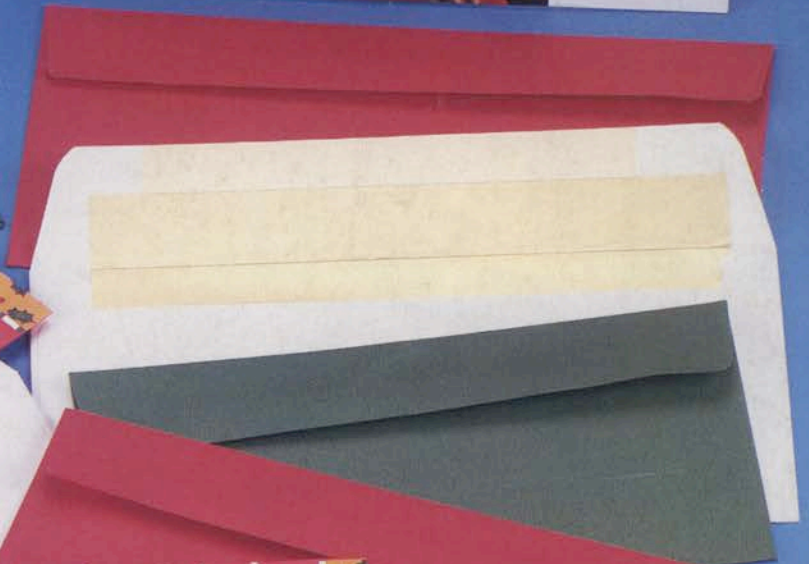


PHOTO LAB

MANAGEMENT

\$2.50 / DECEMBER, 1994 ■ VOL. 16 THE MAGAZINE FOR PHOTO LAB MANAGEMENT PERSONNEL



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RIT at night: The Big Shot! This shot of the School of Photographic Arts & Sciences was produced by RIT students, faculty and friends.

In Search of Excellence: RIT'S Imaging Systems Management Program

Michael Peres
(with James E. Rice & William DuBois)

"The irony of being a small program is that the Imaging Systems Management program has far more job opportunities for its graduates than graduates to place."

*Professor Jim Rice
McGhee Chair*

quently, my interest in writing this article is to share with you some aspects of the RIT program, its current changes as well as possible directions through the selection of the next McGhee Chair.

The Program

Imaging Systems Management is one of six programs of study located within the School of Photographic Arts & Sciences. SPAS, as it is commonly referred to, is a very large and diverse school with more than 850 students and 45 full-time faculty. RIT, as a whole, has a student population of more than 13,000. So as you can imagine, the campus is large, with a multitude of activities to support its student body.

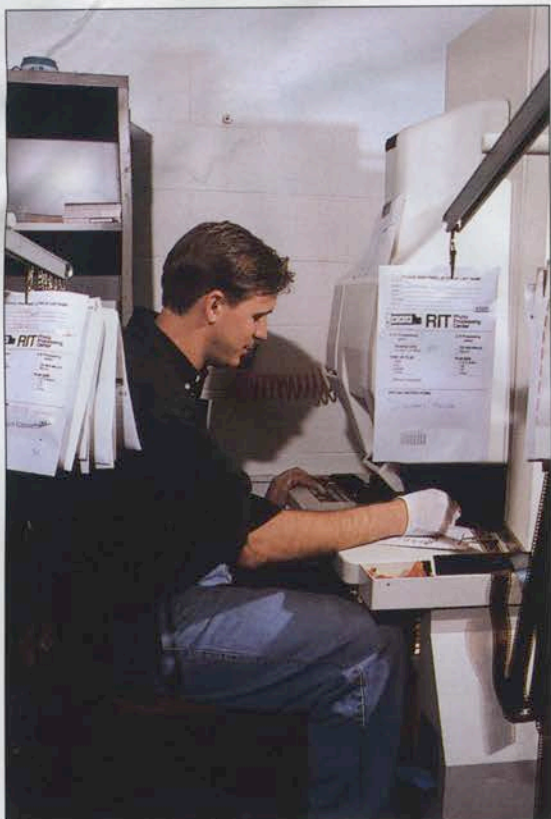
As a result of SPAS's size and history,

THE ROCHESTER Institute of Technology (RIT) has played an important role in providing photographic education for our industry. One key program is Imaging Systems Management (IMS). Over the span of the last 25 years, RIT's ISM, formerly the Photo Systems Management program, has had an intimate relationship with the photographic industry that funded it many years ago.

