

Director's Digressions

by Sheryl Burgstahler

Meet the 2008 *DO-IT* Scholars

This summer DO-IT will host its annual Summer Study program for *DO-IT* Scholars. Primary funding for the *DO-IT* Scholars program is provided by the State of Washington. Additional funding for Scholar activities is provided by Microsoft, the National Science Foundation, and the Boeing Company. For information about the *DO-IT* Scholars program, consult <http://www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Programs/scholars.html>.



'07 Summer Study Interns Zach, Marlen, and Daren serve ice cream during karaoke night.

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We welcome the following '08 *Scholars* to DO-IT! All are residents of Washington and most will be sophomores or juniors in high school this fall.

Yomara writes for her school paper. Her favorite classes are math and English. Yomara, who has Spinal Muscular Atrophy Type II, hopes to be a psychologist and someday analyze how the mind works.

Mack, who has Cerebral Palsy, lives in SeaTac. His two favorite subjects are retail management and Spanish. Mack plans to major in business in college. He is a DECA officer and is going to Guatemala this summer with Global Visionaries.

Erica lives in Pateros. She enjoys studying human physiology and geometry. Erica, who has an orthopedic impairment, plans to study oncology. She enjoys meeting people and making new friends.

Russell, who has Asperger's Syndrome, lives in Renton. He would like to pursue a degree in history and become a teacher, researcher, demographer, journalist, archivist, or a professional in international relations.

Sam's favorite classes are anatomy and pre-engineering design technology. He runs on the track team. Sam has an auditory processing disorder and dyslexia.

Collin lives in Kirkland. His favorite subjects are history and math. Collin, who has dyslexia, plans to get a four-year degree and pursue a career in politics.

Emily has dyslexia and dysgraphia. She would like to study science in college and work for the NASA space program when she graduates.

Derek, who has ADHD and a learning disability, lives in Snohomish. His favorite courses are history and band. He would like to become a middle school teacher.

Nejowa lives in SeaTac. Her favorite subjects are language arts and marketing. Nejowa, who has Spinal Tuberculosis, is a member of a wheelchair basketball team. She also participates in wheelchair track-and-field. After college, Nejowa hopes to be a fashion designer.

Marco, who has Asperger's Syndrome, scoliosis, and kyphosis, lives in Ballard. Marco's two favorite classes are math and science. He enjoys robotics, biology, and computer science and hopes to earn a master's degree in science.

Christopher, who lives in University Place, has Autism. His two favorite subjects are history and science. He hopes to become a historian.

Carolyn lives in Spokane. She has a learning disability. English and history are her favorite classes. Carolyn would like to study dental hygiene or counseling in college.

Christine, who has Cerebral Palsy and a learning disability, lives in Spokane. Her favorite classes are English and history. She would like to be an emergency room nurse or a personal trainer.

Nathan, who has a learning disability, lives in Pullman. Multimedia and foreign languages, particularly Mandarin Chinese and Spanish, are his favorite subjects. After college, Nathan hopes to become a digital editor or linguist.

Aaron has dyslexia. He is a member of ACE (Architecture, Constructing and Engineering) and plays ultimate frisbee. He is on the cross country running team at school.

Wesley, who has quadriplegia, lives in Toledo. His favorite subjects are history and math. Wesley would like to attend college to pursue a career in child or family psychology.

Eric lives in Burlington. His favorite subjects are math and history. Eric, who has Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, plans to study math, science, or history in college and pursue a career as an accountant.

Brianna has Cerebral Palsy and hearing and vision impairments. Her favorite classes are American Sign Language and peer tutoring. She plans to be a special education teacher. Brianna lives in Woodinville.

Shelby lives in Yakima. Her favorite subjects are American Sign Language and vocational drafting. She wants to become a sign

language interpreter. Shelby, who has a health impairment, enjoys participating in debate.

Jeremy, who has Cerebral Palsy, ADHD, and a learning disability, lives in Cheney. His favorite subjects are science and history. Jeremy wants to study medicine or technology in college. Jeremy holds several national athletic records in sports for people with disabilities.



Goodbye, Josh

by Sheryl Burgstahler

I am sad to report that Josh Niklason, '03 *DO-IT* Scholar, lost his battle with cancer. Josh cherished his family and friends and enthusiastically engaged in sports—basketball,

swimming, baseball—and academic studies. After high school graduation he attended Landmark College in Vermont. He hoped to someday have a career in elementary education. Josh will be receiving an honorary degree from Landmark College, which will be presented to his family this fall.

