

# Benchmarks

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#### IT Strategic Planning Website

By [Dr. Philip Baczewski](#), Senior Director of Academic Computing and User Services and Deputy Chief Information Officer for University Information Technology

A new website is available that supports and documents the IT strategic planning process that was announced previously. The new site is <http://it.unt.edu/strategicplan> and features an overview of the planning process and will serve as a focal point for planning information and activities.

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### [Winter Break Hours](#)



By [Claudia Lynch](#), *Benchmarks Online* Editor

The fall semester is over, winter is upon us; time to rest, relax, catch up on things that were put aside, and generally take a break from what had become your routine these past few months. The following information should help you plan your activities if you need/want to access campus computing facilities over the break.

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### [Using Clickers in the Classroom at UNT](#)



TurningPoint

By [Jane Himmel](#), Associate Director, CLEAR and [Kathy Roberts](#), Instructional Technology Support, CLEAR

Among the instructional technologies supported at UNT is the classroom response system, informally known as "clicker" technology. Clickers have been used in higher education classrooms since the late 1990s to improve student engagement during class. Instructors present a question or problem to the class and students respond by entering an answer choice on the clicker device assigned to them.

[Read more](#)     

### [Blackboard: Then and Now](#)

## By the Numbers

### Down the Corridor of Years

1998

The [April, 1998 issue](#) of *Benchmarks Online* notes these milestones:

- The Instructional Program Group of the IRC is forming a campus-wide committee of persons who are interested in adopting a Web course management system. The goal is to get a system in place by the fall semester that will provide a framework for delivering Web-based courseware, tracking student progress, and administering Web tests. At the time of this writing, TopClass and WebCT were the two packages that Academic Computing have identified as the best candidates for our use.
- An extensive set of computer-based-training packages has been purchased and installed on campus for student, faculty, and staff use. From a campus PC, you can take training courses on the Microsoft Office products, learn how to program in C++, and even learn Novell networking. Plans are currently underway to sell CD-ROMs containing this software in the UNT Bookstore.
- The Computing Center recently completed a new installation package for the Internet software that is used for dialing into campus computers. The package includes a



By [Jane Himmel](#), Associate Director, CLEAR

If you were to utter the word Blackboard around campus a year ago, a pained facial expression or deep groan would likely have told you all you needed to know about users' thoughts, feelings, and observations. The system had experienced multiple unplanned outages during Fall 2012, causing considerable distress among faculty and students who expected a stable, reliable platform on which to complete their course assignments, activities, and exams.

[Read more](#)



## Blackboard Collaborate



By [Michelle Farley](#), Instructional Consultant , CLEAR

Looking for ways to collaborate with colleagues, meet with students without coming to campus, or provide online office hours? Blackboard Collaborate 12 is an online, synchronous, set of collaboration tools available to the UNT community.

Blackboard Collaborate is designed to enhance online courses and encourage collaboration with dynamic interaction.

[Read more](#)



## Today's Cartoon

Click on the link above for an information age laugh.



recent version of Netscape, the student E-mail client Simeon, and several other packages. Available in the Bookstore on CD-ROM for \$10, it works on Windows 95, Windows NT, and the Macintosh and makes it very easy for you to set up your computer for free or Premium Remote Access to UNT's dial-up Internet services.



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<http://it.unt.edu/strategicplan> and features an overview of the planning process and will serve as a focal point for planning information and activities.

As part of the information gathering phase of central IT strategic planning, members of the UNT community can now provide their ideas about how UNT can tap into current themes in IT services. The "Provide your input" link on the strategic plan page will launch a "crowd sourcing" activity that enumerates identified IT themes and provides an opportunity for suggestions of UNT learning, research, and creative activities that should be priorities when considering resource planning. The "Track our Progress" link will provide an overview of the activities supporting the planning process as well as provide links to some of the resource information developed as a result of those activities (login may be required.) Suggestions for additions to this site are welcome. We hope that this will be a useful resource for those interested in staying informed about the UNT IT strategic planning process.

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## Winter Break Hours

By [Claudia Lynch](#), *Benchmarks Online* Editor

The fall semester is over, winter is upon us; time to rest, relax, catch up on things that were put aside, and generally take a break from what had become your routine these past few months. The following information should help you plan your activities if you need/want to access campus computing facilities over the break.

Following are the hours for University Information Technology-managed facilities during the Thanksgiving break. The University is [officially closed](#) from Monday, December 23, 2013 through Wednesday, January 1, 2014.

- The [Helpdesk](#) hours for Winter Break are 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, December 23, Tuesday, December 24, Thursday, December 26 through Tuesday, December 31. **Closed** Wednesday, December 25, 2013 and Wednesday, January 1, 2014. **They will be closed to walk-in traffic on those days they are open during this time.** Re-open for regular hours Thursday, January 2, 2014.
- [Data Management Services](#) will be **closed** Monday, December 23, 2013 through Wednesday, January 1, 2014.
- The **ACUS General Access/Adaptive Lab** ([SYMR 104](#)) will be **closed** Sunday, December 15, 2013 through Saturday, January 4, 2014. Re-open for regular hours Sunday, January 5, 2014.