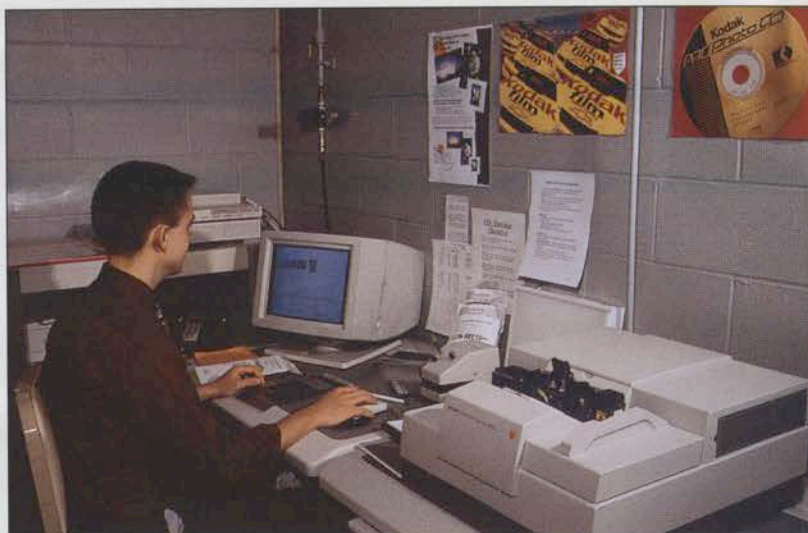
Last year, Professor Jim Rice, the current McGhee chair of the IMS program,

announced his retirement. Coinciding with his announcement, many initiatives in the department were implemented, including the formation of a search committee to find his replacement. Sitting on this search committee has allowed me to learn about the photo finishing industry as well as RIT's unique relationship with that industry.

As our search unfolds, the history, direction, philosophy and current changes in the program are clarified. Conse-



Minilab operation, Jim Malcolm at the controls.



C.D. workstation at RIT Chris Kohanek, operator.

there are some very unique programs located here. Beyond the Imaging Systems Management program, RIT supports an Imaging and Photographic Technology and a Biomedical Photographic Communications department. These two programs also have strong relationships to their industries and garner much support from them. As a result of the hands-on philosophy of the curriculums, graduates from all three of these programs are typically very employable and have high placement rates.

As you know, academia is a very different place from the "real world." Consequently, the way search committees function in academia is quite different than the way industry searches are run. Academic searches are slow, and issues are often deliberated at great lengths before decisions are reached. This search committee's charge will progress through discussion and debate until the committee is comfortable that all things have been thoroughly investigated.

The goal of the deliberation is to provide a smooth and easy transition for the new person by building constituencies on campus as well as externally. This particular search is very important to the school because it is to fill the McGhee Professorship. This position is described as an endowed chair and reports to both the sponsors of the endowment as well as to the administrators of the college

where the Chair resides.

As a private university, RIT's operating budget comes primarily from the tuition it collects. Consequently, program enrollment plays a vital role in each department's future. Not immune from the influences of the world and its economy, RIT is currently involved in a strategic plan that is investigating each program and its viability for the future. In response to our responsibility to the student (who is the primary customer), all programs are being reviewed.

This review is based on the mission statement of the strategic plan and investigates costs associated with the program's operation, the number of current students as well as the placement rate. Unquestionably, the curriculum, facility and employment opportunities for the ISM students and graduates are good, and there are opportunities for additional quality candidates.

The McGhee Chair

James E. McGhee was a vice president of Sales for the Eastman Kodak Company for many years until his retirement in 1963. He was a very warm man who was well liked and known throughout the industry. As one of the founders of the National Photographic Manufacturer's Association, Jim was instrumental in establishing three-day short

courses in the 1960s held for lab owners at the original RIT campus. These courses investigated approaches to marketing strategies and financial planning as well as lab organization to enhance the photo finishing industry and its sales. The course series, part of the Association's educational program, grew in attendance and was very successful.