We will always remember Josh's positive attitude and enthusiasm in everything he did. He worked tirelessly as a *DO-IT* Intern during Summer Study 2006 and was always focused on making sure that the new *Scholars* felt welcome and encouraged. Josh will be greatly missed.

Demon On Wheels

by Josh Niklason

What image would you want permanently etched on your body?

Piercing pictures with individual sacred histories.

Scrawled figures concealing special tales only you can tell.

Iconic affections, personal characteristics, abstract illustrations, unique nicknames.

*“Demon On Wheels”
Fierce, hellish beast
abundance of boiling frustration.*

*Fiery red eyes
staring devilishly
at surrounding emptiness.*

*Hideous fangs hidden within
an evil smirk of death.*

*This monster creates fresh
skid marks teasingly
tickling your sense of smell.*

*Growing ferocious flames
follows fresh tire tracks
formed by a manual wheelchair!*

*This creature is eternally
triumphant at any task
disregarding limitations
and other opinions.*

*The greatest fuel feeding
this animal's infatuation for
endless achievement is
energetic determination,
willingness to try anything.*

*This is the design I would want
stamped to my skin forever.*

Visually depicting my soul.

“Demon On Wheels”

*This silent symbol constantly echoes evidence of
infinite physical strength
everlasting enthusiasm.*

Boeing Continues to Support *DO-IT* Scholars

DO-IT is delighted to be the recipient once again of a gift from the Boeing Company. Boeing's gift supports students with disabilities who are striving to excel in academics and careers. Boeing's generous donation allows us to maintain the scope and quality of our *DO-IT Scholars* program by funding the participation of several *Scholars*.



'05 Scholar Sakina engages in a mock interview with an employer during Summer Study.

The Workforce Recruitment Program Visits Seattle

by Scott Bellman, DO-IT Staff

The Workforce Recruitment Program for College Students with Disabilities (WRP) is run by the U.S. Department of Labor. Each year, the program sends recruiters to college campuses nationwide. This year, a WRP recruiter came to the University of Washington campus in Seattle to meet with fourteen students. The students had many different disabilities and career interests.

Participants who complete WRP interviews are included in a database that captures their major, their skills, and locations where they would like to have an internship or job. The student information in this database is made available to employers in the public and private sectors. The database remains active

for one year. During that time, employers contact students and invite them to apply for open positions.

One student explained why she participated in the WRP interview: "Meeting the WRP recruiter was good practice for me, because I will be graduating in June, and I will be needing to talk to LOTS of employers. The interviewer asked a couple of questions that surprised me, but next time I'll be ready with a better answer."

Last year, one student participant was offered a summer civil engineering internship for the USDA Forest Service. He said, "It was a great internship, people were very friendly and showed a strong interest in my learning." He also discovered that the Forest Service offers a range of career opportunities.

DO-IT participation in this event was funded by the National Science Foundation as a part of the *AccessSTEM* project. For more information on WRP, consult their website at: <http://www.dol.gov/odep/pubs/brochures/wrp1.html>.

Tools for Life in Idaho

by Tamitha Tidwell, DO-IT Staff

The beginning of March took DO-IT staff to Idaho Falls to participate in the fourth annual Tools for Life: Secondary Transition and Technology Fair. This conference provides students with disabilities a look at life after high school and educators the tools to help students succeed. At Tools for Life, students and teachers attend sessions together, which promotes joint learning opportunities from a variety of perspectives.

Attended by more than 450 students, parents, and school staff, the event was the largest to date. Forty conference sessions were offered, five of which were presented by me and my colleague Debra Zawada and included

“Disability Mentoring Day,” “Running Your Own IEP as a Student,” “A Teacher’s How-to on Empowering Students to Take the Lead in IEP Meetings,” “Disability Disclosure,” and “Work-Based Learning.” We also hosted a booth where we provided information and collaboration opportunities for our colleagues.

Olympic gold medalist Rulon Gardner was the first Tools for Life keynote speaker. Rulon let students hold his gold medal, gave them a message of hope, and encouraged them to pursue their dreams. Rulon observed, “To bring students to a symposium and a function like this gives these kids the opportunity to say, ‘I can accomplish my goals. I can be the best that I can, and I am going to get better every day.’”

