New frontiers in wearable technology: Translating potential into everyday uses

The UMRA Forum at 12 noon on Tuesday, January 26, will feature Brad Holschuh, PhD, co-director of the Wearable Technology Laboratory (WTL) in the University of Minnesota College of Design. Holschuh will highlight the work of the interdisciplinary WTL and recent advancements in technologies that can be integrated into fabrics.

Consider, for example, typical compression stockings that squeeze the legs to help with circulatory issues. They are difficult to put on and uncomfortable to wear because they are designed to be too small in order to provide compression. By integrating technologies such as sensors and actuators into the structure of the clothing, it could be possible to create stockings that are selectively tight—meaning, they could tighten in different areas, at different times, and at different magnitudes. You could have compression stockings that are initially loose fitting, easy to put on, and can later tighten to provide the therapeutic effect when it is desired.

Incorporating such technology into clothing creates special challenges beyond those faced by other wearable technologies like smart watches and fitness trackers. Holschuh will discuss the current research challenges, best practices for clothing-integrated technologies, and potential applications under development in the WTL.

Real, everyday uses
Founded in 2009, the lab focuses on the intersection between apparel and new technologies in areas including medical, wellness, human space flight, e-textile manufacturing, and human-computer action. Many WTL projects deal with translating technological potential into real uses in our everyday world. Could a computer-mediated compression vest help a person's mental health? What methods could heat the human body instead of the environment? How can astronauts keep their hands dry during space flight? With backgrounds ranging from aerospace engineering to fashion design, students in the WTL are working together to find answers to these questions.

An assistant professor in the Department of Design, Housing, and Apparel, Holschuh also serves on the graduate faculty of the Department of Human Factors and Ergonomics and the Department of Aerospace Engineering and Mechanics. Please register and join us for this Zoom webinar.

—Suzanne Bardouche, UMRA Program Committee

JANUARY 19 WORKSHOP
Making choices to be active, healthy, and well
Our Living Well Workshop for January, the month when people traditionally head back to the gym, will focus on building physical fitness and activity into our lives, an especially challenging task in a pandemic winter. We all (hopefully) know how important physical activity is to our overall well-being.
From the President

Welcome to the New Year!
I hope, in spite of the challenges, you had a satisfactory and gratifying holiday season. UMRA, with your support, made it through 2020 and is looking forward to a vibrant new year.

At the UMRA Board meeting in November, the University of Minnesota Foundation (UMF) made a presentation on the University campaign, *Driven*. The campaign is well on its way to exceeding the $4 billion goal, and UMRA giving has been a solid part of this success.

UMRA members have contributed $30.8 million, including $3.9 million in the last year. Eighty-four percent of UMRA members have made gifts to student, staff, and faculty support; research; outreach and community engagement; and capital projects.

In May 2020, UMRA turned to Zoom for presenting our monthly UMRA A.M., Living Well Workshop, and Forum. The Office of Information Technology (OIT) has been very generous in providing technical support, but with the University’s financial challenges, OIT will need to begin charging us for their support services at approximately $400 for each event.

UMRA member Virgil Larson is leading an effort to achieve UMRA technical self-sufficiency with the establishment of a Zoom interest group; email Virgil if you are interested.

Support our Zoom presentations
Given the continuing need for OIT technical support and the stress on UMRA’s budget while UMRA volunteers are being trained, UMRA needs to ask the membership for a voluntary contribution of $20 each. Please read “Support our Zoom presentations” by Bill Donohue [page 7] for more information.

Several of you have experienced the cancellation of your umn.edu access to Zoom and other OIT-sponsored software. See “Deactivation of retiree access to Zoom services” [page 6]. We are working on a solution to provide UMRA committees and special interest groups with access to the UMRA Zoom account. You can find instructions on our website for using the UMRA Zoom account to host an UMRA meeting.

You do not need a Zoom account simply to attend any Zoom meeting or webinar.

Donations to the PDGR fundraising effort continue, and I urge you to make a contribution if you have not already done so.

If you have concerns, ideas, or needs, please contact your leadership. I look forward to another year of vitality for UMRA.