### Hours for Other Campus Facilities

### General Access Labs



[24 Center](#) (formerly known as WILLIS)

Open 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. Monday, December 16, 2013 through Friday, December 20, 2013.  
**Closed** Saturday, December 21, 2013 through Wednesday, January 1, 2014.  
 Open 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. Thursday, January 2, 2014 and Friday, January 3, 2014.  
**Closed** Saturday, January 4 and Sunday, January 5, 2014.  
 Open 7 a.m. - 7 p.m. Monday, January 6, 2014 through Friday, January 10.  
**Closed** Saturday, January 11, 2014 and Sunday, January 12, 2014.  
 Open at 7 a.m. Monday, January 13, 2014 and return to a 24hr schedule.

[College of Information General Access Computer Lab \(CI-GACLab\)](#) (B205)

**Closed** Monday, December 16, 2013 through Sunday, January 12, 2014. **Re-open** Monday, January 13, 2014 and resume normal

	hours ( <b>closed weekends</b> ).
<a href="#">MUSIC:</a>	<b>Closed</b> Sunday, December 15, 2013 through Sunday, January 12, 2014. <b>Re-open</b> Monday, January 13 at 8 a.m. and resume normal hours.
<a href="#">PACS Computing Center</a> (College of Public Affairs and Community Service, Chilton Hall)	<b>Closed</b> Saturday, December 14, 2013 through Sunday, January 12, 2014. <b>Re-open</b> Monday, January 13, 2014 at 7 a.m. and resume normal hours.
<a href="#">CVAD</a>	<b>Closed</b> Saturday, December 14, 2013 through Sunday, January 12, 2014. <b>Re-open</b> Monday, January 13, 2014 at 7:30 a.m. and resume normal hours.
<a href="#">COE</a>	<b>Closed</b> Saturday, December 14, 2013 through Sunday, January 12, 2014. <b>Re-open</b> Monday, January 13, 2014 at 8 a.m. and resume normal hours.
<a href="#">COB</a> (BLB 190)	<b>Closed</b> Saturday, December 14, 2013 through Sunday, January 12, 2014. <b>Re-open</b> Monday, January 13, 2014 at 8 a.m. and resume normal hours.
<a href="#">CAS</a> - This schedule is for all CAS labs.	<b>Closed</b> Friday, December 13, 2013 through Sunday, January 12, 2014. <b>Re-open</b> Monday, January 13, 2014 and resume regular hours.
<b>Engineering General Access Lab</b> (CENGAL, <a href="mailto:englab@unt.edu">englab@unt.edu</a> , Discovery Park, B129, 891-6733)	<b>Closed</b> Monday, December 16, 2013 through Sunday, January 12, 2014. <b>Re-open</b> at 9 a.m. Monday, January 13, 2014 and resume normal hours ( <b>closed weekends</b> ).

**UNT Shuttle Service**

Check out the transit [website](#) to keep up with the shuttle schedule. A 2013-2014 calendar is available here: [http://www.unt.edu/transit/pdf/2013-2014\\_calendar.pdf](http://www.unt.edu/transit/pdf/2013-2014_calendar.pdf). **There is no service Tuesday, December 24, 2013 through Wednesday, January 1, 2014.**

**Remember:**



[Get your alerts fast in case of inclement weather](#)

Visit the Emergency Management [website](#)

City of Denton Residents, [sign up](#) for the CodeRED Emergency Notification System

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## Using Clickers in the Classroom at UNT

By [Jane Himmel](#), Associate Director, CLEAR and [Kathy Roberts](#), Instructional Technology Support, CLEAR

Among the instructional technologies supported at UNT is the classroom response system, informally known as “clicker” technology. Clickers have been used in higher education classrooms since the late 1990s to improve student engagement during class. Instructors present a question or problem to the class and students respond by entering an answer choice on the clicker device assigned to them.

The system instantly charts the aggregate data and displays it on screen. Such a system enables an instructor to quickly identify when students are having trouble with a concept and can also be used to stimulate discussion and debate.



*TurningPoint*® software from Turning Technologies is UNT’s primary response software used by hundreds of instructors and thousands of students on our campus every day. The latest release of *TurningPoint* is the easiest-to-use and most powerful version to date, offering additional capabilities and an enhanced overall user experience. In *TurningPoint 5*, both methods for polling – *PowerPoint Polling* and *Anywhere Polling*, which enables an instructor to create a poll atop any application – are consolidated in a single interface. As always, the data from class sessions can be exported to Blackboard through the building block integration.

