For Addicts, It’s All About the Craving

Jonathan Potts

Of all the researchers devoted to studying drug addiction, hardly anyone has ever asked the most important question, says George Loewenstein: Why?

“There is so much research on addiction and drug abuse, and amazingly little of it is focused on the central question of why people take drugs in the first place,” said Loewenstein, the Herbert A. Simon Professor of Economics and Psychology and a world-renowned researcher on the psychology of intertemporal choice — or decisions that require trade-offs between costs and benefits at...

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“Seeing Science” Tells Fascinating Story of Historic Tome

Cindy Carroll

Last fall, as she perused some of the books in the Posner Collection, Dean of University Libraries Gloriana St. Clair happened across a 16th century edition of the work of Ibn al-Haytham (known in the western world as Alhazen), an 11th century Arabic scientist and mathematician. The book, “Opticae Thesaurus,” was a Latin translation of al-Haytham’s theories and discoveries in optics, a science that he pioneered.

St. Clair quickly noted several points of interest about the book. The spine was hand-marked OSF (Ordo Sancti Franciscus), the society of monks that had bound the printed pages in the 1570s. Two previous owners had signed the book: Count Mikolaj Niewiescin-ski, a collector of science literature in...

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Hello Mrs. Huxtable

Most people remember her as Clair Huxtable on the television smash “The Cosby Show,” but actress Phylicia Rashad had more on her mind than sitcoms when she spoke in Carnegie Mellon’s Philip Chosky Theater last week. In “A Dialogue With Phylicia Rashad,” alumni Dan Green (A’94) spoke with the Tony Award-winning actress on everything from her process for developing a character to her take on Pittsburgh, which she deemed “fascinating.” And while the audience treated Rashad to two standing ovations, she made no secret of just how much her trip to Carnegie Mellon and mentoring sessions with School of Drama students meant to her. “I must say that being here today and being able to interact with developing actors at this institution has been the fulfillment of a dream,” she said. The dialogue was sponsored by the School of Drama, University Advancement and Student Affairs in celebration of Black History Month.
Researcher Says Addicts Can’t Predict Intensity of Cravings

Continued from page one

different points in time.

Researchers have dubbed it the paradox of initial drug use — why a person who understands the risks inherent in drug addiction makes the decision to experiment with drugs anyway. Loewenstein got some insight into the problem while teaching a freshman seminar on drug use and abuse. His students were mystified at the behavior of drug addicts.

“They couldn’t imagine that they would behave in that way, like stealing from their parents to feed their addiction,” Loewenstein says. “It’s just beyond the ability of an unaddicted brain to imagine what it’s like to be addicted.”

Loewenstein thinks he’s found an answer to his question. In a study published in the Journal of Health Economics, he and his colleagues discovered that even long-time drug addicts failed to imagine the intensity of a drug craving when they weren’t currently experiencing it.

The study involved 13 heroin addicts being treated with the maintenance drug buprenorphine (BUP). During the eight weeks of the study, participants were repeatedly asked to choose between varying amounts of money or an extra dose of BUP, both when they were craving the drug and when they weren’t. The major finding was that addicts valued an extra dose of BUP about twice as much when they were craving it (right before receiving their normal dose of the drug) than when they were currently satiated (minutes after receiving the BUP) — even when they knew they would not receive the extra dose until five days later.

“If addicts can’t appreciate the intensity of a craving when they aren’t currently experiencing it, as these results suggest, it seems unlikely that those who have never experienced a craving could predict its motivational force,” — George Loewenstein

With spring right around the corner, the patio furniture sales won’t be far behind. But before you decide on that new table, chairs and matching glider, you may want to talk to freshwater economics major Josh Kresge, one of the latest student entrepreneurs to enroll at Carnegie Mellon.

You see, Kresge, who’s no relation to the Kresge Theater folks, is in the business of backyard rest and relaxation, peace and tranquility on those warm, breezy, blue sky summer days.

So what exactly does Kresge sell? It’s a hammock, in more shapes, colors and styles than you can shake a glass of lemonade at.

“It’s the perfect gift for someone who has everything,” Kresge says.

As a youngster growing up in East Greenville, Pa., about 40 minutes outside Philadelphia, Kresge took a liking to hammocks while vacationing in Ocean City, Md. Years later, he realized that the easy lifestyle icon could yield a pretty nice profit margin. So he parlayed his interest in business and hammocks into HammockHutch.com, an online hammock warehouse.

