UVic honours five top researchers
by Valerie Shore

Dr. Harold Coward, winner of the Craigdarroch Gold Medal for Career Achievement in Research, is a world-renowned scholar in religious studies, with special emphasis on Hinduism. His work ranges from classical language theories in south Asia to modern ethical concerns of the survival of this planet. In the process, he has written 17 books, edited 33, has 57 chapters in books, and is author or co-author of 76 journal articles.

Coward is equally well-known for his leadership in bringing religious studies together with other disciplines to address major world policy issues, ranging from climate change and management of the environment to peace-building and health.

Coward is a "superb leader and facilitator," says UVic President David N. S. MacLaren. "The university is indeed fortunate to have an academic leader as strong, enthusiastic and capable as Jamie Cassels," says UVic President David Turpin. "The enthusiastic support for his reappointment is testimony to the respect afforded Prof. Cassels."

The vice president academic and provost is responsible for academic leadership and the fiscal management of academic programs and initiatives of the university.

"I've always been proud of our accomplishments at UVic, but the last four or five years have been particularly transformative," says Cassels. "We've been joined by about five new top researchers, including Harold Coward, who is a leader in religious studies, a leader in global climate change, and a leader in peace-building and health."

SEE CASSELS P.4

Cassels appointed to second term

Jamie Cassels, UVic's vice president academic and provost since 2001, has been reappointed to a new five year term after a unanimous recommendation by a 16-member review committee and a 95 per cent vote of approval in a ratification ballot by faculty members.

The reappointment was confirmed by the university's board of governors on Feb. 24 and is effective July 1, 2006.

After collecting feedback from internal and external constituents, the review committee concluded that Cassels is a "superb leader and facilitator," motivated by an "unwavering desire to improve the quality of the broader learning environment for all students, faculty and staff" and who has "demonstrated the capacity to take a principled approach to tough issues and exhibits exceptional integrity and fairness."

"The university is indeed fortunate to have an academic leader as strong, enthusiastic and capable as Jamie Cassels," says UVic President David Turpin. "The enthusiastic support for his reappointment is testimony to the respect afforded Prof. Cassels."

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SEE INDIGENOUS PLANTS P.4

Upcoming budget to address transportation options

When UVic's board of governors discusses the university's budget for 2005-06 later this spring, one of the items under consideration will be the reduced rate that UVic and the Victoria Regional Transit Commission have agreed to give the university a pass to employees of UVic.

To encourage UVic employees to take public transit, UVic and B.C. Transit have agreed to give UVic employees a pass to employees of UVic.

"UVic is committed to reducing the amount of vehicular traffic to its Gordon Head campus and this partnership with B.C. Transit would be an important part of our transportation demand management program," says Sarah Webb, UVic's sustainability co-ordinator.

"This partnership with UVic follows the success of the UPASS program which has more than doubled the amount of student ridership to campus since it was introduced in 1998," says webb. "This is the first program of its kind for the capital region and we hope to form similar partnerships to encourage employees from other large organizations to ride the bus to work."

To encourage UVic employees to make a commitment to public transit, the monthly bus passes wouldn't be available to annual parking pass holders. But UVic is considering flexible daily parking options for bus pass holders who still need to drive to campus occasionally. Other budget items under consideration include a revision of UVic parking rates.

As part of its transportation demand management strategy, UVic is aiming to improve transportation choices for students, faculty and staff. All new buildings include shower and change room facilities for pedestrians and cyclists, as well as covered bike parking and lockers. UVic designates parking spaces for car pooling participants and is a partner with the Victoria Car Share Co-op.

A 2004 traffic audit showed that traffic to campus had declined 13 per cent since 2000 and that less than 50 per cent of all trips to campus were in single-occupancy vehicles. At the same time, transit ridership has increased by 33 per cent over 2000 levels.

SEE CASSELS P.4

Back to their roots

A UVic graduate student helps First Nations schoolchildren reconnect with their natural world

by Lyndya Hills

"When gathering Ts’uqaam, one must have a clear mind. When you are done, you can leave a gift of thanks. Never pick for fun and waste this precious plant."

