

**AVANT-GARDE
FOREVER**

**PINT-SIZED POP DIVA
SHAPES D.C. ARTS SCENE**
p. 18

**SOUVENIRS OF A
CAREER**

**KNICKKNACKS
THAT INSPIRE**
p. 22

**WORKING
OVER TIME**

**NFL RETIREE SCORES
UNDER ARMOUR GIG**
p. 32

AMERICAN

UNIVERSITY MAGAZINE | NOVEMBER 2013



SWEARING IN

**SIX NEW AMERICANS
SHARE STORIES
OF CITIZENSHIP**

p. 26



{ PHABLET }

Andrew Lih
Journalism, SOC

For decades there was Britannica—then came Wikipedia. The original social media, the e-encyclopedia written by anonymous volunteers, debuted in 2001. Today, it's the fifth-most visited website in the world.

It gripped new media pioneer Andrew Lih, who became the first professor to use Wikipedia in the classroom a decade ago. He also penned the preeminent history of the site: *The Wikipedia Revolution: How a Bunch of Nobodies Created the World's Greatest Encyclopedia*.

But he says the number of contributors has declined since 2007, as the “low-hanging fruit” has been plucked. “Wikipedia is the sum of all human knowledge—there’s a natural cap. There are 4.3 million (English) articles about elephants and Exxon. The next 4 million articles won’t be so easy to write.”

One way to ensure Wikipedia doesn’t go the way of MySpace is by encouraging contributors to post video to existing articles. (Currently, only 0.1 percent of entries include video.) With laptop sales dipping and desktop sales plummeting, Lih predicts people will do that on phablets: keyboardless computer-phone hybrids, with six-inch screens perfect for “clicking, browsing, tapping, shooting, and snapping.” Phablets are all the rage in Asia, and Lih says Americans will soon adopt the technology en masse. “In the future, people will own just one device.”

Another big opportunity: partnering with GLAM communities (galleries, libraries, archives, and museums)—the focus of Lih’s latest research. “More people learn about items in a museum’s collection from Wikipedia than from the museum itself. The Smithsonian just hired its first Wikipedian in residence.”



{ PORT }

Chapurukha Kusimba
Anthropology, CAS

Chapurukha Kusimba made a discovery in his native Kenya this spring that garnered headlines around the globe: a 600-year-old Chinese coin minted during the Ming Dynasty. Unearthed by Kusimba, then curator of African archaeology and ethnology at Chicago’s Field Museum of Natural History, on the island of Manda, the rare coin proves that trade existed between China and eastern Africa before European explorers even set sail.

“Trade serves as a way to break down boundaries that separate communities,” says AU’s new anthropology chair. Artifacts like the coin offer insights into everything from migration to the establishment of diaspora communities.

As a youngster in Africa—dubbed the cradle of humankind—Kusimba wanted to be an anthropologist. “American kids want to be paleontologists and study dinosaurs,” he says. “African children want to be anthropologists.”

A former research scientist at the National Museums of Kenya (where he hopes to establish a field school for AU students), Kusimba investigates ancient trade networks, which frequently takes him to East Africa. During a 2010 trip, he commissioned an artist in Ambositra, Madagascar, to carve him an intricate wood port from a 300-year-old tree, felled by a Canadian mining company to build a road. The beautiful piece holds images that chronicle the island nation’s cultural identity and tells the story of its 18 ethnic groups.

“The artist is trying to come to terms with the history of his nation during a time of great turmoil. But despite these differences, he’s saying ‘we are one.’ That’s so inspiring to me.”



{ FLOPPY DISC }

Lindsay Grace
Film and Media Arts, SOC

Most six-year-old boys aspire to be firefighters, astronauts, pro baseball players—but Lindsay Grace wasn’t most boys. After using his first computer at school in 1982, he rushed home and excitedly declared: “This is what I want to do.”

Soon after, the Massachusetts native began designing and developing games on his Laser 128. At the tender age of 10, he released his first game, *Super Mystery House*, on a five-and-a-quarter-inch floppy disc, under the label Mindtoggle. “I graphed each image on graph paper and drew each scene in code,” recalls Grace. The choose-your-own-adventure game “wasn’t very good,” he admits, “but the programmer-artist was still in middle school.”

Today, Grace—recruited by AU to shape a new gaming initiative within SOC and CAS—is a renowned gaming guru. He founded the Persuasive Play Lab at Miami University of Ohio, and his game, *Wait*, was inducted into the Game for Change Hall of Fame this year, as one of the five best games for social impact in the last 10 years.

He likens social impact gaming to cherry-flavored medicine: entertainment with an informational twist. The goal is “to construct educational experiences that help people see things in a new light. It’s about ‘aha’ moments.”

AU’s new social impact gaming graduate program, slated for a fall 2014 launch, will train students to not only produce games but to evaluate them. That, says Grace, is what makes AU’s offering unusual.

“It’s a lot of fun to make games, but are they effective? At the moment, no one’s evaluating them. There’s a huge opportunity.”