“I wanted to do something different,” Kresge says. “There was too much competition in the sports merchandise business, but hammocks didn’t give you very many options. Some stores, like Lowe’s, had them, but there was pretty much only one choice.”

Using his Web skills, Kresge built his own site and launched his company in May 2006. He’s had 7,000 hits and has sold about 60 hammocks thus far, but he hopes to increase traffic by working with search engine optimization, so when users search for hammocks, his site comes to the top of the list.

“That’s what I’m trying to figure out when I’m not in class,” he said. Kresge’s hammocks and accessories, such as stands, cup holders and pillows, range from about $40 to $200. He has distributors in Ecuador, North Carolina and Canada, and is looking to expand into China. He says a distributor in China stocks the “Beach Hammock,” which fold like a beach chair and sit low to the sand. It sells for about $100.

The fledgling entrepreneur says he’s made about $3,000 thus far, but not all of that goes to his college education. Some of the profit goes to his adopted son in Ecuador, 7-year-old Anderson Toscano. Kresge supports Anderson through Children International.

“HammockHutch.com was founded with two primary goals in mind. One was to provide hammocks and accessories at a reasonable price. The other was to help others in the process.” — Josh Kresge

Student Entrepreneur Sells R&R On a Summer Day

Bruce Gerson

Freshman economics major Josh Kresge sells peace and tranquility at HammockHutch.com.
New Web Site Debunks Driving Myths

Criss Swaney

If you really want to test fate, hop on a motorcycle at 2 a.m. on Saturday or ease into the family car for a drive between midnight and 4 a.m. It doesn’t take a rocket scientist to guess that the midnight to 4 a.m. slot is the most dangerous time to drive or that motorcycles are risky transport.

But it might come as a surprise that the Pacific region — with its tangled maze of freeways — scores second-lowest in the nation in terms of fatality rates. That’s the word from a recent study by Carnegie Mellon engineers who developed an interactive Web site to improve travel risk information.

Carnegie Mellon faculty Paul Fischbeck, David Gerard and Randy Weinberg, consultant Barbara Genler, and a team of student researchers developed TrafficSTATS (Statistics on Travel Safety) for the AAA Foundation for Traffic Safety to improve risk information available to policymakers and the public. The tool provides a different perspective on travel safety.

The study breaks down the stats by age, gender, time of day and geography. Among the study’s findings was that 82-year-old female drivers and males between the ages of 16 and 23 are the groups mostly likely to die on the road. The women die more often because they are so frail, and the young men die because they are risk-takers, inexperienced drivers and less mature, the study says.

The study also debunks the stereotype of “crazy women drivers.” An analysis of traffic data shows that male drivers are actually 77 percent more likely to die in a traffic accident than women, based on miles driven.

“Males don’t believe us,” said Gerard, study co-author and executive director of the Center for the Study and Improvement of Regulation (CSIR) in the Engineering and Public Policy Department. “The kicker is that 20,000 men are killed every year behind the wheel compared with 6,700 women.”

The study also revealed that the safest groups mostly likely to die on the road are 82-year-old female drivers and males between the ages of 16 and 23 and drivers are between the ages of 40 and 50, the study says. “They do stupider things,” said study co-author Fischbeck, a professor of social and decision sciences and engineering and public policy.

The study also revealed that the safest drivers are between the ages of 40 and 50, and fatality risks are higher in the summer than winter.

The researchers used a national database with more than one million demographic variables to calculate their findings.

Walking to the Arctic Sky

February’s severe weather didn’t spare anyone, including the men and women in Jonathan Borofsky’s (A’64) sculpture. Here, snow-covered figures watch their icle-adorned peers make their way to the Frigo winter sky above.
Scot on the Street

Carnegie Mellon’s Healthy Campus 2010 committee recently unveiled a proposal to make the campus tobacco-free by, well, 2010. With all the controversy surrounding the issue, The Piper thought it would be a good idea to take to the streets and uncover what the average student, professor or employee thinks about the issue.

