

iPeer

A guiding document
for the iPeer program
supporting dMLIS students in
the Information School at the
University of Washington

*Document originally created February 2006
by Sarah Evans and Linda Nixon*

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History

iPeer was created based on the feedback of distance MLIS students. During the Winter 2005 open meeting with iSchool administration, new students expressed interest in getting to know students in their surrounding area. The administration suggested that this be done on a student level, and Linda Nixon and Sarah Evans volunteered to devise a program to connect current students with incoming students.

After investigation, it was decided that iPeer need not be a stand-alone student organization. The benefits of creating a registered student organization did not outweigh the difficulties. Therefore, iPeer operates under the umbrella of the Association of Library and Information Science Students (ALISS). The ALISS Distance Representative is the contact person for iPeer.

After only one year of operation, the program matched over 20 incoming students – roughly 25% of the incoming cohort – with their more experienced peers in the distance program.

Timeline

Based on the experiences of the previous program administrators, here is a proposed timeline for proceeding through the year.

Winter Quarter (early weeks)

- Announce program administrator vacancies via iAnnounce, and idMLIS listservs, as well as dMLIS ePost forum

Winter Quarter (final weeks)

- Previous program administrators announce new program administrators through iAnnounce and idMLIS listservs.
- Check in with new ALISS Distance Representative. Make sure iPeer has the new password for the aliss UW NetID which gives access for creating the website.
- Review results of participant survey done by former administrators.

Spring Quarter

- Check with iSchool Student Services and MLIS Program Advisor to determine due date for iPeer flyer to be included in new dMLIS student packets.
- Revise questionnaire and iPeer website.
- Solicit experienced students to sign up for matching with incoming students over the summer and into the autumn.

Summer Quarter

- Match incoming students with experienced students as questionnaires are completed and submitted, and maintain spreadsheets with matches noted.
- Check with Student Services and MLIS Program Advisor about iPeer inclusion in orientation for new students and residency events.
- If not already happening, prompt ALISS Distance Representative to send out regular emails inviting new students to sign up for iPeer.
- Create flyer to hand out during autumn residency.

- Near the end of the quarter, send an email to current participants encouraging them to meet in person during the upcoming residency and offer suggestions.

Autumn Quarter

- Attend new student welcoming fair prior to residency and hand out flyers. If unable to attend, recruit local experienced distance students to help.
- Encourage participants during the residency.
- Continue to match incoming students with experienced students as questionnaires are completed.
- Compile lists of participants based on geographic location. Send the lists to each group of students that live near each other.

Winter Quarter

- At the beginning of the quarter, send an email to participants encouraging them to meet in person during the upcoming residency and offer suggestions.
- Create and send a participant satisfaction survey that will assist the next set of program administrators.
- Solicit and select program administrators for the next year.
- Transfer ownership of the iPeer email to the new administrators.
- Ask iSchool Tech Services to change permissions for the N drive folder to the new administrators.
- Announce new program administrators through iAnnounce and idMLIS listservs.