When the second keynote speaker missed his plane, conference organizers did not let it derail their plans. LeDerick Horne joined the conference from thousands of miles away via video conference. To listen to Horne’s spoken word poetry about his life as a person with a severe learning disability, visit <http://www.horneonline.com/poet/listen.php>. Miss Idaho, Sadie Quigley, who is currently pursuing her degree in special education, also met with students.

Nora Jehn, training coordinator for the Idaho Assistive Technology Project, shared this insight: “For a lot of kids and their families, it feels like life after high school is like dropping off the edge. They don’t know what’s out there. We pool all of these resources together to let them know what great things are out there and the kinds of support they can expect in higher education [or] employment.”

Eight *AccessSTEM* collaborators were in attendance. These educators and other professionals actively engage in the

AccessSTEM project, which is funded by the National Science Foundation. *AccessSTEM* participant and occupational therapy student, Jessica Crohner, moderated the lunchtime panel. She also attended DO-IT’s post-conference training on universal design at the Idaho Falls School District. Jessica, who knows that networking can be the key to success after graduation, met three local occupational therapists at the DO-IT event.

“For a lot of kids and their families, it feels like life after high school is like dropping off the edge”

Four participants joined DO-IT’s e-mentoring community after the mentor training session. These college students also volunteer as mentors for the Idaho School for the Deaf and Blind. This year,

they coordinated an event called Students Accessing their Abilities at the College of Southern Idaho. This event focused on mentoring high school students to be successful in college. They distributed their mentoring how-to book at the event to inspire others to replicate their activities.

Some other exciting outcomes of DO-IT’s participation in Tools for Life include two student attendees who are working with their teacher and using DO-IT resources to develop presentations to lead their IEP meetings. An Idaho Falls Vocational Rehabilitation Counselor also reported that she has added many of DO-IT’s suggestions to her transition steps for high school students.

DO-IT’s participation in Tools for Life was funded by the National Science Foundation as a part of the *AccessSTEM* project. Next year, the event will be held in Coeur D’Alene.

AccessCollege Goes to Alaska

by Rebecca Cory, DO-IT Staff

Colleges and universities in Alaska face unique challenges to providing education access for students with disabilities, due to remote locations and low population density in many parts of the state. To increase access to education, the College Access Project for Rural Alaska (CAPRA) was founded. In February, I visited two of the CAPRA program sites. I delivered two presentations that focused on how faculty, staff, and community members could incorporate universal design strategies into their programs and classes. The first presentation was located on the University of Alaska Anchorage (UAA) Matanuska-Susitna campus in Palmer, and was connected via satellite to four other UAA campuses. The second presentation was held in Soldotna on the UAA Kenai campus.

Several participants commented on the thoroughness and relevance of the presentations. One parent, who is working on new ways to help her son self-advocate, said she felt like I was talking about her son.

This outreach was funded by the U.S. Department of Education as a part of the *AccessCollege* project.

Spring Transition Events—Washington

by Debra Zawada, DO-IT Staff

Spring is a busy time for high school seniors, as many are planning their transition to college or a career. Events are held to assist students with these significant life changes. Even though the majority of event attendees are seniors, it is a good idea for sophomores to attend and begin planning early!

The second annual Postsecondary Transition Fair, hosted by Highline School District, was held at the Occupational Skills Center

in SeaTac, Washington. Attendees rotated through different sessions that provided information to prepare students for their transition after high school.

DO-IT staff delivered a presentation discussing the differences between high school and college. They emphasized the laws that apply in postsecondary education. Some students were surprised to learn that Section 504 of the Rehabilitation Act of 1973 and the Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 guarantee access for individuals with disabilities, but do not necessarily guarantee success. Staff stressed the importance of students' self-determination and self-advocacy during the transition from high school to college.

DO-IT staff also presented to students and parents at the Snohomish County Transition Fair at Everett Community College in Washington. The interactive session focused on the transition from high school to college. A former *DO-IT Scholar* shared her college transition experience. Following the presentation, the *Scholar* was on hand to share resources and answer questions at the DO-IT booth.