Erika Barrington
Junior, History
Duxbury, MA

I’m a little hesitant to be totally in support of it because I have friends who smoke and they feel that it imposes the views of other people that no one should be smoking. And they feel that it doesn’t really give them license to seek out ways to quit. They basically feel like it’s being imposed upon them. And they feel that it really doesn’t respect their rights as having the choice to smoke if they want to. People who have been smoking for a long time and have been trying to quit feel like they need that cigarette and they’re wondering how far they will have to go on break to find a place to smoke. They’re feeling set apart from everybody, victimized a little bit, ostracized.

Sholom Cohen
Member of the Technical Staff, SEI

One thing I found is that difficult is people smoking right outside a building — three or four or people congregating so you can’t even walk outside a building without having to go through a wall of smoke. It makes it very uncomfortable for a non-smoker. People should be more considerate. I would be in favor of it (the ban).

Jane Ditmore
Senior Sales Associate, Entropy

I do not smoke, but I would have no problem with them purchasing the cigarettes because we are very careful as far as carding them to make sure they are of legal age to do that. People should have the right to be able to choose.

Chekhov’s “The Three Sisters” Slated To Open 2007-08 Drama Season

The School of Drama has announced the stage productions for the 2007–08 season, which will address the struggle of individual within a hostile society. Productions will include Anton Chekhov’s “The Three Sisters,” directed by Vladimir Mirodan; “Guys and Dolls,” created by Jo Swerling, Abe Burrows and Frank Loesser; by Brian Johnston; “The Piano Lesson,” written by August Wilson; and “Don Carlos,” written by Friedrich Schiller. Performances will take place in the Purnell Center for the Arts, Philip Chosky Theater, Helen Waynes Raut Studio Theater and John Wels Video Studio, as well as various locations around campus and Pittsburgh.

Kushal Doshi
Freshman, Chemical Engineering,
Marlboro, NJ

I’m an opponent of smoking so I believe this is a great plan that is being proposed. … It would make the environment healthier for us to breathe and walk around without being intoxicated from second-hand smoke.

Kristhan Wanchee
Sophomore, Computer Science, Ridgewood, NJ

I’m not in favor of smoking so I’m definitely for this proposal. I think it would be great. There are a lot of people who smoke on campus and it gets kind of annoying.

Maury Burgwin
Faculty Researcher, Computer Science and Tepper School of Business

It’s really very simple. I’m against it. I happen to like to smoke cigars, but that’s irrelevant. When I go to a restaurant I actually prefer to go to a non-smoking restaurant. The problem is there’s too much government, there’s too much imposition in our personal lives. And all I say is, get out!

N E W S B R I E F S

Tepper School Creates Richard P. Simmons Distinguished Professorship

The Tepper School of Business has received $5 million from Richard P. and Virginia M. Simmons to establish the Richard P. Simmons Distinguished Professorship. The first person appointed to the Richard P. Simmons Chair is Finn E. Kydland, who received the Nobel Prize in Economic Sciences in 2004. Simmons, retired chairman of Allegheny Technologies Inc., is a devoted philanthropist and distinguished adjunct professor at the Tepper School, where he teaches the popular graduate course “Responsibilities and Perspectives of the CEO.” Kydland, who earned his doctor's degree in economics from Carnegie Mellon in 1973, received the Nobel Prize in conjunction with Edward Prescott, who also earned his Ph.D. from Carnegie Mellon (1967).

TK60: Celebrating Takeo Kanade

A symposium celebrating the 60th birthday of world-renowned robotics and computer vision expert Takeo Kanade will be held March 8-9. The technical symposium will feature top experts in robotics, computer vision and medical and assistive technologies, areas in which Kanade, the U.A. and Helen Whitaker University Professor of Computer Science and Robotics, has made groundbreaking discoveries. Festivities begin at 4 p.m., March 8 in Wean Hall 7500, where Yuichiro Anzai, president of Keio University, will deliver the keynote address. For more on the TK60 schedule and speakers, visit http://www.ri.cmu.edu/events/tk60/.

Trotter Reappointed Head of History Department

History Professor Joe Trotter has been appointed to a second five-year term as head of the Department of History. Trotter, the Mellon Professor of History, has been on the university’s faculty since 1985, and has been head of the History Department since 2001. During that time, the department housed the internationally renowned journal Social Science History and added six full-time faculty members. History faculty published 10 books, edited or co-edited 16 collections and scores of scholarly articles and essays during Trotter’s first term.