## Can Students Use Mobile Devices Instead?

Although Turning Technologies has long offered *ResponseWare*, a solution that would enable students to use their mobile devices rather than a separate, dedicated clicker device, UNT has delayed its implementation until the the planned project for wireless infrastructure expansion has reached the point at which students can reliably access wireless signal in every classrooms across campus. Starting in Fall 2014, we look forward to implementing *ResponseWare*, which supports laptops, smartphones and tablets as response devices. Using *ResponseWare*, instructors will be able to gather response data both from students with traditional clickers *alongside* students using their own technology all in the same classroom! Students who choose to use a clicker device can still do so while classmates who prefer to use a mobile device have this option. In this way, Turning Technologies enables UNT to provide students with greater flexibility in technology choices. Since *ResponseWare* will be supported campus-wide, students will be able to use their preferred device in every class in which the system is used without incurring additional costs.



## Getting Started with Clickers

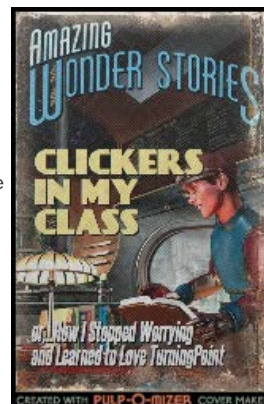
By law, students must be informed when they register for a class that a clicker is required. Therefore, for an instructor, getting started with clickers begins with adding the clicker ISBN to a textbook adoption form. Deadlines posted by the B&N University Bookstore are:

Fall Semesters – First Monday in April

Spring Semesters - First Monday in October

Summer Semesters – First Monday in March

Although the deadline falls early, it allows ample time for the instructor to learn how *TurningPoint* works and to design an instructional strategy that will improve students' learning experience. CLEAR provides full training and support for using clickers. For more information about using clickers at UNT, please visit <http://clear.unt.edu/clickers>.



## Additional Resources

Bruff, D. (2013). *Classroom Response System ("Clickers") Bibliography*. Retrieved from <http://cft.vanderbilt.edu/docs/classroom-response-system-clickers-bibliography/>

Carl Wieman Science Education Initiative (CWSEI) and The Science Education Initiative at the University of Colorado (CU-SEI): (2009). *Clicker Resource Guide: An Instructors Guide to the Effective Use of Personal Response Systems (Clickers) In Teaching*. Retrieved from [http://www.cwsei.ubc.ca/resources/files/Clicker\\_guide\\_CWSEI\\_CU-SEI.pdf](http://www.cwsei.ubc.ca/resources/files/Clicker_guide_CWSEI_CU-SEI.pdf)

Tena B., Lara Ducate, Jeanna Marie Rathel, Karen Heid, and Stephen T. Bishoff. (2011). "Clickers in the Classroom: Transforming Students into Active Learners." (*Research Bulletin 9*). Boulder, CO: EDUCAUSE Center for Analysis and Research, 2011. Retrieved from <http://www.educause.edu/library/resources/clickers-classroom-transforming-students-active-learners>

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## Blackboard: Then and Now

By [Jane Himmel](#), Associate Director, CLEAR

If you were to utter the word Blackboard around campus a year ago, a pained facial expression or deep groan would likely have told you all you needed to know about users' thoughts, feelings, and observations. The system had experienced multiple unplanned outages during Fall 2012, causing considerable distress among faculty and students who expected a stable, reliable platform on which to complete their course assignments, activities, and exams.

Flash forward to Fall 2013 and we can report a complete turnaround from a year ago! The Distributed Learning Support Team in IT Shared Services (ITSS) reported earlier this week that, "Our last quarter uptime on Blackboard was 99.980%, better than the best uptime offered by Blackboard hosted services." This fall semester, Blackboard at UNT experienced only two unplanned outages including one that was the result of a regular maintenance window that ran 1.5 hours longer than expected and another lasting 5 minutes in which the entire UNT campus lost its WAN connection. During the latter outage, only off-campus users would have had any trouble connecting. (Details on both outages can be found on the [UNT System's Bb Learn blog](#).)

### How much is Blackboard Really Used?

Usage of the learning management system (LMS) at UNT has grown steadily since the late 1990s. During the Fall 2008 semester, the University of North Texas hosted 2,014 course sections within 1,404 Blackboard course sites. 29,547 students were enrolled in courses that used Blackboard for online, blended, or web-enhanced learning. During the Spring 2009 semester, the threat of an extended campus closure due to the H1N1 flu pandemic brought to the forefront the need for an academic continuity plan. Blackboard featured prominently in the university's planning efforts. As a result, CLEAR and the

Distributed Learning Support Team designed and implemented processes that would automate the creation of course shells for every course section offered so that departments could easily include the use of Blackboard in their continuity plans going forward. IT Shared Services also conducted long-range planning to ensure hardware would be sufficient to support the increased load in the event every course needed to use the system. The number of simultaneous users was at a record high this week when campus was closed due to icy conditions. The Distributed Learning Support Team reports that Blackboard is easily serving 7,000 active, simultaneous users with only half the available hardware.

This Fall 2013 semester on Blackboard, faculty used 2,422 course sites for individual and combined UNT sections, a 73% increase over the number of course sites used in 2008. Enrolled in these course sites are 38,158 users (students, faculty, and staff). The average number of daily page views this semester was 2,533,992, and on the most active day of the semester, this number reached 4,781,174. There can be no doubt that Blackboard is in high use at UNT.