Stay safe and well.
—Frank B. Cerra, MD, UMRA president

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UMRA A.M.

The U of M is an age-friendly university

Last fall, with President Joan Gabel’s endorsement, the University of Minnesota became the first higher-education institution in the state to join the Global Network of Age-Friendly Universities (AFU). Participation in the network, led by Dublin City University, will give the U of M access to resources and technical assistance to support local, age-friendly initiatives.

To learn what this will mean in terms of exciting new opportunities at the U for lifelong learners, retirees, and older adults, please register to attend UMRA A.M. on Tuesday, January 12, from 9 to 10 a.m. via Zoom.

Our presenters will be Rajean Moone, PhD, the facilitator for the U of M’s new Age-Friendly University Council, and Lynn C. Anderson, UMRA’s representative to the council.

Moone is the faculty director for long-term care administration in the College of Continuing and Professional Studies, associate director of education for the Center for Healthy Aging and Innovation in the School of Public Health, and an adjunct faculty member in the School of Social Work. Anderson, prior to retiring, served as dean of international education at UC San Diego and before that as associate director of the Learning Abroad Center at the U of M.

They will provide a brief description of the mission and history of the AFU Global Network and the process that led to Minnesota gaining AFU status. They will note the various units on campus that are members of the council and provide an overview of the principles that guide AFU work.

Your input on resources and ideas for funding, projects, and collaborations will be welcome! The webinar will conclude with time for Q and A and discussion.

Please register and join us to participate in this program.

—Lynn C. Anderson

Welcome new members to UMRA

Please give a hearty welcome to 18 new members who have joined UMRA since early October.

- Charles Eugene “Gene” Allen (and Connie Allen), College of Food, Agricultural, and Natural Resource Sciences, associate VP for international programs
- Elizabeth Anderson, Office of the General Counsel, senior paralegal
- Pamela Belding, University of Minnesota Foundation, director of design and brand
- Carla Carlson, Office of the Executive Vice President and Provost, senior consultant
- Patricia Foss, Office of Human Resources, civil service
- Nirmal Jain (and Anita Jain), Facilities Management, Energy Management, principal engineer
- Angie Klidzejs (and Gunar Bruvelis), Medical School, finance professional
- Kevin McCourt, University Services, Capital Project Management, business manager
- Evelyn McKee, Minnesota Cystic Fibrosis Center, nurse care coordinator
- Therese Perrier, Medical School, Department of Urology, medical laboratory technician
- Will Rogers, Facilities Management, Health Sciences, pipefitter
- Karen Schanfield, Office of the General Counsel, associate University attorney
- William Seefert, Office of Information Technology, IT professional
- Catherine Statz, Medical School, Department of Surgery, infection surveillance
- Jamie C. Tiedemann, Student Affairs, Aurora Center for Advocacy & Education, director

For contact information, visit the Member Login page at umra.umn.edu (login required).
HELLO, my name is Fred Bertschinger

Hometown: Keokuk, Iowa

When did you join UMRA? 2017

What was your very first job? Newspaper carrier for the Keokuk Daily Gate City.

What was your occupation when you retired from FT work? Director of development for the School of Dentistry.

What is the name of the first record you bought? To Our Children’s Children’s Children (LP) by The Moody Blues.

If you could learn a new skill, what would you like it to be? Mississippi River towboat captain.

In October 2020, Fred Bertschinger rode his bike to Father Hennepin Bluff Park to walk on the riverbed below St. Anthony Falls and under the Stone Arch Bridge in Minneapolis.

Do you have a favorite place on the U of M campus? Weisman Art Museum, Cedar Creek Ecosystem Science Reserve, and the Landscape Arboretum, where I volunteer at the Bee Center.

What is a fun fact about you we might not know? In June 1973, three years after returning from Ceylon (Sri Lanka) as a Peace Corps Volunteer, I was thrown out of my hydroplane in my first race. The steering broke just past the starting line and I was tossed out, tumbling head over heels twice on the water at 55 m.p.h. I released the deadman’s throttle, so the engine stopped, and the boat settled down on the water. My PFD kept me afloat. I was rescued, and my racing runabout was towed to shore where I replaced the broken part, remounted, and completed my first race. (I never told my mother.)