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Carnegie Mellon Software Steers NASA’s Mars Rover

Autonomous navigation software developed by researchers at Carnegie Mellon and NASA’s Jet Propulsion Laboratory drove the NASA Mars Rover “Opportunity” earlier this month in the software’s first live test on the Red Planet. Opportunity, operating near the rim of Victoria Crater, was traversing an area that mission managers had made certain was without obstacles for this initial test. But they programmed a “virtual keepout zone” for Opportunity to maneuver around, and initial findings suggest the rover veered around this simulated obstacle as anticipated. “Much more work and testing remains to be done, but we are thrilled to see our software operating on Mars and we believe it will ultimately expand the capabilities of this and future planetary rovers,” said Tony Stenzel, research professor at the Robotics Institute and associate director of the National Robotics Engineering Center.

Trailblazing Historian To Deliver Margaret Morrison Women’s History Lecture

Gerta Lerner, a pioneer in the field of women’s history and a longtime social activist, will give the inaugural Margaret Morrison Distinguished Lecture in Women’s History at 7 p.m., Thursday, March 1 in the Giant Eagle Auditorium. Born in Austria in 1920, Lerner founded the nation’s first master’s degree program in women’s history at Sarah Lawrence College in 1972, and in 1981 established a doctoral program in women’s history at the University of Wisconsin—Madison. The Margaret Morrison Distinguished Lecture in Women’s History is sponsored by
Technology Opens New Window Into Civil War History

Byron Spice

A bulldozer moving earth for the future School of Computer Science Complex looms in the window of Laura Tomokiyo’s office in Newell-Simon Hall. But it doesn’t distract her as she works to create a new window for computer users to view Pennsylvania’s past.

Using Google Earth as a platform, Tomokiyo and colleagues in the Robotics Institute’s Global Connection Project are developing a new way for people to explore the Civil War battlefields, monuments and museums of southcentral Pennsylvania.

This new effort, funded by a $285,000 state grant, will use some of the same techniques first employed by the Global Connection Project to tie National Geographic photos and articles about people and locales to their respective sites via Google Earth. The National Geographic overlay, now available for Africa and North America, has become a standard feature of the globe-exploring Web site.

The Civil War Trail initiative will encompass information from a wider variety of sources and incorporate a new technology, called Gigapan, which creates “explorable pictures” of historic or scenic sites.

“We are going to change the way people browse for destination experiences,” said Illah Nourbakhsh, an associate professor of robotics who is co-director of the Global Connection Project with project scientist Randy Sargent of Carnegie Mellon West.

“Gigapan is a brand-new technology that will open the Civil War trails to electronic exploration, and Pennsylvania will be the first state to capitalize on it.”

Gigapan — for “gigapixel panoramas” — is a robotic platform that enables a digital camera to take dozens or hundreds of photos of a scene that can be electronically stitched together to create a panoramic computer image that users can examine in great detail.

A person viewing a Gigapan image of the Gettysburg battlefield, for instance, could zoom in on monuments that would be all but invisible in the larger image. “The battlefield is such an enormous space that even people who have visited it numerous times keep finding new things,” Tomokiyo said. “The potential for exploring it with Gigapan is amazing.”

Likewise, users could zoom in to read individual headstones in a Gigapan of a historic cemetery. Tomokiyo and other project staff will begin capturing Gigapan images later this spring. At some sites, images will be produced each month, adding dimension to the Gigapan exploration experience.

In the meantime, Tomokiyo, a Language Technologies Institute alumna who joined Global Connection as project scientist in January, is busy identifying which sites merit highlighting and finding sources for the historic, travel and environmental information that will be incorporated into the Google Earth overlay.

“The battlefield is such an enormous space that even people who have visited it numerous times keep finding new things.” — Laura Tomokiyo

“We’d really like Pennsylvanians to have a voice in this,” she said. “There are so many people here with special expertise, such as the uniforms, weaponry and even music of the Civil War era. People have just been so forthcoming.”

Global Connection, a joint project of Carnegie Mellon, NASA and Google, is working with Ripple Effects Interactive, Public Intelligence, the National Civil War Museum and the Pennsylvania Tourism Office.

Tomokiyo said she hopes the Civil War trail information will be available for use by the end of the year, with Gigapans being added through 2008. But she hopes that won’t be the end of the work in Pennsylvania.

