



Maria Haras

Library databases waste our budget

By Grey Anderson
Staff Writer

Ever notice those brilliantly ugly orange papers littered between computers in the Library Media Center? According to librarians and SPHS faculty, the papers contain information to access large databases to help students with projects and nightly work. SPHS pays thousands of dollars each year for the use of these sources of information. With even more school budget cuts coming up this year, it is time to say goodbye to the wasteful SPHS expenditure.

Each year, all SPHS students are sent to the Library to spend an English period learning about these expensive and inefficient databases. This

period consists of the Librarian explaining how to access the databases, and how to "effectively" use them. Even with this training, many students have found that a simple Google search yields more useful and relevant information than attempting to search through the off-topic links the SIRS Knowledge Base so frequently offers.

A new California Public School budget cut is well on its way. Several billion dollars will be cut, a definite loss for SPHS. Spending thousands of dollars every year on a scarcely used source of information is not necessary. Perhaps the saved funds could be spent on class sets of textbooks so students aren't forced to carry 40 pound backpacks!

Even worse is that SPHS willingly forfeits scarce funds for not just one, but multiple online databases. It seems pointless to pay so much for something that can be found on free websites and knowledge bases.

Online encyclopedias such as Wikipedia offer millions of free webpages that contain thorough and accurate information. In fact, online dictionaries seem to give more precise, to-the-point information, then follow up with specific details. Websites such as Wikipedia also offer links to related topics. To find information using the school's fee-based databases, a student must browse through multiple articles to try to find the necessary information.

Some may argue that fee-based resources will result in better information. However, SIRS for example, simply returns any article that has the same words or phrases that a student searches—regardless of the main point of the article. These search results are useless and only slow a student in his or her quest for information.

The amount of money that has been spent for the privilege of using these wasteful databases is ridiculous. Far too many students face the struggles of the many budget cuts that have hit the California public school system. It's time to stop pretending everything is alright and under control; it's time to face the truth that the school's scarce funds need to be invested more wisely.

Slow and steady?

By Krystal Tung
Copy Editor

There must be something wrong with the TV. Just minutes ago, *Titanic* was beginning. Now, Rose has met Jack on the ship, the *Titanic* has just struck the iceberg and sunk, and we've missed all the juicy parts in between. We find that there is no problem with the TV, but the remote control is on FF, FASTFORWARD, and we've set the world record for watching a 185 minute movie in 5 minutes.

Although it seems ridiculous to do anything on a constant FF, we are living life in the FF mode. In society, everything we do is governed by a sense of urgency; we feel the need to race from place to place and rush from activity to activity. Innovative technological gimmicks, such as updated iPhones and brand new software, are being developed at alarming rates. Though many would argue that new tech-

nology has positively impacted society, this dose of development has induced the adverse side effect of the "need for speed" syndrome. Life is whizzing by us at an accelerating rate, and the only way to assert control is to sprint after it.

This need to rush is evident in even the most trivial activities. The few people who actually eat breakfast wolf it down in order to rush to school. We wait in lunch lines, pushing and shoving in order to get our food and hurry off to our next destination as quickly as possible. After school, whether we are active in extracurricular activities or just struggling to stay afloat in the sea of homework, we speed to finish in order to go to sleep before midnight. We are incessantly thinking about where we need to be later instead of appreciating the present moment.

In retrospect, is all this rushing really worth it? Life is not a marathon; it is not about who reaches the end first, but

rather about who lives in a more fulfilling and memorable fashion. What is the point of finishing the day's tasks without remembering any of the niceties that happened? By rushing, we are negatively impacting our social lives. Many times, when people want to talk, the "need for speed" syndrome kicks in and instead of listening to what they want to say, we start thinking "hurry-and-shut-up-so-I-can-go-elsewhere." (Don't deny it)

On a more global level, every aspect of life is speeding up. Companies face tough competition, forcing them to put forth the best products, spewing out a decade's worth of technological progress in just one year. By attempting to improve our quality of life, paradoxically, we are actually moving faster toward the death of society.

We cannot keep on with living at breakneck speed. We are only human and we have our limits. If we continue to live at this hasty pace, we will eventually break down. Now, the only thing we should hasten to do is to slow down and live life.



Allison Kong

Liberal lovin'?

By Haley Muhlestein
Opinion Editor

With all the frenzy of the Obamaphiles and Hillaryites and McCain... well not so much McCain, but this year in politics has been pretty hectic, and brought up some heated issues. Here in star-studded California, the political talk seems pretty one-sided. Self-proclaimed liberals swear by their SmartCars, enjoy Michael Moore movies (if not the man himself) and swell with pride whenever somebody mentions that Al Gore won the Nobel Peace Prize. Liberalism also declares itself the political persuasion of tolerance. Those crazy conservative white people from the Heartland hate poor people and minorities, the liberal boasts. Stereotypes often come with a grain of truth, and the Heartland does contain a very high percentage of conservatives, many of whom have a lot less exposure to cities and people different from them, but many liberal people often find themselves, in their accusations, committing the very crime they rage against.

