broad in scope and elegant in design. It’s posted on the NCF Web site, and I urge you to take a look.

Fundraising continues at a strong pace. We are ahead of last year’s dollars by a significant amount, thanks to you, and we continually examine our fundraising efforts with an eye towards making those efforts even more effective. (Hint: you can help by sending us money.)

We need your ideas and participation now more than ever. One of the exciting ways in which you can be a part of keeping New College strong is to help the Admissions Department. In this issue of NIMBUS, there is a great article by Sonia Wu of admissions in which she outlines some ways in which you can participate. Please take a look at the article, and contact admissions if you want to get involved.

During the remainder of 2006 we will be working on more and even better regional events. Look for announcements in the near future, and keep your comments, ideas, and criticisms coming in. Be heard, and be a part of keeping New College strong, challenging and exciting for those future generations of the best and the brightest!

I’d also like you to join with me in congratulating Adam Kendall ’98 on his election as treasurer of the NCAA. Adam is a great addition to the Executive Committee and we look forward to working with him as we get our financial house in order.

How alums Mark Mudge and Carla Schroer are saving civilization, image by image

by S. Lawrence Paulson ’65

Mark Mudge and Carla Schroer are helping to preserve the world’s cultural legacy, one digital image at a time.

Mudge ’74 and Schroer ’81 are president and executive director, respectively, of Cultural Heritage Imaging (CHI), a California-based nonprofit whose mission is to use cutting-edge digital techniques to document what Mudge refers to as “humanity’s treasures”—culturally significant objects and places—so that they can be studied and admired by more than just a relative handful of archaeologists or curators.

CHI’s job, however, is not to carry out this documentation but to teach others—the archaeologists and curators themselves—to do it. Schroer uses the “teach a man to fish” analogy to explain this strategy, and the phrase seems anything but hackneyed.

How CHI Began

Schroer and Mudge met at New College in 1983, when Mudge returned to campus for a visit. They were married in 1989. “We had an idea early on that we didn’t want to work for a corporation, that the corporate lifestyle, while a fine place to get experience and get going, wasn’t our ultimate goal,” Schroer says. “So we both had the idea of doing something to make the world a better place.”

They weren’t sure what that would be until Mudge, who majored in philosophy and sculpture at New College, got the idea that the new field of computer graphics might help him with his art. “I was sculpting bronze and that’s a notoriously slow process—you make a mold and then you make another one and another one. When computer graphics started to exist in any meaningful way in the 1980s, I thought, ’My God, that’s the solution!’”

So Mudge went to one of the first community colleges that had a computer graphics workstation and started taking classes. “I became more and more interested in it,” he says, “and I really liked it. Except for the sound and smell, it had all of the same qualities as the foundry.”

Schroer is also an artist, having studied both sculpture and ceramics, but her major at New College, “as shocking as that may seem,” was computer studies, so her appreciation for the possibilities of computer graphics was both artistic and technical.

All of that, added to the pair’s interest in travel and archaeology, set the stage for CHI’s founding in 2002. “We really started to become aware of the problem with our cultural heritage, getting the stuff documented, making it available, helping with the preservation,” Schroer says. “We realized we have the

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skills, we both have interest in the area, we love to travel, we love history.”

**Doing It Themselves**

Both Schroer and Mudge use the phrase “bridging the gap” when describing CHI—the gap between “what’s being developed in the computer graphics laboratory and making it practical and usable by archaeologists and cultural heritage people on the ground,” in Schroer’s words.

Mudge emphasizes that CHI is not a service bureau that individuals and groups can hire to do cultural documentation.

“If the archives and museums of the world had to pay a service bureau to digitally document their stuff, it would never get done,” he says. “The only way it’s going to get done is to demonstrate to them, within their culture, using their skills, which are usually limited to shooting good-quality digital photographs, that they can do this themselves.”

Sometimes this means adapting equipment that teams or institutions already have, and sometimes it means breaking new technological ground. In 2005, Mudge, along with CHI volunteers, designed the world’s first automatic, fiber optically illuminated reflection transformation image acquisition device and is now working with partners from Hewlett Packard Laboratories to develop new cultural heritage applications for the technology.

He explains, “It allows you to look at cultural objects from many directions, and in any direction you look at it, it moves the light around it like a flashlight, changing the reflection properties.”

While the emphasis is on teaching others to use technology, “we may do some of the work as a pilot project or as a way of training people or trying some technique that’s never been done before,” Schroer says.

Last year, for example, Mudge, Schroer, and CHI Imaging Director Marlin Lum spent 16 days in Switzerland documenting 114 objects from three collections. The team captured 186 reflection transformation images of ancient coins, wax and lead document seals on medieval manuscripts, an eighteenth-century oil painting, sculptures, ceramic epigraphy (writing or drawing on objects or other surfaces) and a 3,700-year-old Bronze Age torque, or metal collar. The team also shot seven object movies and a great deal of video and numerous photographs.

‘Incredible Generosity’

In the absence of outside funding, CHI doesn’t charge for its imaging work. Often CHI’s collaborators will pitch in to help with travel expenses.

“We have to work both sides, talk to the technology people and figure out what’s going on there, and then talk to the cultural heritage people,” Schroer says. “I think the nonprofit notion works because we’re not trying to sell anything. We’re solution oriented.”

So where does the money come from? Mudge says right now CHI relies on private donations and the “incredible generosity” of volunteers. (Besides Mudge and Schroer, CHI has one contract employee.) But efforts are under way to get funding from foundations, and a $1.6 million grant proposal is now pending.

To pay the household bills, Schroer works three days a week at Sun Microsystems—she played a major role in the creation of Sun’s licensing and compatibility testing model for Java—while Mudge works full-time for CHI. The goal is for both of them to earn enough from CHI so they can both spend full time on their nonprofit work.

“I think that will be possible,” Mudge says. “As the number of collaborations has increased, word is getting out.”

To learn more about Cultural Heritage Imaging and to see examples of CHI’s work, go to www.c-h-i.org.