Diverse panelists examine filesharing at debate

Though multiple sides of issue represented, RIAA dominates the more than hour-long discussion

By Joshua Cuneo
Senior Staff Writer

If there's one thing that nearly every student at Tech has in common, it's a love of music. Many of us listen to it on our iPods between classes, keep it in the background while we study for our next test, and whisk it on when we climb in the car.

We also keep gigabytes of it on our computers, much of it illegal. The ethical question of downloading copyrighted-protected music was the hot topic of Tuesday's panel "The Download: Free for All?" Hosted by the Honor Advisory Council (HAC), four panelists from different sides of the file-sharing debate spent 90 minutes discussing the moral implications of illegally downloading music from peer-to-peer (P2P) networks.

"We wanted to say...there's sides to it; downloading is illegal, and so there's an ethical question right there," said Erin Holtz, a fifth-year Industrial Engineering major and HAC programs chair for the discussion panel. "We didn't want to tell people what was right...So we'd be saying, here's all the sides, now you guys, decide how to take this.

The event was sponsored by several Tech organizations, including the Georgia Tech Student Foundation, who funded the publicity, and the Office of Information Technology, who approached HAC with the idea for the panel.

Auxiliary Services and the Office of the Dean of Students provided additional support, and WREK and GTCON broadcasted the event.

The panelists included Linda Zirkelbach, Associate Counsel, Legal Affairs for the Recording Industry Association of America (RIAA), who fought in last week's Supreme Court case against Grokster in MGM Studios v. Grokster.

John Bonus, an admired former file-sharing analyst at a Tech alumni who co-founded the record label Bonus Records and spoke first-hand about the impact of file sharing on the industry.

He put a human face on the big business," Holtz said.

"It definitely came off more in the sense of preaching to not download, which wasn't the ultimate goal of the event."

Erin Holtz
HAC programs chair

Representatives from RIAA and various aspects of the entertainment industry participated in panel discussion, sponsored by the Honor Advisory Council, that was held last Tuesday at the Ferst Center.

Graduate research poster competition debuts

By Swathy Prithivi
Contributing Writer

The multitude of research done by Tech's approximately 5000 graduate students was spotlighted at the first campus-wide Graduate Student Research Symposium Friday, April 1.

Held in the Student Center Ballroom and sponsored by the Graduate Student Government Association (GSGA), the six-hour event featured almost 80 submissions by graduate students from all six colleges.

Posters displayed a wide range of research topics, including technology development in China, the role of NGOs in the coffee market, biologically-inspired networking reception also fol-

Cancer therapy, decision tools in the market, and biologically-inspired technology development in China. Many of the research topics were due to the effort of NGOs in the coffee market, biologically-inspired networking reception also followed the event.

The research symposium was the first one of its kind. Kasi David, graduate student body president, said the event was part of GSGA's mission to "increase a sense of community among graduate students."

Civil and Environmental Engineering major Leonardo Duenas-Osorio was one of the interested graduate students who took part in the event.

"I really wanted to display my work," he said. "I have [prepared] presentations in the past for conferences, and I was always wondering why, we have so much research going on and we never have the opportunity to hear comments from people who have a completely different point of view which you may not agree with.

"I was always wondering why...we have so much research going on and we never have the opportunity to present." Leonardo Duenas-Osorio
CEE graduate student

"It is a nice event to see all the people, what they are doing and how the research is going [at Georgia Tech]," he said.

According to Pekgune, a good number of students stopped by the event to view the posters and talk to the students presenting them.

In addition to students, "judges from faculty and industry were seeing the posters, asking questions about research and evaluating it based on clarity of presentation, research content, motivation, method and the computation," she said.

Samuel Graham, an assistant professor in the School of Mechanical Engineering, was one of the judges.

"I just wanted to come out and see the kind of research that goes on [at Tech]," he said. "It has been intriguing and interesting, I asked a lot of questions and I learned a lot.

The inter-college participation was a unique aspect of the event, Graham said. "It has been a great experience, because you get to see all of things that are going on in different departments," he said.

"I was not looking just at Mechanical Engineering, but at ISyE, Civil Engineering," Graham said.

The students who participated also benefited. "It is important to hear comments from people who have a completely different point of view which you may not agree with," Pekgune said.

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Above: Prosthetists and Orthot-ics graduate student Andrew Saw-ers (right) presents his poster. Left: several of the poster com-petition winners display their award certificates.
have because you are completely immersed in your work,” Duenas-Osorio said. Many of the participants agreed that the event should definitely be repeated. According to David, SGA will continue its efforts to make the symposium a regular event, and perhaps even extend its scope to undergraduate students.

