or netbook) and a video capture card to create multimedia productions. Each netbook has a range of software installed, including Open Office, an open source office suite, Audacity, an open source audio recording and editing software, and video editing software. The kit weighs about 15.5 pounds and costs around \$1600, depending on what's included in the backpack. For further details go to: http://yci.illinois.edu/yci/?page_id=820

As part of the Youth Community Informatics (YCI) research team, Wolske created this ingenious backpack system for use by the YCI participants, as well as for research on other projects in São Tomé, East St. Louis, and points in between! Funding for the initial 10 units was provided by Prairienet (4), and by Youth Community Informatics grant from the Institute of Museum and Library Services (6). Two of the latter toolkits are being used in field by Teen Tech Team in East St. Louis. Wolske will present his ideas behind the development of this toolkit at the Community Informatics Research Network (CIRN) gathering in Prato, Italy in the fall of 2009.

Street Librarianship

Street librarians—who take to the streets to provide reference services to curious people—can be likened to tour guides or museum docents. ShinJoung Yeo, a doctoral student in the Information and Society program of the Graduate School of Library and Information Science at UIUC, inspired this idea. She recently described a group that she helped start in 2004, Radical Reference <http://www.radicalreference.info/>. The group “endeavors to focus on the information needs of activists and independent journalists.” In 2004, volunteers stood on the streets during the Republican National Convention in New York City and helped people get the information they needed—from where the nearest bathrooms were, to how to find a lawyer, to where there were clashes with police. Back-up helpers who weren't on the street provided information via cellphone to those who were fielding questions.

A small group of folks adapted ShinJoung's idea in the spring of 2009 to foster dialogue about a recently-installed work of art on the UIUC campus. “Beyond the Chief,” by internationally exhibited Cheyenne-Arapaho artist Hock E Aye Vi/Edgar Heap of Birds, was commissioned by Professor Robert Warrior, former director of the UIUC Native American House and current director of UIUC American Indian Studies.

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Heap of Birds' series of red and white metal signs were installed along both sides of one block of West Nevada Street, the location of the campus cultural houses and the Department of African American Studies, American Indian Studies, and Asian American Studies. The art reflects on political and social histories of central Illinois, especially those related to indigenous peoples, naming twelve different tribal groups who lived in or passed through this area. Since their installation, there have been six separate incidents of vandalism followed by the theft of two of the signs (the latter resulting in the June 18 arrest of a recent University of Illinois graduate.) Clearly there is need for conversation about art and about social tensions on campus.



The art-signs include the words "Fighting Illini" written backwards, over the words "Today your host is...". The backwards writing refers to the name of the University of Illinois sports teams. By making us read the words in reverse, Heap of Birds proposes that we reverse post-colonial claims on the land as well. The metallic, highway-sign surfaces seem official yet make the observer wonder about other directions and instructions that should be questioned.

Professor Heap of Birds encouraged those concerned about the damage to the signs and ignorance about public art interventions in general to take action, to make offerings to honor those who have gone before, to bring gifts to tie to the signs to help protect them, and to talk about the art around campus. Thus, two "street librarians" interacted with those pedestrians who paused to talk on an afternoon in May 2009. The signs will remain in place through December of 2009, so plans are in the works to be on-the-spot librarians when fall semester begins.

DCEO Grant Strengthens East St. Louis-CII Partnerships

The Community Informatics Initiative (CII) recently received \$55,000 from the Illinois Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity (DCEO) to continue and expand work in East St. Louis. The project is a partnership of Prairienet/CII and four community technology centers (CTCs) located in East St. Louis: Community Concepts, Teen Tech Team, the Mary Brown Center and Eagle's Nest Transitional Housing for Veterans. In addition to those efforts in southern Illinois, the DCEO grant will help support a community media lab in Champaign. Congratulations to Paul Adams, CII's Director of Community Networking, and Martin Wolske, CII Senior Research Scientist, for this winning proposal!

East St. Louis is a low-income community where 67.6% of students in the area are eligible for free or reduced lunch. The grant in part is dedicated to expanding basic training for youth and homeless veterans. The veteran training will especially focus on job preparedness and search skills. The grant also will allow purchase of, and training on, accessibility hardware and software to facilitate use for veterans who have returned with disabilities that inhibit digital content access. Youth training will focus not only on technology basics, but also dynamic, multimedia, interactive content. With these tools, the general public can use the video and image manipulation software to meet their own specific goals. These range from editing home photos and videos, to editing and publishing historical documents about their community, to producing print and online media advocating for justice within the community. It is the goal of the project to expand cross-generational social networking that also could lead to greater community development.

The East St. Louis partners receive support from the non-profit, community-based corporation, Computer Village. Computer Village is a major contributor to the efforts of digital literacy in St. Louis and the Metro East area (as the greater East St. Louis area is called). The Digital ESL Collaborative (a group of local CTCs) also partners by directing youth to the programs and identifies potential projects. The partnership between Prairienet and the East St. Louis CTCs also extends across the University of Illinois campus through the East St. Louis Action Research Project <http://www.eslarp.uiuc.edu/>.