Email Administration

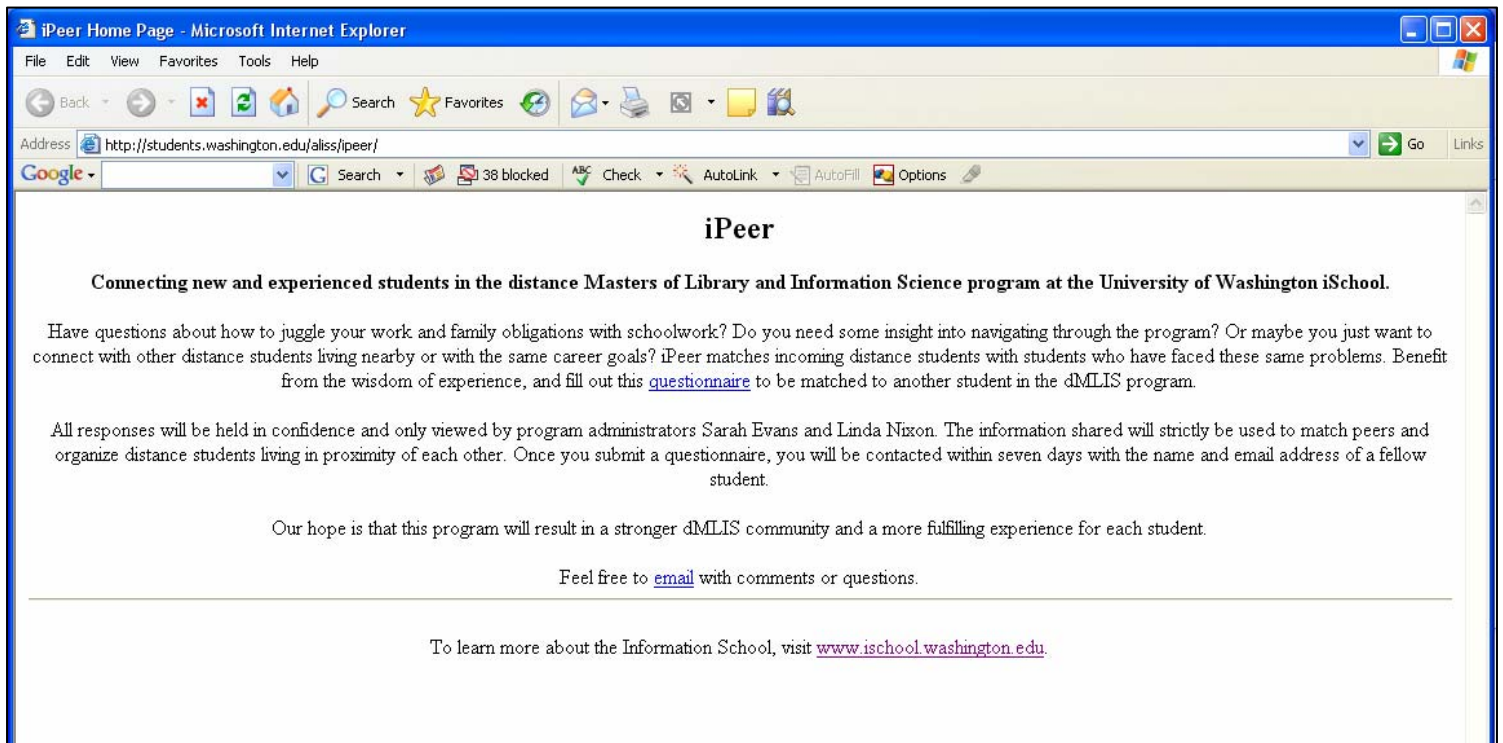
Because UW rules prevent students from maintaining more than one email account and iPeer isn't a registered student organization, the email account for iPeer is actually a UW Listserv. The email address is ipeer@u.washington.edu. The general site for iPeer mailman administration can be found at <https://mailman1.u.washington.edu/mailman/admin/ipeer>. All current iPeer administrators should be subscribed to the iPeer listserv so they each will receive the messages sent to the iPeer email account.

Because the iPeer email address is an active link on the iPeer website, the account is subject to a fair amount of spam. Occasionally, the mailman spam blocker will request that you approve or discard a message that is obviously spam.

To alleviate duplication of effort and transmissions to participants, it is best to assign one person to deal with incoming messages for a specific time frame, but all administrators should stay subscribed to the iPeer listserv to stay current with the volume of responses, or to provide insight into matches as necessary.

Website Administration

The website for iPeer is a branch of the ALISS website. The URL is <http://students.washington.edu/aliss/ipeer/>. The ALISS Distance Representative is responsible for updating you on any changes to the password for your level of access.