#### Blackboard at UNT - Fall 2013

2,422 active course sites

38,158 active users

6,700 peak simultaneous users

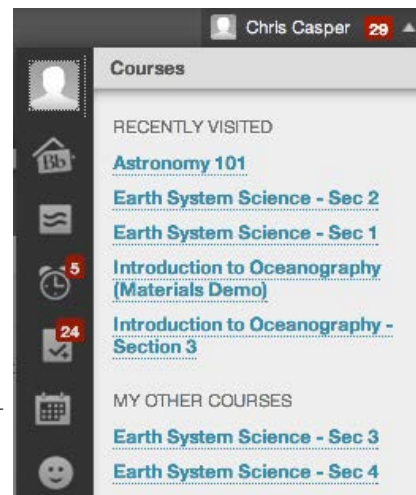
### New Features in 2013

A number of [new features](#) were introduced to the Blackboard product this year. Inline grading makes the task of viewing and grading assignments much more efficient. The system's new Retention Center provides faculty with an at-a-glance view of students who may be at risk of failing or dropping out. Video Everywhere enables both faculty and students to record, embed, and reuse video throughout the course. A new global navigation menu (pictured right) makes it easy for students and faculty to see what's new in all of their courses as soon as they log in to the

system.

Accessing courses in Blackboard from a mobile device is easy with the download of a mobile app, which is available for a variety of devices including [iOS®](#), [Android™](#), [BlackBerry®](#), and [webOS®](#) smartphones. UNT has purchased institution licensing for Blackboard Mobile Learn, which means students, faculty, and staff can download the app for free.

We are glad that 2013 brought improvements to both the reliability and functionality of a service that is so widely and regularly used on our campus and are confident that the system will continue to support the success of our students, faculty, and staff.



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## Network Connection

By [Dr. Philip Baczewski](#), Senior Director of Academic Computing and User Services and Deputy Chief Information Officer for University Information Technology

### A New Kind of Coin

Most people have heard of open source software, and you may have heard about [open source hardware](#), but have you heard of open source money? Perhaps you've seen references to [Bitcoin](#) in the news. Bitcoin bills itself as an open source currency that is not dependent on governments or banks. The news you heard may have been about the shutdown of online site, named [Silk Road](#), that allegedly dealt in illegal drugs and accepted payment in Bitcoin.

#### For real?

You might be wondering if Bitcoin is a real currency. It is used as a medium of exchange for goods and services. Unlike [Paypal](#), which is a service that transfers money between parties, Bitcoin can be traded directly and requires an exchange process to convert Dollars to Bitcoin. So, Bitcoin is as real as the money in your bank account, and can even be converted to a [paper](#) version.

Currencies like the Dollar are issued by central banks chartered by national governments. In the case of the U.S., the [Federal Reserve Bank system](#) manages the money supply and determines how many Dollars will be in circulation at a given time. Bitcoin transactions are [processed](#) by a distributed network of computers, called "miners", that record those transactions. Transaction processing is a competitive process that pays a Bitcoin to the miner that completes a process in the least amount of time. This is one way that new Bitcoins get created.

Over the last couple years of its existence, Bitcoin's value has increased dramatically. Perhaps it is just a investment fad which like [Dutch tulips](#) in the 16th century, [dot-com companies](#) in the 20th century, and the [housing bubble](#) of the 21st century. If the primary holders of Bitcoin are held for speculative reasons, then a random negative event could cause a rapid devaluation. Once the sentiment is to sell, then, just like stocks, value can decrease dramatically. But, unlike tulips, Bitcoins have a real value, since they are accepted by [thousands](#) of online merchants.

#### Too early to tell?

Bitcoin was invented in 2009, so it may be too soon to tell if it's just a fad or a revolutionary development in economics and commerce. Matthew O'Brien [has claimed](#), "Bitcoin won't work as a currency as long as it's so deflationary. Why spend bitcoins today when they might be worth much more tomorrow?" On the other hand, you could make the same statement about gold, titanium, or the Japanese yen. If Bitcoin becomes a standard choice for an investment portfolio or online commerce, then it might be around for quite some time.

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### Childcare Help now Available for Faculty, Staff, and Students

Childcare is a pressing issue for many people. A [recent article](#) in *InHouse* featured a new service offered by [Off-Campus Student Services](#) in conjunction with the [Camp Fire Child Care Network](#). To use the service:

- **Faculty and staff** can contact the Camp Fire Network directly at 817-831-5060 and let them know they are UNT employees.
- **Students** need to first contact Off-Campus Student Services at 940-565-3807. It is important for students to contact Off-Campus Student Services first because that is a "one-stop shop" helping with childcare needs. That office can help provide [more resources](#) that are tailored for individual students.]
- The Camp Fire Network provides a specialist who will ask for information about the type of childcare you need, your community, hours, your budget and any other specific related needs you have.
- Then, within two business days, that specialist will contact programs and provide you with some that fit your criteria. You will receive information about licensing standards and profiles of state-licensed providers both inside and outside the network.
- Then you can contact and visit the providers and determine which one is best suited for your needs.
- If you are not satisfied with any of the initial referrals, ask the Camp Fire Network specialist to help you keep looking.