“This is a state with a rich history and great scenic beauty, so we have much left to explore,” she said.

Tuition Increase Approved

Carnegie Mellon’s Board of Trustees approved a tiered tuition increase for incoming and current undergraduate students for this coming fall. Tuition for entering undergraduate students will be $36,950 (an 8.1 percent increase over last year), while current students will see a tuition increase of 4.1 percent. Room and board costs will also increase 4.1 percent to $15,663 and $3,997, respectively.

The university uses tuition dollars to support and develop programs that allow it to compete for outstanding students and faculty. Tuition also supports the growth of undergraduate education initiatives and improvements in labs on campus. And since tuition covers only a percentage of these costs, the university engages in energetic fundraising to build its endowment and generate dollars for student programs, facilities and scholarships.

“We aim to offer the best possible learning environment for our students,” said Vice President for Enrollment William Elliott. “The student experience here extends beyond the classroom into all aspects of student life. We provide a positive experience for our students and a strong start on their futures.”
Co-Ed Rooms, Campus Cars, Bikes Ride Atop Student President’s Agenda

Bruce Gerson

Student Government President Karl Sjogren (pronounced “sher grin”) is looking to end his one-year term with a rush. With less than three months to go, the senior social and decision sciences major—who’s also a first-year public policy and management grad student at the Heinz School — has a few blockbuster initiatives ready to hit campus. Although he’s busy putting the final touches on his administration’s proposals, the Fremont, Calif., native took a few minutes to chat with The Piper about those proposals, the role of the student body president and some hot topics facing students today.

colors and have “Tartans” written all over it. So if you steal it, everyone will know where you got it.

We’re also setting up a car-sharing program, called Flex-Car, in which cars will be available on campus for rent by the hour for students, faculty and staff. It’s basically having your own personal fleet service on campus.

What will the bikes be for rent?

There will be no fee involved. They would just be placed all around campus. If one’s available you can just grab it. The goal is that they would stay on campus. Only the campus community would want to use them, believe me. These bikes are functional, they’re not very nice. It would all be on the honor system.

But the cars would be rented?

Yes. We’d have three to five vehicles, small hybrids, trucks and vans or something like that. I think the program we’ll wind up going with is called a “place- ment fee” service. Students, faculty and staff would pay membership fees and then get reduced rates. They would pay about $5–7 per hour to rent a Toyota Prius. A Toyota Tacoma would be like $7. We’ll have vans and trucks closer to the beginning and end of the semesters to accommodate students’ needs. And if you’re under 21, you can still rent one.

There are programs like this in Portland, North Carolina, San Francisco, Boston, New York, D.C. It’s a growing movement in metropolitan areas.

You’ve been working on a gender neutral dorm room proposal that may see a decision soon. Why are students interested in co-ed rooms and what’s your take on it?

The proposal calls for making some Oakland apartments co-ed by room, not just by building. Upperclassmen (first-years would be excluded) would select pairing by female, male or no preference. I think it’ll give the students a lot more choice and flexibility within their housing arrangements. Our targets — groups of friends, siblings and GLBT students — are all expected to benefit from this proposal.

Is it difficult to get things done with only one term in office?

It feels like we have attention deficit disorder sometimes because we’re always working on so many things. I’m of the philosophy that if only 10 percent of the ideas will make it, I’d rather be working on 100 ideas rather than five.

What has given you the most satisfaction as president?

Being able to reach out to students, and students knowing they can reach out to me with their ideas, is satisfying. I might not make them happen, but I’ll meet with people and try. If it happens, that’s great, but if it doesn’t at least we tried. I feel that a lot of administrations in the past didn’t have that reputation.

What are some of the hot topics facing students today?

There’s going to be a lot of focus on the mascot. Deciding what that’s going to be, what it should look like, who’s going to be involved in creating it. When that process becomes more defined, everyone will want to talk about it.

Last year it was public art. It wasn’t that people were objecting to public art. This is an environment that trains you to be a change agent, but when anyone wants to change anything about Carnegie Mellon, we freak out. It’s amazing.

What about the proposed smoking ban?

That’s a mixed bag. You’ll find people vehemently against it and you’ll find people vehemently for it. I think it really comes down to how we engage the people in the middle. I think the vast majority of campus doesn’t have a strong opinion because they don’t smoke.