To Ts’uqaam, or licorice root, is one of the native plants schoolchildren in a First Nations community on B.C.’s north coast are learning about, thanks to Judith (Edōsdi) Thompson, a master’s student at UVic’s school of environmental studies.

Throughout Thompson’s Gits’aat plant project, students in Hartley Bay school’s Grade 9 to 12 classes are connecting to the world around them, and re-affirming a tradition of passing on knowledge from one generation to the next. Hartley Bay is a community of about 200 people located 140 km southeast of Prince Rupert.

"The project retains and strengthens the transmission of traditional ecological knowledge," says Thompson. "It reconnects children to their elders and the land, something that hasn’t been happening."

Thompson developed the project based on a curriculum she worked on with two Ts'msyel'Wan teachers, Cameron and Eva-Ann Hill. The project pairs up 19 students to choose and research a plant native to Hartley Bay. The children interviewed elders, researched the Internet, and used botany books provided by UVic through the Coasts Under Stress research project.

Throughout the process, Thompson monitored the students’ progress and provided support with such things as interview role-playing. She solicited feedback from teachers, elders and the students themselves. The project also involved field trips. Information gathered provided a framework for student reports and a variety of public presentations.

Students also contributed to a poster with details of each plant along with its uses as material, medicine and food. Thompson and the students are currently drafting a booklet called The Gits’aat Plant Project.

"The students learned skills that assisted them not only with their interviews, but in recording the knowledge they learned, and sharing this knowledge and wisdom with the community," says Thompson.

First Nations people are under-represented in science classrooms and in science-related careers, notes Thompson.

SEE INDIGENOUS PLANTS P.4
The faculty of engineering has received a $200,000 planned gift from the estate of prominent Victoria engineer Ray Simpson.

Simpson, who built some of Victoria’s most familiar buildings—including Government House, the Victoria Law Courts and the Douglas Building—died last August. The gift from his estate will establish the Ray and Naomi Simpson Scholarship Award for undergraduate electrical and mechanical engineering students.

“Our faculty is in the midst of a major expansion,” says Dr. Michael Miller, dean of engineering. “The generous gift will recognize the achievements and potential of some of our excellent students and will further increase our capacity to recruit the most promising students.”

The endowment will create a $3,000 scholarship for a top-ranked, second year engineering student. The scholarship is renewable, meaning the student must maintain a high grade point average to continue receiving the award in subsequent years.

“Ray Simpson, as one of the builders of this city, had very high standards both professionally, and in life,” says Miller. “The idea of a renewable scholarship that would challenge students to strive to their very best affirms the values and ideals of an extraordinarily talented man who made an invaluable contribution to our community.”

John Raymond Simpson was born in Edmonton in 1914 to English immigrant parents. In 1923 his family moved to California where, in his youth, he excelled in music and tennis, becoming the youngest member of the 1931 U.S. Davis Cup tennis team. The following year, his family returned to Victoria where he graduated from Vic High. A gifted musician, Simpson successfully auditioned to play in the orchestra aboard the trans-Pacific Liner Empress of Japan, playing cello and clarinet. Later, with aid of a scholarship, he enrolled at the University of Leeds, graduating with a degree in civil engineering in 1939. During a short stay in a British hospital, he fell in love with one of his nurses, Naomi Seddon, and they married in 1939.

When war broke out, Simpson was commissioned to build submarine ammunition bunkers and later, in British Guiana, the marine defenses against a supposed invasion of South America. After the war, Simpson returned to Victoria with his young family, and went to work with the provincial government, rising to the position of senior structural engineer, where he built some of Victoria’s best-known structures.

Offered the position of deputy minister of public works on a number of occasions, Simpson declined in favour of remaining a practising engineer. Simpson was also a master craftsman, whose expertise period furniture and lamps grace many Victoria homes.

University home to more students this fall

With room for 500 more full-time undergraduate students, UVic is encouraging those with an average of 75 per cent or higher to apply to the university for admission this fall.

