Soon it will be time for the 5th annual ASIS&T student design competition at the Annual Meeting in Seattle. I hope this recap of what happened in 2013 will encourage students to participate and others to come and cheer them on. The design competition is intense but fun. Each year teams are formed on the first day of the meeting (Sunday), and a design challenge is presented. Two days later, the teams come together to present their ideas to a distinguished panel of judges. Each member of the winning design team receives complimentary registration to the next ASIS&T Annual Meeting.

Last year, after several rounds of matching up (group speed-dating), four teams emerged:

- **The Fabs** (Rong Hu, Nathan Lowrance, Nada Naji, Esperanza Pacheco, Afroza Sultana)
- **Go Canada** (Rhiannon Gainor, Petronilla Muriithi, Zhen Yue, A Yusuf, Qing Zou)
- **Gryffindor** (Nicole Alemanne, Katie Chan, Guillermo Galdainez, Xiao Xie)
- **Flaming Squirrels!!!** (Kate Dillon, Wei Jeng, AJ Million, Philippe Mongeon, Fei Shu)

They were presented with the 2013 challenge, “All the Things”:

Today’s researcher has (synced) folders of full-text files; citation management systems packed with references (and more full-text); clipping tools containing yet more items to follow up on; and “read it later” and “favorite” collections stored by browsers or RSS readers. This personal collection and any public persona information (blogs, Twitter, etc.) are ignored during the process of discovery in the massive open or subscription-based scholarly databases.
we use to find new information. Coyle (2011) [1] points out that “[b]y having such large databases to search we are increasing our odds of finding everything in the world about our topic. Of course, we probably do not want everything in the world about our topic, we want the right books (articles, etc.) for us.” Develop a preliminary design for a system that makes use of a researcher’s personal collection and online persona to enhance discovery in large databases.

Teams were sent off to work on their designs, with a reminder to also attend sessions and enjoy the conference. Two days later we gathered again. Each team had seven minutes to present its design and five minutes to field questions from the distinguished panel of judges: Jamshid Beheshti, McGill University; Nick Belkin, Rutgers University; Sandra Erdelez, University of Missouri; Jim Jansen, Penn State University; Liz Liddy, Syracuse University; and Howard Rosenbaum, Indiana University. Each judge scored the presentations for creativity, impact on solving the problem, feasibility of the solution, contribution to humanity and quality of presentation, including the question and answer session.

Each of the teams contributed interesting ideas to the mix, including apps entitled Definitely Nut Mendeley (Flaming Squirrels!!!, of course), Harmonious (Team Canada) and EurekaPortal (Gryffindor). The judges submitted their score sheets, and after a few minutes of furious addition by the design committee, Team Canada emerged from a close contest as the winner (appropriately for a conference held in Montreal). Member Rhiannon Gainor was kind enough to describe her team’s design for this report:

[They] interpreted “enhanced discovery” as having two aspects: personal information management and information retrieval. Their goals were to propose a way to improve (simplify, make more relevant) large database searches, improve user time management (automate searching, make retrieval and discovery quicker) and decrease information fragmentation of search results. Several user features were proposed for the interface, including click-and-drag tagging and graphical clustering of files by assigned tags and scraped subject terms assigned by the scholarly databases, to reduce re-finding. A user-controlled search display provided side-by-side comparison of the enhanced searches with standard searches of scholarly databases. However, the most innovative aspect of the system design was the attempt to combine a recommendation algorithm for learning the researcher’s online persona and personal collection and a relevance ranking algorithm for bringing disparate information elements together in a way that could be controlled by the end user for building and tailoring not only external database searches, but also internal searching of the user’s own computer.

First, to capture the researcher’s online persona, Yahoo! Pipes was recommended since it provides a graphical user interface for building data mashups of Twitter feeds, blogs, CiteULike, etc. The personal collection of the researcher would be captured with elasticsearch, an open source search and analytics engine that permits the indexing of text items such as Portable Document Format (PDF) and HyperText Markup Language (HTML) documents. Lastly, the system would permit users to enter personally developed user factors, such as weighting certain items or terms more heavily than others, or filtering out results that already exist in the personal collections. These three elements, the online persona, the user-built personal collection and user factors, would inform the recommendations and relevance rankings of the proposed system. The team members were thrilled by their win and would like to express their appreciation to the organizers and the judges and to ASIS&T for sponsoring their awards.

For my part, I would like to give my thanks to all the students, the judges and especially my fellow committee members Michelle Kazmer, Florida State University, and Rong Tang, Simmons College, with assistance on the opening day from judge-to-be Sandra Erdelez, University of Missouri. Drs. Kazmer and Tang will carry the competition on in 2014. ■

Resource Mentioned