Harry Carhart, then president of the Master Photofinishers and Dealer's Association (now the PMA), wanted very much to recognize the years of contributions Jim McGhee made to the industry as well as maintain the educational courses that McGhee started. In 1963, Carhart's goal was to establish an Endowment fund to be used to create a Bachelor of Science degree program for the study of the business and techniques used in the finishing industry.

The goal was to fund a program of study at RIT that would allow the study of this discipline for undergraduates as well as providing faculty and facilities to run short courses as McGhee had originally run. Over a period of several years, Carhart raised \$500K to create the necessary endowment receiving wide support from individuals as well as the entire industry. In 1969, the program was funded.

The program was initiated at RIT and James E. McMillion was hired as the first McGhee Chair. Prior to his appointment,

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RIT's Imaging Systems Management Program

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Prof. McMillion was a faculty member in the Illustration department and had been a manager at Ansco for many years prior to his original RIT appointment. Mac, as he is often referred to, was charged with the task of organizing the new program: writing a bachelor's degree curriculum; recruiting students; finding a space and getting the operation up and running. Beyond those serious challenges, Mac also needed to garner equipment support for his operation.

These challenges were met with tremendous support on all fronts and the first class graduated 11 students in 1973. Many of these original graduates are still very active in their own businesses around the country. These include several professional labs as well as school photography businesses. Additionally, several of the original class went to work at major corporations and have risen to upper level management positions.

"We had to start from scratch. All we really had was four walls with several pieces of equipment donated from Kodak still in crates. It seemed like an overwhelming challenge."

*Jim "Mac" McMillion
first McGhee Chair*

In response to the industry needs of the time, the curriculum was heavily weighted in the marketing, managing and operations of a photographic finishing lab. Thus certain parts of the curriculum explored aspects of color negative and positive processing as well as printing. Students were exposed to quality control methods, work flow and organization as well as supervisory strategies. The ultimate goal was to create individuals who could step out of the program and make strong contributions to the industry. From all accounts, this happened with great success, as the graduates were well received in the field.

In 1981 Mac retired and was succeeded by Elsworth J. McCune. Prof. McCune was well known in the industry for his many patents on electronic equipment used to interpret color negatives for printing. His history and background were a natural for this position. After a brief tenure as the McGhee Chair, Prof. McCune retired due to illness, leaving the McGhee Chair vacant for the second time.

A vigorous search was embarked upon to find a quality replacement who could step in at a critical time for the program. In 1985, James E. Rice was hired directly from Kodak as the third McGhee Chair. Prof. Rice set out an ambitious plan to develop the laboratory and improve the

lab equipment. Tremendous industry support came forward to modernize the facility with contemporary minilabs, high speed printers and motion picture processing equipment as well as a PVAC. Additionally the program implemented same-day service on transparency processing as well as other services.

It should be noted that the program delivered and still provides a significant amount of its curriculum through on-the-job experiences in the laboratory. This philosophy, used from the beginning, allows students a thorough knowledge base from film drop-off to delivery of product back to the customer, as the student participates in all phases of the operation.

As the economy changed, cost-saving measures were implemented from the administration. The majority of ISM students were transfer students: Thus, in 1991, the four-year degree program was scaled back to a two-year transfer pro-

gram. It was also observed that many of the enrolling students at that time were most interested in shooting curriculums. That constituted changes in the student applicant pool. It was decided that a two-year junior/senior program would have the best chances of success and surviving. The curriculum still had a thorough blend of science, math, business and photo finishing, and the bachelor's degree was still to be granted. However only students with an Associates degree could be admitted.

The program continually sought ways to implement curriculum and services reflecting the trends of the industry. The ISM program is currently providing photographic services to the entire RIT community. To minimize any conflict of interest issues, the lab serves only the campus. These services include four-hour turnaround on all E-6 service, two-and three-day services on C-41 and printing as well as slide duplicating, copy work and other related work.