What is something you currently enjoy doing with your time? Fly tying and fishing with another U of M retiree and other friends. Also, in recent years I became a Minnesota master naturalist and a beekeeper.

Vaccine update

We’re reading and hearing about promising vaccines ready for distribution before the end of 2020. In the world of science, the speed that has brought these vaccines to the point of distribution is truly remarkable—and a clear sign of how technology, combined with our growing understanding of human immunology, speeds up discovery.

So, what does this news mean for all of us?

First, although promising and exciting, vaccines will be available only in very limited quantities through the end of the year. I’m aware of one health system with more than 40,000 employees who will be receiving only 2,000 doses before January.

By January, production will increase and there will be decisions to be made about how those doses will be targeted. Again, we don’t anticipate seeing large-scale vaccination sites along the lines of our statewide testing sites until late spring or early summer.

For now, based on the surges we’re seeing and our hospital capacity concerns, basic public health measures remain most important. That means wearing masks, washing hands frequently, and staying separated from friends and family until we can be together again comfortably outdoors.

—Timothy Schacker, MD

You can find the slides from Dr. Schacker’s November UMRA A.M. presentation on “The quest for a vaccine” and a link to the video recording of the Zoom webinar on umra.umn.edu.
From Star Island to China

Armchair Traveler

Our next Armchair Traveler program will be on Tuesday, February 2, from 11 a.m. to 12:30 p.m. via Zoom. I will send an email with the Zoom meeting link to all UMRA members in early January. We have two terrific presenters lined up to share their photos and experiences.

B. Jan McCulloch, professor emeritus, Family Social Science, will take us to Star Island, which she describes as “a magical place” of peace and tranquility nestled among the Isles of Shoals 10 miles off the coast of New Hampshire.

Her presentation will be divided into three parts: a brief history of Star Island; staying at the Oceanic Hotel; and Star Island photography, including birds, landscapes, boating scenes, and an island celebration.

Robert Patterson, professor emeritus, Department of Rehabilitation Medicine, will focus on three of his trips to China. In 1983, he was part of an invited lecture tour; in 1986, he led 20 people from the Twin Cities on a 350-mile bike tour from Shanghai to Nanjing; and in 1989, he was on Tiananmen Square during the uprising to overthrow the government.

Please mark your calendars. We look forward to your joining us.

—Lynn C. Anderson, chair, Armchair Traveler

Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing

Online Wellbeing Opportunities

Introduction to Mindfulness

An online 4-week course that explores what mindfulness is (and isn’t) through direct experience and discussion. Begins in February.

z.umn.edu/IntroToMindfulness

Mindfulness-Based Stress Reduction

Reduce your stress and improve your wellbeing in this online, 8-week class. Begins in January.

z.umn.edu/MBSR

Earl E. Bakken Center for Spirituality & Healing
University of Minnesota

csh.umn.edu
Denied access to Zoom: One person’s experience

By Carla Carlson

In late August, I set up a Zoom meeting that was to be held September 3 for a fundraising discussion with a national nonprofit that I work with as a volunteer. There were to be about 15 people in the meeting.

When I went to open the meeting as host, the system would not let me in. After several unsuccessful attempts, I called the IT Help line and was told that access to Zoom for former faculty and staff ended on August 31. Luckily, a colleague quickly launched another Zoom invitation, and we were able to conduct the meeting as planned. Here’s what I was told in a follow-up email from IT:

1. Access to technology resources changes quickly as does the associated business model. The University now licenses a majority of its technology services from vendors in the private technology industry.

2. Access to most University technology resources is intended to be conditional on the enrollment or employment (full- or part-time) of students and staff. Upon departure from the University, most of these services (i.e., Zoom) are discontinued.

3. The University routinely removes access to technology services following departure. The timing for this removal varies according to the timing of the entry of an employee’s departure in the PeopleSoft Human Resources Management System.

4. UMRA’s email account (umra@umn.edu) and the technology services associated with it (i.e., Zoom) will remain unchanged.