Has Carnegie Mellon lived up to your expectations?

I love Carnegie Mellon. It’s not perfect, but in terms of the richness of the experience, the richness of the people I’ve been able to meet here, it’s been great. It’s a unique environment. It’s very supportive to the intellectually curious. We’re all very geeky and we thrive on that.

Has Pittsburgh been a surprise to you?

Now that I’m transitioning into the role of a grad student, I realize how much Carnegie Mellon students don’t recognize the strengths of Pittsburgh. Pittsburgh has all the amenities of a large metropolitan East Coast city, but fortunately not with the high prices. You can experience a lot — the symphony, fine arts, a ridiculous amount of bars and styles of bars. There’s so much culture that students could spend eight years here and never experience it all.” “Yinzers” love Carnegie Mellon students. It’s a very friendly town. It’s a city that’s very much underrated. Pittsburgh is just like Carnegie Mellon in a way. It’s transitioning into a new role, it’s growing, it’s finding a new purpose. It’s a great time to be here.

Do you have any advice for the next student body president?

Enjoy the power of the role. People want to listen to the student body president. You have one year, so maximize it. Once you’re identified as a student leader, everyone wants to talk to you about initiatives and changes. Use the power to broadcast as many ideas as possible. You’re privy to an incredible amount of ideas. Just use that power and take it all in.

Expert Says No Reason To Panic Over Murder Rate

Ken Walters

Despite an uptick in the U.S. murder rate, it’s not clear whether the country is facing a new wave of violent crime.

That’s what Carnegie Mellon Professor Alfred Blumstein told attendees of the American Association for the Advancement of Science (AAAS) annual meeting on Feb. 16.

While the murder rate had essentially been flat since 2000, the FBI’s Uniform Crime Report showed a 2.5 percent increase in murders and a 2.9 percent rise in robberies in 2005, which has some people concerned. But Blumstein thinks it could just be a blip. “The numbers indicate that this increase is not part of a widespread national trend,” said Blumstein, the J. Erik Jonsson University Professor of Urban Systems and Operations Research at the Heinz School. “While some cities are experiencing rising rates, other cities are seeing a downturn in violent crime.”

Blumstein was one of several Carnegie Mellon faculty members to speak at the meeting, considered the largest general science conference in the world, with approximately 10,000 attendees. Other faculty included:

• Cliff Davidson, professor of civil and environmental engineering, discussed Carnegie Mellon’s Center for Sustainable Engineering;

• David Klahr, professor of psychology, and post-doc Junlei Li addressed the need for better operational definitions in educational research, instructional innovation and assessment;

• Baruch Fischhoff, the Howard Heinz University Professor of Humanities and Social Sciences and Engineering and Public Policy, gave a presentation about applying the principles of decision science to climate-change policy;

• Indira Nair, vice provost for education and professor of engineering and public policy, led a symposium titled “Environmental Literacy: Educating for Environmental Well-Being;”

• Jay Apt, executive director of the Electricity Industry Center and professor of engineering and public policy, discussed technologies and policies to control carbon emissions in the U.S. electric sector;

• Sara Kiesler, the Hillman Professor of Computer Science and Human-Computer Interaction, was a participant in the “Cyber-Enabled, Cross-National Social Science Research: Promoting Sustainable Well-Being” symposium.

• Judith Hallinen, director of the Leonard Gelfand Center for Service Learning and Outreach, gave a talk on K-12 outreach.

SIX
Robotics Researchers Featured in “Almost Human”

Anne Watzman

You’ve heard the names — Groundhog, Zoe, Sandstorm, Grace. They’re just a few of the famous robots created by the students, faculty and staff at Carnegie Mellon’s Robotics Institute (RI). But how they were built and what makes them succeed at their tasks is something of a mystery, one that Pittsburgh native Lee Gutkind is trying to solve in his new book, “Almost Human.”

The book focuses on five people — Computer Science Professor Manuel Veloso, Associate Research Professor David Wettergreen, Robotics Professor William “Red” Whittaker, Biological Sciences Professor Alan Wagner and Nathalie Cabrol, a scientist at NASA’s Ames Research Center — plus dozens of other RI faculty, students and staff.