#### UNT Family Services:

<http://studentactivities.unt.edu/resources>

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## Helpdesk FYI

By [Jacob Flores](#), **UIT Support Services Manager**

### Howdy! How can I help you?

Merry Christmas, UNT community! I'm thankful to have the privilege of starting as the UIT Support Services Manager this month – a comeback of sorts. I started working for the UIT Helpdesk (formerly CITC Helpdesk) in 2007 when I was admitted for undergrad school. This position kept me on my toes until 2011 when I started full-time with AITS, providing network resource support for UNT administrative staff. When the Business Administration Building was renamed Sage Hall, I took on the migration of most departments into their new spaces in the building, including UIT. Funny enough, I've come full circle by rejoining my initial department and am even located in one of the very offices I set up. It's a pleasure to be back.

Now, onto business: I'd like to make sure everyone is aware of the available methods to contact the UIT Helpdesk.

#### Call us!

**(940) 565-2324**

If you'd like to speak with one of our knowledgeable Helpdesk staff members, they may be reached by phone during the following hours:

Sunday-Thursday 8 a.m. - Midnight

Friday 8 a.m. - 8 p.m.

Saturday 9 a.m. - 5 p.m.

#### E-mail us!

[helpdesk@unt.edu](mailto:helpdesk@unt.edu)

Our prompt staff keep a close watch for incoming e-mails. If you contact us by e-mail, you can expect a response during the same hours we're available by phone (listed above).

#### Come see us!

##### Sage Hall 130

We're located in Sage Hall, room 130, next to the east and west entrances of the building. If you need help and are near Sage Hall, or if you would just prefer to receive support in-person, you may stop by to see a smiling face during the following hours:

Monday-Friday 8 a.m. - 8 p.m.

#### Submit a ticket

<https://helpdesk.unt.edu/>

To provide better service, we like to keep things documented for reference. You may submit a trouble ticket at any time, receive a ticket reference number, and we will address it during our regularly staffed hours.

The hours listed are normal working hours during academic terms. We may use an alternate schedule during Holidays, in which case those hours may always be found at the top of the UIT Helpdesk website.

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The UNT logo features the letters 'UNT' in a bold, white, sans-serif font, centered within a circular emblem. The emblem consists of concentric green circles with a grid-like pattern of small dots, creating a sense of depth and movement.

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## RSS Matters

[R\\_stats](#)

# Research and Statistical Support University of North Texas

## Useful R Resources That May Have Escaped Your Attention

Link to the last RSS article here: [Five easy steps for scraping data from web pages.](#) -- Ed.

By [Dr. Richard Herrington](#), Research and Statistical Support Consultant

This month I would like to bring a couple of useful resources to the attention of our R users here on campus. Given the popularity of R nowadays, and the ubiquity of R web resources available for perusal, sometimes the really useful resources can get lost in this overwhelming volume of content.

### R Help and rdocumentation.org

The R "ecosystem" is quite large and sometimes finding the right function or package can be daunting.

Fortunately, many efforts are underway to make bulk of R documentation easy to access and easy to search. One notable website is <http://www.rdocumentation.org/> (screen shot below):

Additionally, for Google Chrome Users, there is a Chrome extension that provides ready access to this website (search for "r documentation" on the Google Apps store front).

Many of the helpful hints from user contributed wikis and listserves provide essential troubleshooting advice and programming tricks that are useful to R users.

The website <http://www.rseek.org/> provides a customized search interface that searches through the most common wikis and listserves:



[Add to Google Toolbar](#) - [Add to Firefox/IE](#) - [Task Views](#) - [Ref Card](#) - [R Code Search](#) - [Created by Sasha Goodman](#) - [Rseek.org Citation](#)

## Using R for Teaching and Collaboration

The online consulting group *DataMind* - <http://www.datamind.org/#/> has provided an open interface for running live R code and sharing this code on a threaded wiki - <http://www.r-fiddle.org/#/> (screen shot below):

This website is accompanied by a short tutorial on using r-fiddle as well as short tutorials on learning the R language. Data can be read into an R session either using a Dropbox or a Google-Drive share:

Additionally, DataMind provide a Google chrome extension for easy access (search Google Apps store front for “r-fiddle”).

#### An R Blog Aggregation Website: R-Bloggers

Lastly, we would be remiss to not mention the extremely informative (and entertaining!) website

<http://www.r-bloggers.com/> R-Bloggers brings together hundreds of seasoned R users providing useful R related articles and announcements that cover content for both novice and expert users of R:

# R-bloggers

R news and tutorials contributed by (452) R bloggers

Home
About
add your blog!
Contact us
RSS
R jobs

WELCOME!