Berkeley, perhaps the supreme example of liberalism gone amuck, has brutally attacked all things conservative over the years. Recently, Army recruiters were kicked off the campus. The City Hall then got involved and granted a parking permit to a group created solely to harass the recruiters. The city government aided and abetted political prejudice on a public school campus. Could conservatives similarly ban the ACLU or the Coalition to Defend Affirmative Action by Any Means Necessary clubs at Cal Berkeley? True, the Army is not a club. But it IS a volunteer army. By banning the recruiters, Berkeley is refusing any of its students the ability to CHOOSE to join the army, restricting their entire student body to one political view on the army. It is restricting the very freedoms that liberals laud so vociferously.

Even fellow liberals are not safe. Nancy Pelosi, who was applauded by liberals for her adamant opposition to the war in Iraq, was heckled by the holier-than-thous at Berkeley for not immediately stopping funding on the war. Pelosi attempted to explain her less aggressive stance, but was still heckled and blocked from leaving. Apparently, when a group of people is so stuck in their own ultra-liberal world, anyone that does not conform to their pure ideals is a sell-out.

Of course, the right does this too. We've got our Ann Coulters and our Bill O'Reilly's, loudly and obnoxiously condemning liberalism in all its forms. The difference is that the right doesn't pretend to be the poster boy for freedom of speech and equal rights. The truth is both sides are the same. Both have their extremes, both have prejudiced pundits, and both have a few intelligent, thoughtful advocates. But please, liberals, come off your high horse. You're just as tainted as the rest of us dirty Republicans.

Take the initiative for Backwards

By Leslie Toy
Editor in Chief

The Backwards Dance seems to be a lot like the proverbial chicken-and-egg dilemma. Is the dance lacking because girls have to ask guys? Or was the dance unpopular first, leaving ladies unmotivated to make the effort? Whatever the case, SPHS has been largely apathetic toward Backwards for several years. When Powderpuff season rolls around students question if the dance will occur without cancellation. The pattern is disconcerting and depressing. We are cheating ourselves out of an opportunity to establish a meaningful and enjoyable tradition.

To be blunt, the main problem is that girls just are not

asking guys. We make up a million excuses for ourselves: the dance won't be fun, he will say no, it's too much trouble. Yet this attitude alarmingly applies to more than just Backwards.

In the three years that the Winter Formal Video contest has been in existence, not one has shown a girl taking creative initiative to ask the guy for a date. Nine out of nine winning entries have featured various males coming up with ideas, taking time to execute plans, and controlling the entire situation.

We women want to be romantics. What girl doesn't want to be swept off her feet? However, it's not easy for guys to summon up courage and face the possibility of rejection. They deserve at least one break.

Wouldn't it also be nice to not have to wait, worry, and play the will-he-won't-he game? This time, the guys will be the ones waiting on our decision to act.

It might still seem awkward for girls to get into the habit of courting guys after being free of such a responsibility for so long. To get more comfortable with the idea, SPHS should take the Backwards concept and apply it to another, more traditionally successful dance. Other local high schools apply the girl-ask-guy policy to Homecoming. During that time, it is seen as the girl's turn to take initiative. Guys can have their chance to reciprocate at a later dance like Winter Formal. In this way, both sexes could have the experience of asking

and being asked without feeling abnormal. The more equalized system will also result in more elaborate and entertaining plots to snare a date. Girls will be free to contribute their creativity while guys will not have to doggedly repeat the process three-plus times a year.

Everybody wins. The heightened general comfort and confidence will naturally motivate more people to be asked to and attend dances in general, not just the recent one that inspired this article. This may seem like a strange time to explore the topic, especially since the school year is almost over. But it's never too early to start planning to improve future events. It's time to stop moving in such a backwards direction.

"Quoted"

What should be given away at the SPEX assembly besides t-shirts?

Photos by: Johnny Sprague



"Pinatas, bubbles, cupcakes and rainbows!"
-Hana Kikuchi, 12



"They should also give you a certificate to make it legit."
- Angel Lee, 11



"They need to shoot puppies out of t-shirt guns!"
- Andrei Thompson, 10



"Kanye West's stunta shades!"
- Brandon Law, 9



"Matching knickers to make them look even more SPEXY."
- Andy Cheng, 12



"To quote the great Hao Luo, 'Why go shopping when there's SPEX once a year.'"
- Douglas Muhlestein, 11