These outreach activities were funded by the National Science Foundation as a part of the *AccessSTEM* project. For more information on the transition to college for students with disabilities, consult the following video and publication:

- *College: You Can DO-IT!*
<http://www.washington.edu/doit/Video/college.html>
- *Preparing for College: An Online Tutorial*
<http://www.washington.edu/doit/Brochures/Academics/cprep.html>



DO-IT Scholar Profile
by Blake

Hello. I'm Blake and am a senior at River Ridge High School. I have a sister who will be a junior at Washington State University this fall and a dog named Krystal.

My disability is Cerebral Palsy.

I'm a percussionist in my school's band. I mostly play bass drum, but I have played other instruments such as the gong, triangle, and the cymbals. Every year in September, the band takes a trip to Leavenworth, WA to march in the Autumn Leaf Festival Parade. I hold the school banner, since I cannot play and drive my electric wheelchair at the same time. Last school year, the band also took a trip to San Francisco. We had clinics at two universities, where we learned how to improve our music and conduct a band. We also played outside of Monterrey's city hall, and inside Oregon State's capitol building.

I enjoy going to Starbucks and getting a Mocha Frappuccino, camping, and using a computer. My plans after high school are to go to either Saint Martin's University, South Puget Sound Community College, or Seattle Pacific University to study computer science.



DO-IT Ambassador Profile

by Stuart

I came into the DO-IT family in 1999, knowing little where life would take me. Around that time, I had recently moved from Bulgaria to Seattle, and both

of my legs were amputated. During my high school years, I had my plate full. I was learning how to walk, learning English, and trying to graduate, but I have always believed that if I take one challenge at a time, I will be okay.

DO-IT has helped me find my interests in life—politics and international travel. I am majoring in European studies and minoring in political science at the University of Washington (UW). I also work in the UW's Access Technology Lab. After graduating, I would like to join the Peace Corps.

In 2004, I had the chance to visit Japan with an organization based in Oregon, and last year I spent three months in Europe studying abroad. I visited Germany, Turkey, Bulgaria, Poland, Hungary, and the Czech Republic.

I am curious about cultures and exploring new places. This year, with the support of DO-IT, I traveled to Tokyo. I shared with the DO-IT Japan *Scholars* my love of travel and my experiences with accessibility and visiting foreign countries.

Joining DO-IT has given me the tools to look ahead in my life and to pursue the things I enjoy most.



DO-IT Staff Profile by Rebekah Peterson

Hi. I'm Rebekah and I am the publications coordinator at DO-IT. I work on the team that creates publications, like *DO-IT NEWS* and *Snapshots*. I am in my second year

at DO-IT and enjoy using my degree in English writing to create publications that share useful information to people all over the world. I am also a student in the University of Washington's Master of Communication in Digital Media program. Through my current graduate work, I hope to expand my ability to contribute to the field of disability studies and communications.

Several people in my family have disabilities—both visible and invisible—and shared knowledge, from organizations like DO-IT, is helping them be successful in their endeavors. Knowing how information and resources empower people is very motivating to me in my work at DO-IT.

When I am not thinking about grammar, punctuation, and page layouts, I like to go on long bike rides, plant flowers in my garden, go ballroom dancing, and take my labradoodle Afton to the dog park, so he can go swimming and chase tennis balls.

Disability Mentoring Day

by Scott Bellman, DO-IT Staff

Recently, sixty students participated in the Seattle Disability Mentoring Day (DMD). This annual event is co-sponsored by the American Association of People with Disabilities (AAPD) and DO-IT. DMD promotes career success for students with disabilities. With leadership and resource

materials from AAPD, local communities around the country organize activities to bring students and employers together for mentoring activities and career exploration at public and private places of employment.

The fifty-eight high school and two college students that participated in the event visited employers such as Microsoft, Boeing, Wal-Mart, and Children's Hospital. Many of the interactions focused on careers in science, technology, engineering, and mathematics.

I asked the high school students that visited Children's Hospital about their experience. Some of their comments are below:

- "It takes more than just doctors and nurses to make a hospital run—there are lots of important jobs."
- "Working here isn't about how much money you make, but what you like to do and gaining experience by working with great people around you."
- "Things are always changing when you work for a hospital. You have to be flexible."
- "[Staff is] here to work for the sick kids. The people love their jobs—they like seeing the children develop over time."
- "Everyone is friendly, and they put a lot of work into this hospital to make it run."
- "A lot of important things come through the mail room, things that might save a life, and it is busy!"
- "Nurses do things you wouldn't expect!"
- "You can volunteer."
- "You have to plan ahead to have a good career."