The VP acknowledged that this is a change from the days when technologies were developed and/or created solely by the University for its own use and at a time when the legal and regulatory environments were comparatively relaxed. Over time, these changes have been compounded by escalating costs to provide state-of-the-art services in support of the University’s mission.

Gulachek has been, and will continue to be, a proponent of UMRA, but he cannot exclude retirees (and alumni) from the impact of these conditions.

UMRA Webmaster Cathy Lee Gierke and Database Manager Virgil Larson have worked out how you can use the UMRA account to host UMRA meetings, clubs, and special interest groups. Their instructions, “Hosting a Zoom meeting using UMRA Zoom account,” can be found on umra.umn.edu should you need to request this access for UMRA business.

See DEACTIVATION on page 7 ...
Electoral College reform

UMRA member Mark Bohnhorst retired in 2016 from the Office of the General Counsel, where he provided legal advice and support to the U’s scientific research mission for 24 years.

Kathryn Pearson’s outstanding UMRA Forum presentation on November 24 about the 2020 elections ended with a brief exchange about Electoral College reform. As it happens, I have been immersed in this subject for the last four years and would like to offer this update.

Reforming the Electoral College by action at the state level has been an active topic of discussion and advocacy for 20 years. The lead proposal since 2006 is an interstate compact promoted by National Popular Vote (NPV).

The compact would go into effect when states with a total of 270 electoral votes have joined.
Getting started: New UMRA interest groups

UMRA members are energetic and resourceful people. They have founded interest groups including the UMRA Book Club, Photo Club, Financial & Legal Affairs Group, and Armchair Traveler. Even now (or perhaps especially now), they’re finding ways to connect with others.

Lynn C. Anderson and Craig Swan discovered a shared interest in researching family history. Wondering how many others might be interested, they hosted a session on Zoom in October and invited UMRA members to join them. So many participated and with such great interest, Craig and Lynn gave a second presentation in December, and are planning to offer more.

Virgil Larson invited UMRA members to a Zoom interest group, and within a few days had 45+ people ready to join him. Dorothy Marden and Maggie Catambay organized a second book club after learning that the original UMRA Book Club is fully subscribed.

In response to all this activity, the UMRA Board asked me to draft a policy for recognizing new, member-initiated interest groups.

New policy
Under the new policy, approved by the Board in November, the organizer(s) of a new group are asked to submit an application with the following information:

- name and nature of the activity or group
- contact information for the proposers
- expected duration of the activity or group, and meeting times, if known
- potential conflicts of interest for the proposers
- need for promotion through UMRA’s communication channels, if any
- need for financial support from UMRA, if any

The chair of the Program Committee will share the proposal with other UMRA committee and interest group leaders for comment, and then forward it to the UMRA Executive Committee for approval—unless the proposed activity requires a financial commitment or presents potential significant liability for UMRA, in which case the proposal will be considered by the full Board. The new policy doesn’t apply to the activities of UMRA’s standing committees or to ad hoc gatherings of members that don’t require promotion in UMRA communications.

Is there an interest group you’re thinking of organizing with other UMRA members? I would be happy to hear from you. Please get in touch with me at jam@umn.edu.

—Jan Morlock, UMRA president-elect and Program Committee chair

Personal pronouns
Have you noticed a proliferation of pronouns in some auto signatures, especially in the University world and the business community? I was already wondering about the change when I interviewed Dr. Amelious Whyte Jr. for the November 2020 issue of the UMRA News and noticed this in his auto signature:

Personal Pronouns - He, Him, His
(More about pronouns and why I list them here and here)

The links to “here” and “here” connect to the Sexuality & Gender Equity Initiatives at UMD and the Center for Writing in the College of Liberal Arts. The underlying policy—Equity and Access: Gender Identity, Gender Expression, Names and Pronouns—can be found in the University Policy Library.

The evolving use of personal pronouns is not without controversy. Nevertheless, as Dr. Whyte said in a subsequent email exchange, “Words are important.”

—Kristine Mortensen, editor
VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

Thank you, U of M retiree volunteers!

On behalf of the University Retirees Volunteer Center (URVC), I’d like to recognize and thank all the volunteers who contributed their talents and time to the success of the many projects both inside and outside the University coordinated by URVC this past year.