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The New Horizons/Nuevos Horizontes radio program is currently the centerpiece of this media initiative. First created in 1993 and tailored to address issues relevant to the Latino population, the

Nuevos Horizontes

material is delivered in Spanish via radio and web podcasts that reach nearly one million listeners across the U.S. and in Latin America each week. The New Horizons program includes interviews with national and Latin American leaders, as well as health and culture sections. This program also supplements a Spanish oral comprehension curriculum for high school and university faculty who teach community-based learning pedagogies across the U.S. For the first time in its history, WILL will broadcast the program and has proposed airing emergency alerts in both Spanish and English, such as tornado and health warnings. WILL is also the new home of the New Horizons production studio.



Spanish Language Radio Program

CII worked with New Horizons to find a permanent location for its offices and we are pleased that the campus cultural house, La Casa Latina Cultural <http://studentaffairs.illinois.edu/diversity/lacasa/index.html>, has provided space. La Casa's Director, Adele Lozano, is offering leadership in planning for further intersections of the program with research, learning and campus life.

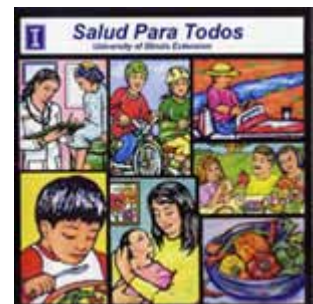
Another major thrust is an e-learning pilot project that will streamline the use of New Horizons audio files, comprehension quizzes, and other material for use by a wide variety of students. The e-learning project, led by Norma Scagnoli (E-Learning Specialist in the

College of Business), is a collaboration among GSLIS, Applied Technologies for Learning in the Arts and Sciences (ATLAS), and Academic Outreach.

Next year's work with the New Horizons Media Initiative will focus on developing community health informatics research projects with the Latino community. CII is teaming up with the local Hope Community Clinic and other partners to submit a grant proposal to the National Institutes of Health. The grant would fund community-based participatory research to support immigrant youth in their role of health navigators for their families.

Professor Bishop is also director of the Community Informatics Initiative of Graduate School of Library and Information Science, as well as directing SOAR, the B. T. Washington Elementary After School Program in Champaign and serving on the Outreach Committee of the Latino Partnership of Champaign County. Mr. Mueller is the Director not only of New Horizons but also of the Northern Illinois Area Health Education Center and of Community Research for the National Center for Rural Health Professions, University of Illinois at Chicago's College of Medicine in Rockford.

Visit the New Horizons Media Initiative website at: <http://www.nuevoshorizontes.org>



"Salud Para Todos" is a Spanish CD which contains information about various health topics organized into seven categories: Women's Health, Children's Health, Healthy Nutrition, Health and the Environment, Adult's Health, and Family's Health.

Storytelling in [Stop] Motion

Amidst the rapid development of web2.0 and participatory culture it's important to remember how to impart the fundamental skills behind all literacies—digital or otherwise—when educating youth. Two of these core competencies, critical and creative thinking, continue to be found in the oldest of practices: storytelling. Often kids are taught to create and write stories in the classroom via traditional methods, such as in essays or journals, but many are denied a chance to tell stories in visual or video form, especially at an early age. Storytelling is a crucial component not only for literacy, but also gives kids the chance to speak for themselves in positive (and unaltered or unmediated!) messages, which in turn builds confidence.



Jeff Ginger works with workshop participants on their movie

With this in mind GLSIS doctoral student Jeff Ginger ran a stop-motion storytelling workshop at the Rantoul Public Library this past spring. Stop-motion means just what it sounds like: a series of still images put together into a movie. Say you take a toy dog as your subject: you'd take its picture, move it, take another picture, and then put those images together in a sequence to form a scene. Over a series of sessions Jeff and the children's librarian in Rantoul, Annette Davis, helped 4th and 5th graders and their parents learn how to brainstorm and build the fundamentals of a story, put them together to make a storyboard, "film" scenes with still digital cameras and ultimately produce a video complete with sound and effects using both Apple iMovie and Microsoft MovieMaker. Learners used stuffed animal characters in sets around the library and portrayed semi-animated shorts which were posted to YouTube when they were done.

Everyone—Jeff, parents, kids, and volunteers—had a lot of fun and learned something about stop-motion video!

- The stop-motion videos (instructional ones and those created by the kids) can be found at <http://www.youtube.com/CommunityInformatics>
- A complete guide for how to run this workshop, complete with links to demo videos, storyboarding materials and more can be found at http://www.communityinformaticspjrojects.com/files/Digital-LearningSeries_StopMotion.pdf

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