Michael Adcock – [adcockm@u.washington.edu]   April 16, 2008
TC 518

Persona: "TiddlyThesaurus"

Name: Brent Hill
Age: 46
Job: Senior Lecturer at the University of Washington
                   Information School, since 2002
Work hours: 8 am to 6 pm (Mon–Fri), weekends
Education: Ph.D. in English literature, MLIS
Birthplace: Kannapolis, North Carolina
Location: Seattle, Washington
Income: $ 46,305/yr
Technology: Laptop, T1 line
Family: Married with several dogs
Hobbies: Loves music, plays guitar, travel to Europe, bicycling
Goals: Have a successful band and own an alpaca farm.

Brent has a history rooted in academia, and has discovered over the years that the only thing he enjoys more than learning is teaching students who are eager to learn. He has been married to his wife Belinda since 1999. While teaching at a university isn't lucrative, they enjoy the free time he has during the summer to travel. Brent enjoys travel to Europe, and especially likes to visit The Netherlands, which he considers his "spiritual home."

Before enrolling in the iSchool, Brent taught as a graduate student in the early '90s at Duke University. This led to a post-doctoral teaching position at Clemson University in South Carolina until 2000. (Brent still strongly identifies with his Southern roots: "I couldn't be more southern if I was dipped in lard and deep-fried.") He then pursued and earned his MLIS degree at the UW iSchool. For the past six years, he has earned the respect of his colleagues through his effective teaching style, and his passion for teaching. This was confirmed by his promotion to Senior Lecturer in the past year. He has also earned the admiration of students for his ability to make learning even the most boring of topics fun and interesting. Brent considers his co-workers and students as colleagues, and many of his former students consider him a trusted friend.

During his time at the iSchool, he has taught many courses on information organization, information behavior, and courses related to teaching and instruction methods. While he is perhaps better known for his instruction on cataloging, he has a special interest in LIS 537 Construction of Indexing Languages. The main focus of this course is for students to work as a group to produce a complete thesaurus based on the processes, techniques, and feedback they receive in the class. When asked about LIS 537, Brent says it is "very do-it-yourself, and you develop an appreciation for the tools."

Although he has evaluated many software tools that could be used for thesaurus construction, none of them would work well for LIS 537. All of them have been either too complex (with unnecessary features), too difficult to understand, or simply unreliable. He wishes there was a software solution that he could use as a learning tool in the class.