Here you will find daily news and tutorials about R, contributed by over 450 bloggers. You can subscribe for e-mail updates:

Your e-mail here

10460 readers  
BY FEEDBURNER

And get updates to your Facebook:

R bloggers

11,498 people like R bloggers.

If you are an R blogger yourself you are invited to add your own R content feed to this site (Non-English R bloggers should

## Review: Kölner R Meeting 13 December 2013

December 17, 2013  
By Markus Gesmann

data.table

Köln R User Group  
December 2013

Matt Dowle  
Arun Srinivasan

Read more »

Last week's Cologne R user group meeting was the best attended so far. Well, we had a great line up indeed. Matt Dowle came over from London to give an introduction to the data.table package. He was joined by his collaborator Arun Srinivasan, who is based in Cologne. Their talk was followed by Thomas Rahlf on Datendesign...

TOP 3 POSTS FROM THE PAST 2 DAYS

Flotly Ext: Collaborative Plotting with R  
Probability and Monte Carlo methods  
Contour and Density Layers with ggmap

Search & Hit Enter

TOP 9 ARTICLES OF THE WEEK

1. Writing papers using R Markdown
2. Installing R packages
3. Using apply, sapply, lapply in R
4. Basics of Histograms
5. Introduction to Spatial Data and ggplot2
6. The homogenization of scientific computing, or why Python is steadily eating other languages' lunch
7. Contour and Density Layers with ggmap
8. Adding a legend to a plot
9. My first . web application with Shiny

SPONSORS

## Programming Tools

The Rstudio development environment - <http://www.rstudio.com/> - comes highly recommended by R users who find themselves wanting more than just the vanilla R script editor that is part of the R console. The desktop Rstudio program is an open-source, free script/debugging editor that provides many bells and whistles for those who find themselves needing more organization and accounting for their development process. Rstudio provides: script highlighting, code completion, integrated help system, workspace browser, data viewer, script debugging, package development tools, and much more. Commercial versions exist providing facilities for deploying R in enterprise settings. Rstudio Server is a version of Rstudio that deploys Rstudio over the web, accessible through a web browser:

The screenshot shows the RStudio interface. The main window displays an R script with the following code:

```

195 snapshotSources <- function(projDir, repos, pkgRecords) {
196   # Get a list of source packages available on the repositories
197   availablePkgs <- available.packages(contrib.url(repos, "source"),
198                                     type = "source")
199
200   # Find the source directory (create it if necessary)
201   sourceDir <- file.path(projDir, "packrat.sources")
202   if (!file.exists(sourceDir))
203     dir.create(sourceDir)
204
205   # Get the sources for each package
206   lapply(pkgRecords, function(pkgRecord) {
207     getSourceForPkgRecord(pkgRecord, sourceDir, availablePkgs, repos)
208   })
209
210
211 annotatePkgDesc <- function(pkgRecord, projDir, lib = libdir(projDir)) {
212   descFile <- file.path(lib, pkgRecord$name, "DESCRIPTION")
213   appendToDesc(descFile, data.frame(
214     InstallAgent=paste("packrat", packageVersion("packrat")),
215     InstallSource=pkgRecord$source))
216 }

```

The console window shows the execution of the script, displaying the output of the `lapply` function:

```

1.1 (Top Level) >
> lapply(
  httpuv 1.2.0
  packrat 0.1.0
  Rcpp    0.10.5
  RJSONIO 1.0-3
  shiny  0.8.0-99
  xtable 1.7-1
)

```

The data viewer shows the structure of the `availablePkgs` object:

```

Data
availablePkgs Large matrix (85357 elements, 1.6 Mb)
attr(*, "dimnames")=list of 2
..$ : chr [1:5021] "AS" "abc" "abcdeFBA" "ABCExtremes" ...
..$ : chr [1:17] "Package" "Version" "Priority" "Depends" ...
Values
pkgRecords  lockInfo(projDir)
projDir     "/Users/jacphers/r/shiny-bp"
repos       "http://cran.rstudio.com"
sourceDir   "/Users/jacphers/r/shiny-bp/packrat.sources"

```

The console also shows the execution of the `lapply` function:

```

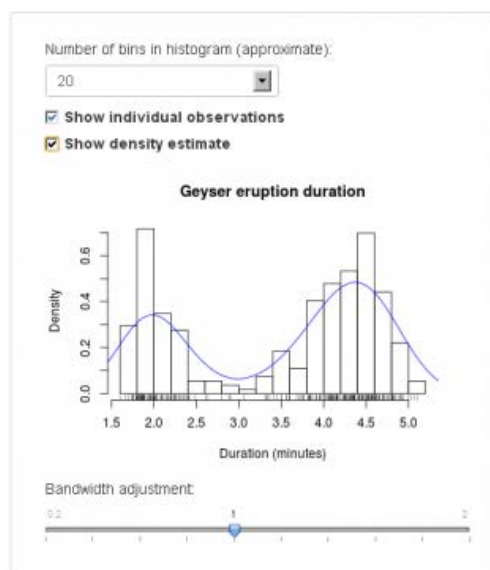
> lapply(
  snapshotSources(projDir, activeRepos(), lockInfo(projDir)) at restore.R:206
  snapshotLapl(projDir, available.packages(contrib.url(activeRepos()), sourcePackages,
  packrat:bootstrapped~/r/shiny-bp, ~/r/packrat) at packrat.R:133
)

