New hurdle for aspiring lawyers

State Public Interest Research Groups combine forces to put pressure on publishers

A search for linguistic connections

Virginia Senator-elect’s small lead holds
**LSAT** ’There really shouldn’t be any special preparation necessary’

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Despite the changes, Ben Baron, vice president of graduate programs at Kaplan Test Prep and Admissions, urged students not to be "too apprehensive" about the new format and said the best thing for students to do is "familiarize themselves as much as possible with the new test." Margolis reiterated this point. "It really shouldn’t be any special preparation necessary" and traditional study methods should be sufficient grounding, she said. However, Peg Cheng, UW academic counselor and pre-law advisor, said there are some things that students cannot prepare for. "It’s just difficult to get better at reading comprehension through taking a prep course," she said. "It’s a skill that students should have developed throughout their school years."

Kaplan representatives are advising students to take either the December 2007 or February 2008 test simply because study material for the new format is not yet available. In past years, students have used a number of study schemes to prepare for the exam, ranging from commercial preparatory courses to regimes they have designed themselves.

Seattle University law student John Lansey tackled the reading comprehension section by reading one paperback book a day for a couple of months.

"I figured that my reading comprehension is generally good, but if I could read quicker, I could go back and read the passage again if I needed to in order to answer the question," he said. The LSAC plans to release more information and preparation material for the comparative reading section by mid-February.

Both the Office of Undergraduate Advising and the Law School Admissions Office will have more information about the new test in the coming months.

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**Pan-lingual image search allows user to search in more than 100 available languages**

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the current web that would allow computers to read and extract data from web content in order to make searches more simple and powerful.

Jonathan Pool, a former UW political science professor and real estate entrepreneur, said he founded the Utilika Foundation and funded the Turing Center because he was interested in creating a universe where one person could interact with any other person and where all people could efficiently communicate with machines.

"Traditional approaches to human-machine communications have either tried to make machines figure out what people mean or make humans express their meaning in a way that machines can understand," Pool said. "I think the problem of enabling universal interactivity is extremely difficult. If you want to have a chance of solving it, you have to use all the resources you can find."

Though the center hasn’t developed artificially intelligent computers or universal translators yet, it is already making applications that help users navigate language barriers on the Internet.

One of the newest applications developed by the Turing Center is a pan-lingual image search. Worldwide, image search is the second most-used type of search engine, said professor of computer science and Turing Center Director Oren Etzioni.

Most images on the web are tagged in English or French, so a person searching for a picture of a horse in, say, Mongolian or Slovenian might have much fewer search results than a native English speaker would.

The pan-lingual image search allows the user to type a search query in his native language, choosing from over 100 available languages. The application then translates the query into all of the other languages. Users choose the translation they want, and the application then feeds the translated word into a Google image search.

"We found that we could get 38 times as many search results if we first typed the results into our pan-lingual image search," Etzioni said.

The search also allows users to clarify the ambiguity inherent in language, which can be a problem in the traditional Google image search. "For instance, if you were going use Google to look for a spring — the bouncy kind — you can’t just type in ‘spring’ because you’d get the season," said Kobi Reiter, an undergraduate computer science major and developer of the application.

The cross-lingual image search solves this problem by allowing users to select from a list of multiple definitions and find the definition closest to their original intent, Reiter said. By translating into other languages, users can also avoid the situation where a word in their language has a totally different meaning in a more widely used language. "The word for ‘teeth’ in Hungarian is ‘teng.’ If you speak Hungarian and you’re looking for a picture of teeth [in Google image search], you’re never going to find it," Etzioni said.

Reiter said he imagined the search would be helpful for people whose languages don’t have much Internet content. He also envisioned the tool being used for cross-cultural learning. For instance, if a person wanted to see pictures of food from around the world, he or she could type the word food into the search and find pictures of hamburgers, pad Thai or piroghis, depending on what language he clicked on.

"It’s like a Google search on steroids," Reiter said.

The cross-lingual image search is still a long way from a truly intelligent artificial agent. A truly smart machine is the ideal, but may not be possible, he said.

"The Utilika Foundation has a very noble, grand goal, though how close to it we’re going to get, I’m not sure," Reiter said. "But in terms of a machine being able to understand us in useful ways, we’re making a lot of progress."

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