2005-2006 iPeer Website

Questionnaire

Currently, the questionnaire is a form embedded in the iPeer website. When the questionnaire is completed, the iPeer listserv receives the information submitted. The following questions are in use on the questionnaire:

First Name:

Last Name:

Email Address:

New Student or Experienced Student

Currently Residing In (City, State):

Focus of Study: Public Library, Academic Library, Special Library, Other, Undecided

Career Goals (in general):

Other Relevant Information (Hobbies, pets, family situation, etc.):

What attributes are most important to have in common with your peer?

(Location, focus, family situation, etc.):

During the 2005-2006 year, at least 4 people filled out the questionnaire but the administrators did not receive their submissions. So far, no specific error has been found with the form, but it should be investigated. A warning may need to be added to the iPeer website that if a participant doesn't receive a message within three days then participants should email ipeer@u.washington.edu.

Matching Process

Via the questionnaire, participants indicated a preference for the attributes they most wanted to be taken into consideration during the matching process. Some strictly preferred finding students in their region – students they could carpool to residencies with, or those they could meet in person for moral support. Others preferred students with similar life experiences – older students, students with small children, students working full time, etc. Still others hoped to connect with students who shared career goals. Although the volume of participating students was not great enough to ensure exact matches for each student, matches were still able to be made based on other attributes to make the exchanges between peers as meaningful as possible.

Email was sent to each matched set, indicating their match, and encouraging them to contact each other.

Document Storage

Documents for iPeer are stored on the iSchool N drive at N:\Project Folders\Student-Orgs\iPeer . Instructions for mapping to the N drive are found at: http://help.ischool.washington.edu/faqs/4_8_en.html . Current documents stored there are an Excel spreadsheet with new and experienced students in columns according to matches, as well as two Word documents that are cut and pastes of form submissions – one document for new students, one for experienced students. For future use, the Sharespace utility might be more convenient to use. Information on this function of Catalyst may be found at: <https://catalysttools.washington.edu/tools/sharespaces/?js=1> .

Important Contacts

The following people help iPeer succeed.

MLIS Academic Advisor – Marie Potter mardup@u.washington.edu

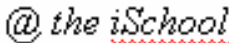

ALISS Distance Representative – Teresa M McElhiney


tmm5@u.washington.edu


Tech Services – help@ischool.washington.edu , specifically Joshua


Ayson ayson@u.washington.edu


Sample Documents





 **iPeer** matches incoming students with peers who have traveled the same road.

 am a new distance student.

 want to find other students who live where I live.

 need advice about instructors and courses.

 would enjoy help navigating through the program.

 could use a friend at the iSchool.

Visit <http://students.washington.edu/aliss/ipeer> to fill out a brief questionnaire to get connected with an advanced student

Contact ipeer@u.washington.edu with questions.

A. Flyer accompanying iSchool new student information packet

*i*Peer @ the *i*School

Want to be a successful distant student and...?

- a) Start a family
- b) Change jobs
- c) Move cross-country
- d) Have a life
- e) All of the above