Scott Bellman is the Washington State Coordinator for Disability Mentoring Day. In addition to the Seattle program, there are activities in Aberdeen, Bellingham, Olympia, Sedro-Woolley, Spokane, and Yakima. This event was funded by the National Science Foundation as part of the *AccessSTEM* project. For more information about DMD visit <http://www.dmd-aapd.org/>.



CSUN 2008 is a great resource to find the latest in accessible technology.

Tech Tips Goes to CSUN

by Terry Thompson, DO-IT Staff

Every year for the last twenty-three years, the coming of spring has been marked not only by the return of songbirds, flowers rising from the soil, and the NCAA men's and women's basketball tournaments, but also the annual International Conference on Technology and Disability, which is hosted by the California State University at Northridge (CSUN). This conference features 150 exhibitors and 300 break-out sessions related to assistive technology (AT) and technology accessibility.

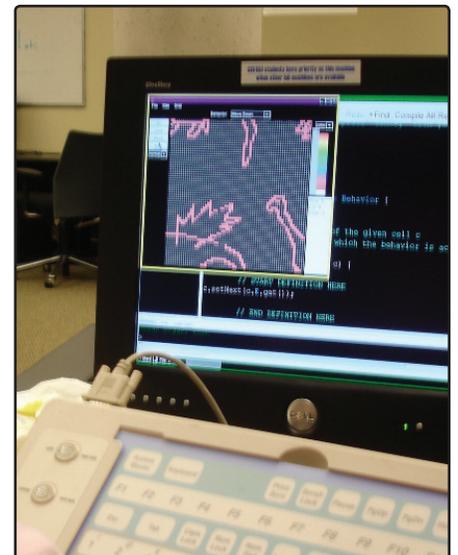
The vast array of AT can be mind-boggling to first-time conference attendees. It was at my first CSUN many years ago that I learned that if a person has only enough physical ability to move his or her eyes or control brain activity, there are technologies available that allow that person to operate a computer, use an augmentative speech device, and control the electronic devices in their environment. This year, the most exciting news wasn't about amazing new technologies, but it was about the growing number of AT products that are available for free, particularly software for individuals who are blind or visually impaired. For example, Orca, a free screen reader and magnifier for the UNIX and Linux operating systems, announced a new version at

CSUN; Apple demonstrated its screen reader VoiceOver, which is built into the Mac OS X operating system; and many presenters talked about NVDA, a free and open-source screen reader for Microsoft Windows that is rapidly improving with support from the Mozilla Foundation.

Despite all the AT that's available, individuals with disabilities still face major barriers in accessing mainstream information technology (IT). There are websites that require eyesight, software applications that require the ability to move a mouse, and video and audio content without captioning or transcription that requires hearing.

Barriers to access was a hot topic at CSUN, and the conference provided an opportunity for people on the forefront of the IT accessibility movement to brainstorm and share ideas. Much of this interaction occurred informally, outside of scheduled conference activities. However, there were also many scheduled sessions that addressed IT accessibility involving representatives from Microsoft, Google, IBM, AOL, Yahoo!, and the Mozilla Foundation, all of whom described their efforts to increase the amount of accessible software and online content.

For web developers, there is a growing trend to build complex web applications by plugging in widgets from code libraries and toolkits, rather than developing everything from scratch. This simplifies the process of creating rich Internet applications. This trend could be a good



thing for accessibility, as long as the widgets in the toolkits are accessible. Several of these libraries and toolkits, including Google Web Toolkit, Dojo Toolkit, and jQuery, are moving towards ensuring accessibility.

CSUN began with a keynote presentation by Jim Fruchterman, one of the pioneers and leading innovators in the field of AT. Jim is an outspoken advocate for social enterprise, creating, and investing in businesses whose goods or services solve social needs. His latest venture, Benetech, is the non-profit parent organization of several companies that use technology to improve human rights, literacy, and access to books for individuals with print disabilities. In his speech, Jim described his vision of a future where individuals with disabilities have full access to information on devices they already use—cell phones, MP3 players, or public terminals at the library—without having to purchase or download specialized software.