Over the years, the lab and program have evolved into a full production lab operation to assist the school in delivering photographic processing to assist in the education of our other programs. It has been estimated that the lab saves RIT students over \$92,000 each year with annual billings at \$65,000. The fees

collected for services are depressed as a result of significant paper and chemistry support from the industry.

Lab activities might give you a clearer picture of the lab's volume. In the academic year 1993-94, 9,000 rolls and 8,000 sheets of E-6 were run. Additionally, 40,500 color prints were produced from process and print orders. The facility is quite impressive and capable of turning out a wide range of high quality silver products. Students participate in all aspects of production and quality controlling as well as customer service.

The program has a strong history in the finishing and manufacturing industry. For the last 25 years, the primary employers of the graduates of this BS program have been the sensitized product manufacturers as well as owners of processing labs. Being the nation's only BS program in this discipline, the curriculum has been nurtured by its important advisory board to include a heavy component in business, marketing, management, supervisory skills, and lab operations and equipment.

The educational experience is also rounded out by a one academic quarter internship which effectively positions graduates for employment. Many of the program's graduates have risen to the upper level management positions within organizations such as Kodak, Agfa, Ilford, Fuji and Konica. In this day and age, what other programs can boast more job opportunities than graduates to fill them?

As the search for the next McGhee Professor continues, the program is gearing up for the future. Increased enrollment is seen as an opportunity and as a potential growth area for both the school and the industry. In March of this year, Prof. William DuBois, the former Associate Director of the school, was installed as the program's academic chair to assist with the recruitment efforts, to develop electronic technologies and to further curriculum revision. With this new appointment, Prof. Rice could use release time to assist with the search for the next McGhee chair and develop transition strategies. Prof. DuBois's responsibilities include the development and implementation of a student recruitment and ISM marketing plan and the development of electronic imaging activities and services for the laboratory.

An electronic service bureau has been established with services including: digital file transfers to and from PC and Macintosh platforms; output to 35mm films; B/W and color scanning; computer

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"With approximately 81 billion exposures being made with 35mm and instant cameras last year, the silver halide technology is not disappearing. Electronic imaging is growing in the industry and will get stronger with time. The curriculum must reflect these technology advances to prepare the graduates for the changes that are yet to come. It is not solely the technology change, but the ability to manage the changes that continue to challenge the industry."

*Prof. William DuBois
Chair, ISM*

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system networking; and, production on the Kodak Photo CD system. The service bureau is expanding its services with additional support from the industry. The program has been very aggressive in embracing these new technologies in preparing for its future as well as assessing how to maintain high quality traditional silver services to support the school, college and campus.

The program is well positioned to deliver a quality experience to its undergraduates both didactically and through hands-on experiences in the lab. There are ample employment opportunities for graduates; nonetheless, attracting more perspective students will be a major role for the McGhee Chair and the program. As with all organizations in the '90s, being financially viable is fundamental to staying in business. In that RIT is involved with its strategic plan, the industry can expect to see changes in the way we do business.

As this search moves forward to replace the McGhee chair, we are looking for the perfect person, someone who has the industry's respect, recognition and who is interested in rolling up his or her sleeves to teach and get the job done. This "right person" is needed to move this program, which is very important to the school and industry and steeped in history, to its next level.

In the '60s, when the industry wanted to create a quality educational program, Harry Carhart with purpose, passion, and industry support built a \$500,000 endowment. This endowment was used to establish an academic program that assisted and provided the industry with capable employees.

In 1985 when the program was in need of infusions of ideas and equipment, the industry stepped in again to meet the challenge, as it had 20 years earlier. Now we are almost into 1995: What will the next 10-year cycle bring to the ISM program? I raise this question to you, the industry. We seek your continued support through the referral of quality students to the program as well as your recommendations for the next McGhee Chair. If you have ideas or names or seek more information, please feel free to contact the school or any of the authors of this article. 

Michael Peres is an associate professor in the School of Photographic Arts & Sciences, Rochester Institute of Technology. Professor Peres has a Masters in Instructional Design and is also a Registered Biological Photographer.