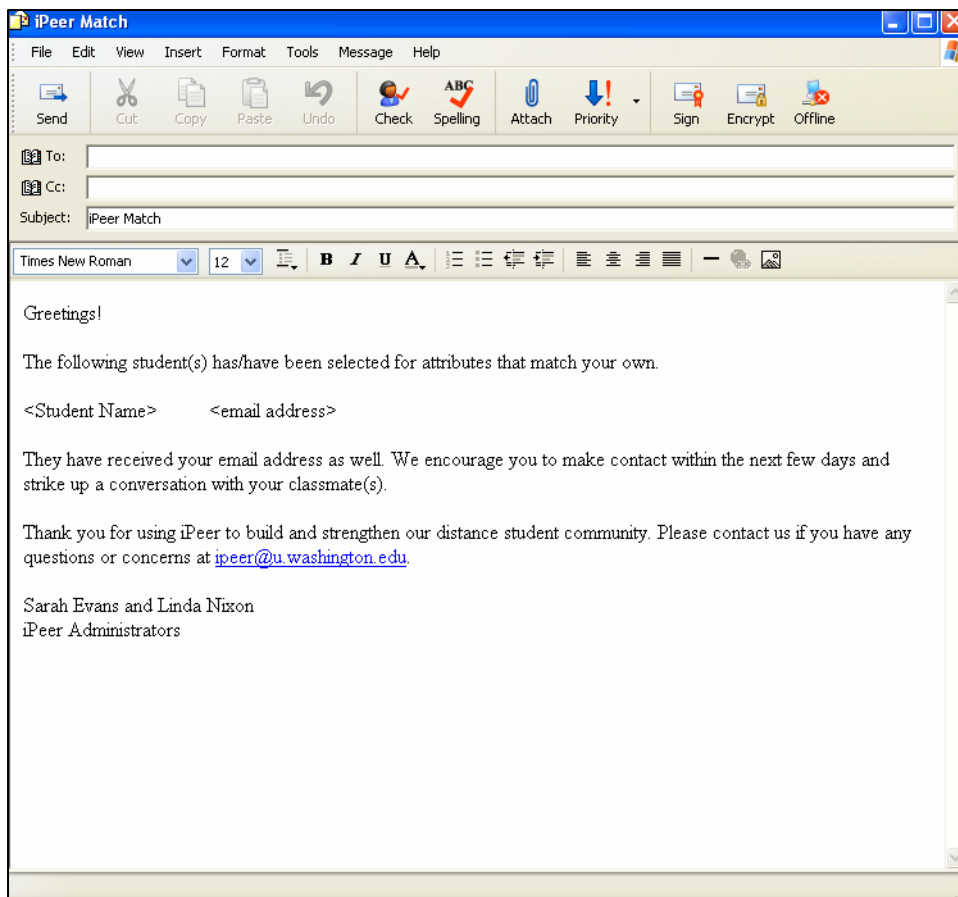
Other students are already doing it.

*i*Peer matches incoming students with peers who have traveled the same road.