He also spoke enthusiastically of the power of human networks that can achieve more than one person or small group. Wikipedia is an example of this type of collaboration. It offers a platform to collect knowledge by harnessing the efforts of millions of people at little or no cost. Jim's own project, Bookshare.org, is another example. Bookshare.org members scan and convert books to accessible electronic format and then contribute them to a growing library. This library can be accessed by other members. Currently there are over 37,100 books and 150 periodicals available through Bookshare.org. The open source movement is another example of the strength of human networks. Open source allows developers

to contribute to software applications. This collaboration has spawned free products such as the Linux operating system, Firefox web browser, and assistive technologies described earlier in this article.

According to Jim, “We take this economic thing a little too seriously.” The mindset that “if it’s not economically successful, you shouldn’t do it” stifles true innovation and does nothing to solve the world’s problems. In closing, he said “I look forward to working with all of you toward making the world a more inclusive place for everybody on this planet.” These were excellent words to kick off the conference and to carry with us in our daily lives, long after CSUN has ended.



The Thread—Helpful Robots?

by Sheryl Burgstahler,
DO-IT Director

In this regular column, I share some of the messages from DO-IT’s e-mentoring community so that you can get the flavor of the many rich conversations the DO-IT community has online. Forum posts may be edited for clarity and brevity.

One of the *DO-IT Scholars* recently posed the following question and received a wide spectrum of answers from our e-community.

If you could have a robot designed specifically to help you with your disability, what would you create and what features would the robot have?

DO-IT Scholar: *If a robot could help me it would be nice. I'm all for having one built into a car so it can drive for me.*

DO-IT Scholar: *There are some things a robot can't do, like interact with people. For physically or sensually affected people, great. For Aspies, a robot might not be a good idea. I've already received too many comparisons to a robot.*

DO-IT Ambassador: *I've read the e-mails and somewhat disagree. Artificial intelligence researchers have been working on "context aware" algorithms and programs that can help to interpret some social situations. One example is have cell phones change to an appropriate ring type based on the environment. I don't think it's unreasonable to believe that there are some possible robots to help those with Asperger's Syndrome.*

DO-IT Scholar: *If I could have a robot that would help me with Aspergers...*

Well, see, having Aspergers means everyone ELSE is my "disability." So my robot would be ten times as big as Godzilla and have 32,000 flamethrowers and rocket launchers and big mega huge layzar-beamz.

DO-IT Scholar: *A robot for a girl with Asperger's Syndrome? Well I'd use one to organize my notes for classes and make it transform into a decoy of me, but that's about it. The decoy is for when I don't want to deal with people.*

DO-IT Scholar: *A robot, hmmm...that's a good question. I need a minute to think about that one. I know! Sometimes neurotypicals (people who are psychologically "normal", for those who don't speak Aspie) have a tendency to have difficulty understanding what I'm trying to say, so my robot would make sure that everyone is able to understand my point of view.*

DO-IT Ambassador: *How about having a robot that would help a visually impaired person fill out paperwork? That would come in handy for filling out printed application forms. It would be especially helpful if that robot had a way of indicating where I needed to sign the form.*

DO-IT Scholar: *Nice one. Help sorting papers would be nice too. Sometimes I stack my papers after printing them but then I knock them on the floor or something and I don't know which way is up.*

DO-IT Ambassador: *Are wheelchairs a type of robot?*

DO-IT Scholar: *Yes. A robot that I thought of is a GPS wheelchair that drives itself and doesn't bump into things.*

DO-IT Scholar: *Are there really wheelchairs that can drive themselves and not bump into things?*

DO-IT Scholar: *Is it possible? Certainly. They already have the cars that beep when you get too close to something. They also already have GPS to tell you where to go in a car. Just combine the two in some way and it's definitely possible. That would be an interesting idea, trying to find someone or some company to actually make such a wheelchair.*

DO-IT Ambassador: *I did a quick IEEE search for published research articles on the subject and it returned numerous documents. If you're interested, I can send full papers, but here are a few titles:*

- *Implementation of an obstacle avoidance support system using adaptive and learning schemes on electric wheelchairs*
- *An assistive navigation system for wheelchairs based upon mobile robot obstacle avoidance*
- *Semiautonomous wheelchair based on quarry of environmental information*
- *Real-time obstacle detection for an autonomous wheelchair using stereoscopic cameras*
- *Intelligent wheelchair moving among people based on their observations*

There are many other related articles as well.

The Browser: Calendar of Events

For a schedule of conferences, visit
*[http://www.washington.edu/doi/
Newsletters/calendar.html](http://www.washington.edu/doi/Newsletters/calendar.html)*

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