```

Additionally, the Rstudio developers provide another open-source tool for deploying R applications over the web, *Shiny* - <http://www.rstudio.com/shiny/>

## Shiny in action

Here's a basic Shiny application, consisting of less than 40 lines of code. Try changing the number of bins and toggling the checkboxes.



```

ui.R
server.R

shinyUI(bootstrapPage(
  selectInput(inputId = "n_breaks",
    label = "Number of bins in histogram (approximate)",
    choices = c(10, 20, 35, 50),
    selected = 20),
  checkboxInput(inputId = "individual_obs",
    label = strong("Show individual observations"),
    value = FALSE),
  checkboxInput(inputId = "density",
    label = strong("Show density estimate"),
    value = FALSE),
  plotOutput(outputId = "main_plot", height = "300px"),
  # display this only if the density is shown
  conditionalPanel(condition = "input.density == true",
    sliderInput(inputId = "bw_adjust",
      label = "Bandwidth adjustment",
      min = 0.2, max = 2, value = 1, step = 0.2)
  )
))
  
```

Please see our [tutorial](#) to learn more about writing Shiny apps.

## No Better Time to Be An R User

The R community has grown an impressive set of resources for researchers who need a smart, flexible, data analysis system. All you non-R users need to do now is to give these impressive tools and resources a chance to improve your knowledge and productivity for your respective disciplines. There is no better time than the present to become a R user! Happy Holidays and good data analysis to you!

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## Training

By [Claudia Lynch](#), *Benchmarks Online* Editor

Do you need training on widely used computer programs including those used in statistical analysis? If so, this monthly *Benchmarks Online* column is for you.

### Statistical Analysis

Instructor-led courses are offered only by special request. Please contact an [RSS member](#) or [Claudia Lynch](#) if you are interested in taking such a class or wish to have someone offer a class for your students. **SPSS, SAS and Introduction to R are offered online.** Make sure and check out the **RSS Matters** article [Statistical Resources](#) in the July 2012 issue of *Benchmarks Online*.

**Special classes** can always be arranged with the RSS staff. Also, you can **always** contact the RSS staff for one-on-one [consultation](#). Please read the [FAQ](#) before requesting an appointment though.

### Especially for Faculty and Staff Members

In addition to the online statistical courses, which are available to students, faculty and staff, staff and faculty members can take courses offered through the [Business Service Center](#) (they have a new comprehensive training curriculum), and the [Center for Learning Enhancement, Assessment, and Redesign](#) (CLEAR). Additionally, the [Center for Achievement and Lifelong Learning](#) (CALL) offers a variety of courses, usually for a small fee.

**EIS training** is available and expanding. Click [here](#) for online tutorials.

### Microsoft IT Academy

All **students, faculty and staff** within the UNT System now have access to online learning via the Microsoft IT Academy. See [this article](#) in the July 2012 issue of *Benchmarks Online* for more information.

### Microsoft E-Learning

Microsoft E-Learning courses are available for **faculty and staff** via our UNT System Microsoft Campus Agreement. See [the article](#) in the November issue of *Benchmarks Online* for more information.

### Central Web Support

Central Web Support [provides](#) "End-User and Administrative Support for hosted general web sites, and Drupal websites for academic and administrative departments." Visit their [website](#) for "How-Tos about Everything."

### CLEAR

CLEAR offers courses especially for Faculty Members. *CLEAR training includes:*

- Blackboard
- Turnitin
- Turning Point

- Assessment
- Teaching Effectiveness
- Respondus

Please check out CLEAR's training and event calendar at <http://clear.unt.edu/calendar> for the latest information regarding Blackboard, CLEAR's initiatives, and on campus instructional events.

Further information can be found [here](#).

#### FREE SLOAN-C ONLINE WORKSHOPS

The University of North Texas is a premium member of Sloan-C College Pass. To request FREE ENROLLMENT in an online workshop by Sloan-C, please contact [Amber Bryant](#) with the name and date of the workshop selected.

- [Sloan-C 2014 Workshops](#)

Please click on the link above to see the available 2014 workshops.

## Ed2go

Ed2go are courses that are offered, for a fee, to UNT faculty, staff and students as well as the general public.

According to the CALL [website](#):

*CALL has partnered up to provide online learning on a variety of topics. From standardized test preparation to database programming to training for libraries and their staff, there's a variety of areas from which to choose in online learning.*

*The online minicourses, provided in conjunction with Ed2go, are standardized 12-lesson modules released over a six week period. (Courses are active for eight weeks to provide some flexibility). Each module features a quiz. Lessons are instructor-led and course participants and instructor communicate through a course discussion board. Lessons can be downloaded and saved. At the end of the course there is a final quiz. A passing grade opens a window that allows students to print out a course completion certificate.*

*Most courses are \$89, and UNT faculty, staff and students may receive a \$10 discount.*

For additional information surf over to <http://www.ed2go.com/unt/> Visit the **Ed2go blog** [here](#).