Your efforts have made significant differences for people (adults and children) who benefited from the work of many non-profit organizations throughout our community.

In a typical year, more than 300 URVC volunteers devote approximately 10,000 hours of their time in support of our partner organizations. Although COVID-19 led to the cancellation of many onsite and in-person activities in 2020, we anticipate a return to our high levels in the coming year and beyond.

Projects that have received support from our volunteers include tutoring and mentoring children and youth; helping international students with English language learning; serving as jurors for law students’ mock trial experience; judging science fairs, History Day, and debate competitions; ushering at Northrop and Rarig Center; serving as research participants in University medical studies; packaging food for Second Harvest Heartland; preparing meals or driving for Meals on Wheels and Help At Your Door; making stress relief items for the Center for Victims of Torture; serving as AARP tax aides; helping health professional students develop patient interaction skills; and much more.

URVC–UMRA connection

URVC and UMRA work closely together through interlocking board representation and joint distribution of volunteer opportunity announcements.

We encourage all UMRA members to join the URVC family by registering at URVC.umn.edu to become a volunteer and receive notification of volunteer opportunities of specific interest.

I thank all of you who volunteered this past year, whether through URVC or other organizations inside and outside our university. Minnesota is known as a state with high volunteerism and community involvement. This, I firmly believe, contributes immensely to our quality of life and is something for which we can all be very grateful.

—Eric Hockert, chair, URVC Board and member, UMRA Board

Help wanted: JOIE editor

Did you know the Retirees Association has its own open access, electronic journal? It’s called the Journal of Opinions, Ideas, and Essays or JOIE, and UMRA is looking for a qualified volunteer to become the new editor-in-chief.

Are you interested in reading a wide range of material? Do you find yourself critiquing what you read, thinking of ways to present it better? Do you like working with people? Do you like working on tasks that require judgment and organization? Maybe this is a position for you.

Sponsored by UMRA and supported by University of Minnesota Libraries Publishing Services, JOIE has been publishing articles by retired and active U of M faculty and staff since 2011. Articles may be aimed at a broad, general audience or a more specialized readership. Topics range from University history, personal stories, and literary critiques to health issues, poetry—even a photo essay.

As an electronic journal, JOIE can accommodate graphics and illustrations in ways that traditional journals often cannot.

UMRA has an editorial committee but needs an editor-in-chief to take the lead in moving JOIE forward. Many potential authors are waiting in the wings.

For more information including a copy of the job description, please contact Will Craig at wcraig@umn.edu.

—Will Craig, UMRA Board member
January 2021 events via Zoom

12  UMRA A.M.
12  Photo Club
13  Managing Family Photos
15  Book Club
18  Executive Committee meeting
19  Living Well Workshop
25  Board of Directors meeting
26  UMRA Forum

Share upcoming events anytime by emailing the UMRA webmaster at leegi001@umn.edu. Include event title, date, time, a brief description, and contact information.

... ELECTORAL COLLEGE from page 7.

Currently, states with a total of 196 electoral votes have done so. With the recent change in composition of the Supreme Court, there is a danger that use of the initiative to enact the compact could be struck down. The issue turns on the definition of “legislature” in the Constitution.

Voter Choice Ballot

My advocacy has been for “state-by-state” measures that would take effect immediately. A national group, Making Every Vote Count, endorses this approach and has come up with a new proposal, Voter Choice Ballot (VCB). Under VCB, individual voters are given the choice of casting ballots for the winner of the nationwide vote. This might be particularly attractive to independent or moderate voters—whom Kathryn Pearson indicated are a large slice of the electorate. In addition, VCB does not change the state winner-take-all basis of appointing electors (which the “legislature” may “direct”), and use of this initiative is far less subject to constitutional challenge.

The Library on the Making Every Vote Count website has articles I have written on several topics, including the constitutionality of the initiative, the 20-year history of the reform movement, race and the Electoral College, and prospects for change.

—Mark Bohnhorst, chair, Presidential Elections Team at Minnesota Citizens for Clean Elections

Food for thought

“Bravery resides in every heart, and some day it will be summoned.”
—Catherine E. F. “Jean” Biden, mother of Joe Biden