However, the newness of the event also drew plenty of suggestions for future improvement. William Rouse, chair of the School of Industrial and Systems Engineering, was part of an attentive audience and came to the event to support the school’s graduate student efforts. “I was definitely expecting more people both presenting and viewing the posters,” he said. His suggestions for improvement included greater publicity of the event. Pekgun suggested reevaluating competition categories. “I think it will be fairer if they split the judging by department instead of schools...Industrial and Systems Engineering is very different [from] Electrical and Computer Engineering, for example. It would more fair if they evaluated on a different basis,” Pekgun said. Other suggestions included increasing the number of judges and providing poster board materials for participants.
CAN YOU FIGURE OUT WHERE ON CAMPUS THIS PICTURE WAS TAKEN?

Email focus@technique.gatech.edu if you think you know the answer; check to see if you won in a later issue.

Answer to previous Tech Up Close:
Class of 1950 plaque on walkway by Tech Tower

Correct submissions:
Chris Dalbec, Aaron Bolduc, Guillermo Narsillo, Albert Peterson Kendal Carey

This Week's Photo:

By Stephen Manek / STUDENT PUBLICATIONS
LCC symposium brings out the “monstrous” in all of us
Two-day event features science-fiction authors and student work, Buffy and Cartoon Network

By Kristin Noell
Senior Staff Writer

Last week, the School of Literature, Communication and Culture (LCC) held a symposium entitled “Monstrous Bodies in Science, Fiction and Culture: Celebrating 25 years of the fantastic in the arts at Georgia Tech.”

The two-day event featured a variety of events, including panelists, lectures, exhibits and readings.

“Thursday was our kind of ‘Tech’ day,” explained Amelia Shackelford, a Science, Technology and Culture major and the conference assistant. Students presented both fiction and academic works. There was also a lunch and a session with sci-fi author and guest of honor Paul di Filippo.

Friday’s events focused more on the local Atlanta science fiction scene. Popular culture expert Rhonda Wilcox spoke about Buffy the Vampire Slayer, editors and producers from Cartoon Network’s Adult Swim participated in an open Q&A discussion, and there was a session on how to get into the fiction, comics and movie industry as a professional writer.

The idea for a “Monstrous Bodies” symposium emerged in part from the ashes of the Frankenstein exhibit that visited Tech last year. “Everyone wanted to focus on that up, because it was such a big success,” Shackelford said. The department contemplated holding a Dracula-themed event, but found the topic to be somewhat narrow.

“We found that very few of us were really doing any research or work with vampires,” Shackelford said. “So through a lot of brainstorming, and looking at what everyone was working on, we just really expanded it out to ‘monstrous bodies’.”

Lisa Yaszek, an assistant professor in the School of Literature, Communication and Culture (LCC), was responsible for bringing in speakers for the Frankenstein event and, as the conference coordinator for “Monstrous Bodies” as well. According to Yaszek, planning for the event began about a year ago.

The primary reason for the event, besides celebrating Foote’s contribution to the Institute, was to share student and faculty work in LCC and STaC. “We really just wanted to show the community what we’re doing here... that you can study science fiction and that we have undergraduate research in the School of LCC,” Shackelford said.

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One reason for the symposium was to celebrate 25 years of science fiction at Tech, beginning with LCC professor emeritus Irving ‘Bud’ Foote’s pioneering work in science fiction studies.

Foote started putting science fiction classes together for university credit and taught the first one in 1971. Throughout his career, he brought science fiction authors to Tech, and when he retired in 1999, he donated a large science fiction collection to the library.

“People weren’t really teaching science fiction studies at the university level much before the late 1960s and early ’70s,” Yaszek said. “We wanted to celebrate Bud’s work, and show the community what we’re doing here...that you can study science fiction and that we have undergraduate research in the School of LCC,” Shackelford said.

The primary reason for the event, besides celebrating Foote’s contribution to the Institute, was to share student and faculty work in LCC and STaC. “We really just wanted to showcase that work and bring together some of the science fiction community around Atlanta and...celebrate the fantastic,” Shackelford said.

Yaszek, who teaches a science fiction class in LCC, said, “We wanted people to see the sort of fun classes that we’re doing where we’re doing serious study of popular culture.”