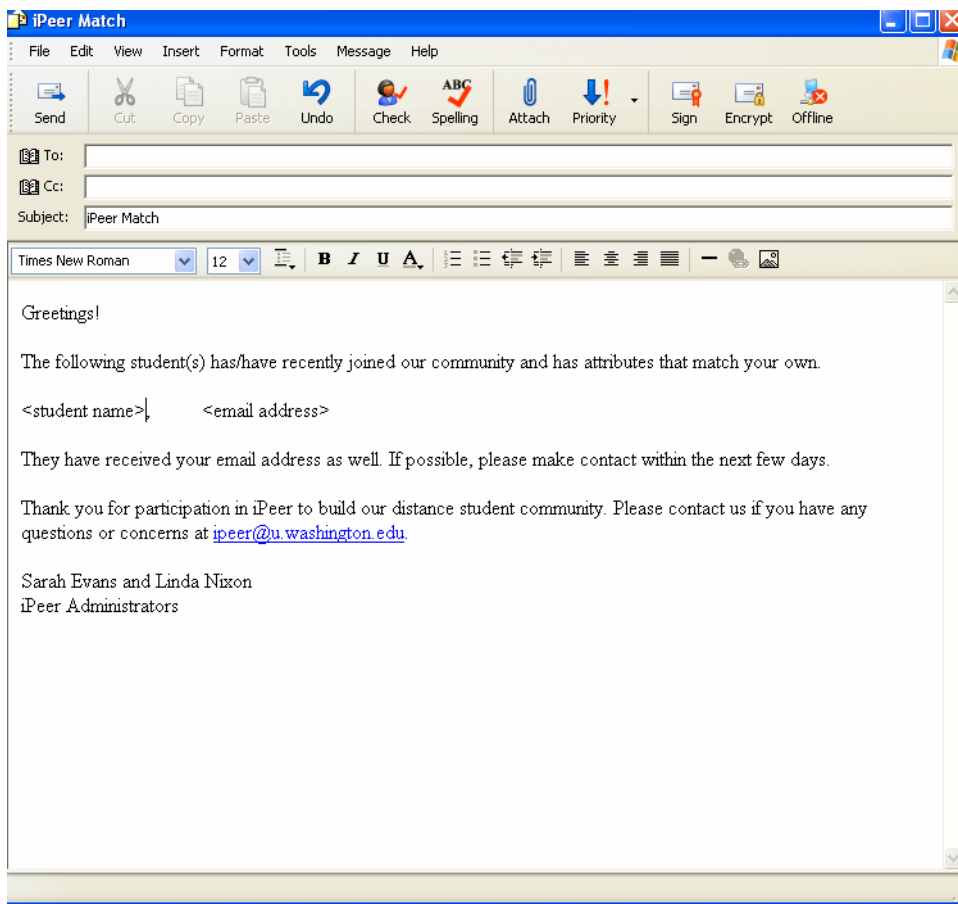
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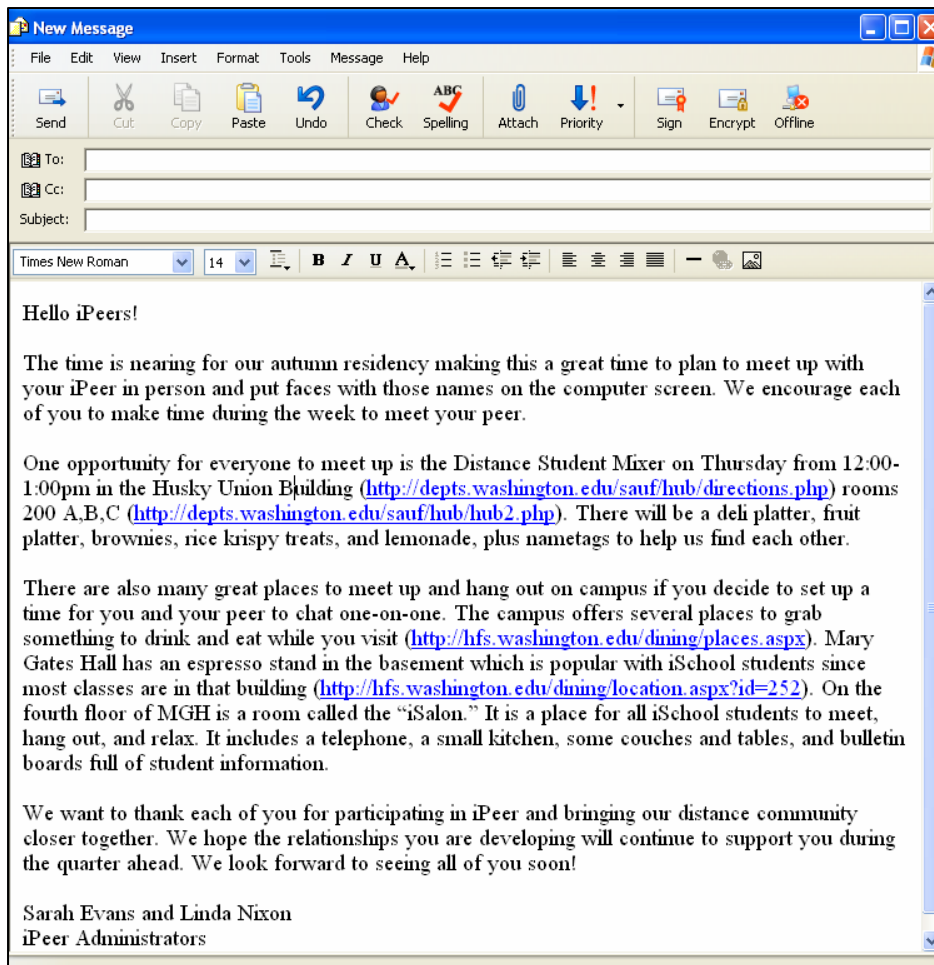
B. Flyer for handout at Autumn Residency



C. Match email sent to New Students



D. Match email sent to Experienced Students



E. Pre-residency email, Autumn quarter