Gutkind spent four years immersed in the institute — in the classrooms and messy labs deep inside Newell Simon Hall — observing its inhabitants, attending their meetings, watching them work and traveling to odd places to view the progress of their research.

What did he discover? That few obstacles are too great for enterprising graduate students to overcome. He also captured the strengths, quirks and idiosyncrasies of the faculty and how they motivate their students to achieve the impossible, whether it’s preparing for a race in the desert, a simulation of conditions on Mars, or a competition against other robots to see which exhibits the most human-like traits.

Gutkind is a professor of English at the University of Pittsburgh. He has written books about organ transplantation, pediatrics, veterinary medicine, the tragedy of childhood mental illness and even baseball umpires. He held a book signing and presentation for the campus community about “Almost Human” on Feb. 27.

Carnegie Mellon is going head-to-head with 200 colleges nationwide in the annual Recyclemania challenge. The competition, designed to educate students about the need for recycling, takes place over a 10-week period and encourages colleges to decrease the amount of waste they generate while increasing the amount they recycle. Campuses across the country compete in different contests to see which institution can collect the largest amount of recyclables per capita, the largest amount of total recyclables, the least amount of trash per capita or have the highest recycling rate. All participating schools are required to report measurements on a weekly basis in pounds and the front-runners are continuously updated on http://www.recyclemaniacs.org/.

This is Carnegie Mellon’s fourth year participating in the competition, which continues through April 7. During the 2005 competition Carnegie Mellon achieved a recycling rate of more than 15 percent — that’s 29 pounds per student. The university wants to improve the amount the campus recycles this year to more than 20 percent. So don’t just toss that paper or plastic in the garbage. Recycle it!

For more ways to recycle on campus, see http://www.cmu.edu/greenpractices.
Lecture Spotlight: Jared Diamond Wins 2007 Dickson Prize in Science

The decline and fall of great societies like the Roman Empire have inspired generations of poets, artists, and scholars. They seem to provide a metaphor for our own mortality, and their ruins are like a rebuke to our grandest ambitions.

But civilizations collapse for a reason, and there is no life cycle for human societies, says scientist and author Jared Diamond, winner of Carnegie Mellon’s 2007 Dickson Prize in Science.

“A common belief is that collapse is inevitable, that it’s the fate of all societies. The U.S. has never been close to collapse, although we have been in existence as a political entity for 219 years,” Diamond said. “Iceland has been operating for 1,135 years and today it’s one of the richest countries in the world.”

Diamond will deliver the Dickson Prize lecture, titled “Collapse,” at 4:30 p.m., March 26 in McConomy Auditorium. Prior to his lecture, he is tentatively scheduled to sign copies of his latest book, “Collapse: How Societies Choose To Fail or Succeed,” at 3:30 p.m. in the University Center’s Danforth Lounge.

In “Collapse,” Diamond probes the decline and fall of once-prosperous civilizations, such as the Maya and the prehistoric Polynesian society of Easter Island. Diamond pinpoints environmental factors common to these catastrophes that provide lessons for today.

“A transparent lesson is to take environmental problems seriously rather than viewing that as a luxury,” Diamond said. “There are deeper lessons about the role of leadership in a society, and a society’s willingness to change core values.”

A physicist by training, Diamond is a professor of geography at the University of California, Los Angeles. He has also studied ecology and evolutionary biology. His 1997 book “Guns, Germs and Steel: The Fate of Human Societies” — which won the Pulitzer Prize — explores the geographic, environmental and epidemiological factors that enabled some societies to progress rapidly while others remained primitive.

The late Pittsburgh physician Joseph Z. Dickson and his wife, Agnes Fisher Dickson, established the Dickson Prize in Science in 1969. Carnegie Mellon awards it annually to individuals in the United States who make outstanding contributions to science. The Dickson Prize includes $50,000, and a medal.

Jared Diamond

Upcoming Events

March 1
Margaret Morrison Women’s History Month Lecture
Gerda Lerner, professor emeritus, University of Wisconsin
7 p.m., McConomy Auditorium, University Center (UC)

March 4
Department of Choral Studies Concert
3 p.m., Kresge Recital Hall, College of Fine Arts

March 5
“Environmental Challenges to Human Fertility: Three Case Studies”
Shanna Helen Swan, professor, University of Rochester
4:30 p.m., Adamson Wing, Baker Hall 136A

March 7
Carnegie Mellon Philharmonic Concert
8 p.m., Carnegie Music Hall, 4400 Forbes Ave.