In fact, she has been teaching Paul di Filippo’s short stories for a number of years. “I always find that students get really excited about [di Filippo’s books]. The first time I taught him, in fact, students asked for more stories, and I’ve never seen a Georgia Tech student ask for more homework before.”

“I think the talk by Rhonda Wilcox on ‘Word as Flesh’ in Buffy the Vampire Slayer was my favorite part.”

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That enthusiasm prompted Yaszek to bring di Filippo to campus. His session was one of the highlights of the symposium, according to Shackelford. “He’s kind of one step below rock star in the writing world,” she said. “We really lucked out with that one, because people, especially in the science fiction world, actually know his name—but he’s not so well known that he’s enormously expensive. And he was excited to come.”

Di Filippo’s work also meshed perfectly with the symposium’s theme. “[He] really does write stories about monstrous bodies, about humans and animals and machines all spliced together,” Yaszek said. “I say that with the greatest possible complement.”

Dave Lillethun, a Computer Science graduate student and one of the symposium attendees, found out about the event from a former STA C alumna. “I wasn’t quite sure what to expect, but figured it would be worth checking out. It did not disappoint,” he said. “I think the talk by Rhonda Wilcox on ‘Word as Flesh’ in Buffy the Vampire Slayer was my favorite the Vampire Slayer...”

Dave Lillethun agreed. “The students were interested peers. “I enjoyed the original fiction that was read at the Literary Slam, and I thought that all of the papers presented in the Academic Panels were top notch,” Ellis said. “At an average of 90 students per event, both Shackelford and Yaszek were pleased with the symposium’s turnout, and felt the symposium to be a success. They also said they hope to hold similar events in the future, perhaps with a different theme.

“I love to do it again next year,” Yaszek said. “I say that with the enthusiasm of having just finished the symposium, but...at this point we’re optimistic it would be something we’d really like to explore in the future.”

“I really hope to see Monstrous Bodies back again next year,” Lillethun agreed. The symposium also made a more general statement on liberal arts at Tech. “I think it’s good press for both LCC and for Tech in general,” Shackelford said. “It shows we have more rounded people than just science and engineering.”

Yaszek agreed. “It only recently, within the last five or six years, that we’ve even begun to talk about the liberal arts at Georgia Tech, and to do an arts festival like this [shows] that we do a lot of creative work [here],” she said. “As far as I can tell, it’s one of the first arts festivals we’ve ever had at Georgia Tech...it was a lot of fun.”

Videos of all the events will be available online at www.monstrousbodies.lcc.gatech.edu within a month.

“File-sharing and P2P networks are expected to have an increasingly greater impact in the business community in the coming years. “As [our generation starts] taking over business, are we going to allow our employees to use these kinds of networks?” Holtz said. “A lot of people are going to be developing software, and are they going to want people to be downloading illegal copies online?”

Unfortunately, the event did not go quite as planned. “The discussion was dominated by Zirkelbach, who gave long responses full of statistical evidence and anecdotes. She succeeded in nailing her point home more than the other panelists, which gave the entire debate an unintended edge topic.”

Especially at an institute full of techno-savvy students—who are likely to download without thought to the ethical implications—the issue becomes even more relevant. Holtz hoped that the panel would help its attendees make more informed decisions about using P2P networks. “A lot of us are the ones that, [while] in high school, Napster came out. We just started using it, and it’s part of our lives,” Holtz said. “We don’t really think about all the sides, and most people kind of made up their mind before downloading is wrong,” she said. “I think it’s good press for the students. “We wanted it to be something that’s not only valuable while you’re at school, but...is kind of the new hot button topic.”

Holtz also said that future panels would permit live questions from the students. “The students were quite upset...They felt it would be an actual discussion.”

Jonathan Olinger

HAC chair

“The hardest part is [finding] the panel members, because obviously you’re dealing with organizations that are pretty famous,” Holtz said. The panel has been under discussion since last year, when HAC started seeking new ways to promote ethics and integrity among the student body. “We’re not the body associated with punishment,” Holtz said. “We wanted to do something that was very proactive, that tied ethics, integrity, honor, everything into something that’s not only valuable while you’re at school, but...is kind of the new hot button topic.”

However, both Olinger and Holtz agree that this provided a valuable learning opportunity, and they hope that this event will serve as a precursor to a series of panels on ethics and technology.

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Holtz also said that they will make sure to get strong speakers who are willing to speak up for their side of the issue.

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“Next time, we’d even move up an effort to make sure that all sides are explored thoroughly,” Olinger said. “Something to challenge the way [the audience was] thinking.”

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