## Information Security Awareness

The ITSS Information Security team offers Information Security Awareness training to all UNT faculty and staff.

**It is a policy requirement that ALL staff take an information security course at least once a year.**

See July's "[Link of the Month](#)" for the latest information about Security Awareness training.

## Business Service Center Training & Development

Provides training to UNT System institutions: <http://bsc.untsystem.edu/training-development>. There is also a link to [download Office 2010 training](#) (in PowerPoint 2010 format) on the BSC website.

#### UNT System HR has announced Fall/Early Winter 2013 Schedule of Training Opportunities

See the attached [Training Opportunities PDF file](#) for an outline of current offerings for professional development and technical training. Instructions on how to enroll are contained in the attached [instructional PDF file](#).

## Alternate Forms of Training

Many of the General Access Labs around campus have tutorials installed on their computers.

See <http://www.gacl.unt.edu/> for a list of labs and their locations. The 24 Center in Willis Library, for example, has a [list of Tutorials and Software Support](#). The Library Instructional Unit also offers workshops and training, including "tech skills" training. Visit their websites for more information: <http://www.library.unt.edu/library-instruction>.

## Info~Tech, UNT's IT Research Partner

Info~Tech is UNT's IT research partner. UNT System, UNT, UNT Health Science Center and UNT Dallas employees have access to Info~Tech research at: [www.infotech.unt.edu](http://www.infotech.unt.edu) (click on the UNT System name to login). Your standard EUID and Password gains you access to the Info~Tech system. Please take a moment to read their terms and conditions by clicking through the agreement when you set up your profile the first time you log in.

## State of Texas Department of Information Resources

Another possible source of training for staff and, perhaps, faculty members is the Texas Department of Information Resources. A look at their Education and Training [website](#) reveals some interesting possibilities.

## New Horizons Computer Learning Centers

New Horizons is a DIR vendor, which means that state agencies, like UNT, get special pricing for their services negotiated at the State level (click [here](#) for more information about DIR vendors). [New Horizons](#) offers courses at their own facilities in Dallas and Fort Worth, but will arrange for onsite training as well.

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## Staff Activities

Staff activities for [UIT](#) are reported in this column. ITSS staff activities are handled by [ITSS Communications](#).

## Transitions

### No longer working in UIT:

- **Henry Boston**, Web Development, AITS (part-time).
- **Michala Sheppard**, CSS Tech, Classroom Support Services (part-time).

## Changes, Awards, Recognition, Publications, etc.

- We welcome **Jacob Flores** to his new position as UIT Support Services Manager this month. He had been working for AITS, providing network resource support for UNT administrative staff. Read his first [Helpdesk FYI column](#).



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## Blackboard Collaborate

By [Michelle Farley](#), Instructional Consultant , CLEAR

Looking for ways to collaborate with colleagues, meet with students without coming to campus, or provide online office hours? Blackboard Collaborate 12 is an online, synchronous, set of collaboration tools available to the UNT community. Blackboard Collaborate is designed to enhance online courses and encourage collaboration with dynamic interaction.

**Blackboard Instant Messaging** allows user to create a learning network to support office hours, school services, meetings, and desktop video conferencing – all initiated through presence and instant messaging. **With Blackboard IM**, students and instructors can easily see who's online and available so they can instantly communicate with peers, colleagues, and experts. **Blackboard Collaborate Web Conferencing** (which will be replacing Wimba Classroom) is a "live" interactive virtual environment for communication, presentation, interaction, and instruction. **Blackboard Collaborate Web Conferencing** allows functionality to provide virtual classes, interactive meetings, professional development, online office hours, and virtual field trips (just to name a few uses).

Highlights of Blackboard Collaborate Web Conferencing include:

- Interactive whiteboard
- Web tour
- Multimedia presentation tool (WMV, MPEG, MP3, Flash, URLs)
- Echo cancellation
- One button global permissions
- Mobile app for participants using iPhone, iPad, and Android

For faculty and staff who currently use Wimba Classroom, Wimba will be no longer be available after January 2015. However, archives will be supported through August 2015. CLEAR Instructional Consultants and the CLEAR Faculty Help Desk will work with users to make the transition to Blackboard Collaborate and preserve archives.

If you would like additional information on getting started with the Blackboard Collaborate tools, please contact your [Instructional Consultant](#) or the [CLEAR Faculty Help Desk](#).

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## Today's Cartoon

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**"It's a new app for people who can't get home for the holidays. It criticizes your lifestyle, disapproves of your significant other, and bursts into tears when you talk back to it."**

From "Today's Cartoon by Randy Glasbergen", posted with special permission.  
For many more cartoons, please visit [www.glasbergen.com](http://www.glasbergen.com).

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