March 8-9
“1962,” a symposium in honor of Talek Kanada’s 60th birthday
Wilan Hall 7500 and UC

March 19
Authors’ Rights and Wrongs Series
“Managing Your Rights: Authors and Copyright”
Julia Blixrud, assistant director for public programs, Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition (SPARC)
4:30 p.m., Posner Center
For a complete list of March events, see the Public Events Calendar at https://my.cmu.edu/site/events and click on “view events” at the bottom of the page.

March 21
Center for the Arts in Society’s “Bring Your Own Brain” Series
Associate Professor of Art Clayton Marcell will present the collaborative work of Carnegie Mellon graduate students and young Mexican artists from Oaxaca
Noon, College of Fine Arts 310

March 22
“Yoga, Sacred Spaces and the Culture of ‘Letting Go’”
Helen Wang, coordinator, Student Development Office
4:30 p.m., Adamson Wing, Baker Hall 136A

March 22
Quarteto Latinoamericano Concert
7:30 p.m., Alumni Recital Hall, College of Fine Arts

March 26
“Deeper Learning in Leadership”
Dennis C. Roberts, associate vice president for Student Affairs, Miami University
7 p.m., McConomy Auditorium, UC

March 28
“Folktales of the Roam-Ing: The Life and Times of the Romani People”
Wendy Safir, professor, Comparative Literature
4:30 p.m., Adamson Wing, Baker Hall 136A

March 30
University Lecture Series LaPagh Lecture “Nanotechnology, Environmental Ethics and Environmental Justice”
Ronald Sandler, assistant professor, Northeastern University
4:30 p.m., Adamson Wing, Baker Hall 136A

March 31
Contemporary Ensemble Concert
5 p.m., Kresge Recital Hall, College of Fine Arts

April 19-21
Spring Carnival
Morewood Gardens Parking Lot

Seeing Science
Continued from page one

the 16th century; and early 19th century mathematician L. C. Bouvier. Between these owners, an unknown scholar penned a Latin annotation inside the front cover, offering references and comparisons to other works.

Clues like these fascinate a book lover because they document the life of the book and its ideas. Twentieth century collector Henry Posner Sr. acquired the volume in 1967, and Henry Posner Jr. deposited it — along with the rest of the Posner Collection of fine and rare books — at Carnegie Mellon in 1978. Since then, the University Libraries has housed the collection (now in the Posner Center) and digitized it, making nearly all of the Posner Collection available in full-text online, where scholars everywhere can access and study it, page by page if they wish.

At the time that she noticed “Opticae Thesaurus,” St. Clair was negotiating a pilot project with the Qatar Foundation to digitize books and manuscripts in the Qatar Heritage Collection. “I wondered,” said St. Clair, “how many of al-Haytham’s writings were in the Qatar collection.” Learning that there were none, she immediately saw Optics and its provenance as an opportunity to demonstrate to the Qatar Foundation how digitization simultaneously preserves rare books and disseminates ideas.

St. Clair worked with colleagues Erik Linke, Gabrielle Michalek and other scholars to research al-Haytham’s scientific contributions and, in particular, to translate and decipher the Latin annotation and other marks of ownership in the Posner copy of “Opticae Thesaurus.” She enlisted the creative expertise of Dan Boyarski, head of the School of Design, and his wife, designer Libby Boyarski. Together, they conceptualized a large-format pamphlet as a vehicle for the text and illustrations, and design’s Smilie Lab technician Dylan Vitone printed and bound the final product. Remarkably, within a few weeks the team produced a limited-edition publication that celebrated al-Haytham’s discoveries, his place in the history of science and the story of how “Opticae Thesaurus” came to be part of the Posner Collection.

In November, when St. Clair visited Qatar to complete arrangements for the pilot digitization project, she presented copy number one of “Ibn al-Haytham: Seeing Science” to the Qatar Foundation and Her Highness Sheikha Moaz bint Nassar al-Missned. Formally a gift from Henry Posner Jr. and St. Clair on behalf of the University Libraries, “Seeing Science” is a work of art in its own right, of which Dan and Libby Boyarski, the Robert Smilie Digital Imaging Lab and the School of Design can be proud.