The extra room is the result of the provincial government initiative to create 25,000 new student spaces at post-secondary institutions in B.C. by 2010.
A draft of a strategic communications plan for UVic is beginning to take shape. The plan is based on the thoughts of faculty, students and staff. As a second, follow-up survey will soon be sent to the same people to evaluate their actual activity.

“Walking is an easy, low-cost way to stay fit. So why don’t more of us do it?” University Communications grad student Carolyn McIntyre laces up. She works with Rhodes on the leisure time walking study.

Rhodes chose to study leisure time walking because previous research looked at physical activity in general and didn’t focus on the type of activity. “Walking is the most preferred, easiest accessible, low-cost activity and can be done at a moderate intensity.”

According to Wightman, that positioning would help university community members to “gives prospective students, faculty, staff, donors and funders a consistent, compelling and sharply focused set of reasons why they should invest their time or support in UVic.”

The task force has been assisted in its work by Educational Marketing Group (EMG), a marketing agency specializing in higher education. EMG was selected from more than 70 firms. As the Ring went to press, the task force was working on an integrated institutional strategic communications plan that will provide measurable goals for 2005-06, identify the communication tools that would be required to accomplish these, and assign administrative responsibility for each. Once finalised, these will go out to the campus community for comment.

The task force is also reviewing a report from EMG that contains recommendations on image-building, integrated communications planning and organisational structure, and examining whether quantitative research with external audiences might be helpful.

More than 1,500 faculty, students, staff and alumni responded to a web-based questionnaire about UVic’s perceived strengths, weaknesses, competitive advantages, and core values last October and November.

Student focus groups and mixed discussion groups with faculty, staff, students and alumni then helped to deepen understanding of the questionnaire feedback.

EMG collected data from many areas on campus on institutional characteristics, funding sources, application patterns, and marketing and communications structures and expenditures for UVic and its competitors.

EMG principals Bob and Marlene Brock conducted 35 small-group or one-on-one sessions with campus leaders, administrators and faculty about the university’s goals and challenges. They also participated in an open meeting to outline the strategic communications planning process and answer any questions.

The task force has met monthly to receive and discuss the input, the resulting reports and the draft integrated strategic communications plan.

More information on the strategic communications planning process at UVic is available at www.uvic.ca/stratcomplan/.

Start walking! Walking is an easy, low-cost way to stay fit. So why don’t more of us do it?

by Lynnda Hills

Getting the couch potato off the couch is one of the goals of UVic’s new study on individual beliefs about physical activity. Everyone knows that physical activity is good for you. Among other things, it offsets depressive symptoms and raises self-esteem,” Rhodes says. “But we get a gap between this knowledge and people actually taking part in physical activity.”

The most common barriers to physical activity are time, energy and motivation. Rhodes hopes that findings from his study will help UVic partner with government agencies to develop a better health promotion campaign and influence infrastructure decisions.

The study looks at three major personal components: personality and attitudes, social support, and environment.

“It’s a large-scale assessment of how these factors interfere and differ in gender, age groups, and various geographical regions of B.C.,” Rhodes says. “Ultimately, it will provide information about whether certain areas are more conducive to physical activity, whether attitudes towards it are changing, and whether there are differences by demographics as well.”

Last month, Rhodes sent out 3,000 surveys to a random group of B.C. citizens asking about their habits and beliefs on walking and physical activity. A second, follow-up survey will soon be sent to the same people to evaluate their actual activity.

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Physical education grad student Carolyn McIntyre laces up. She works with Rhodes on the leisure time walking study.

UVic’s board of governors has a new member. Recently appointed to a three-year term is John Evans, an experienced real estate developer and the principal of Trilogy Properties Corp., headquartered in Vancouver. Evans has guided numerous major real estate projects in Canada and the U.S. over the past two decades. Trilogy, which Evans founded in 1991, is active in real estate development, acquisition and asset management in Vancouver, Whistler and the Fraser Valley. During its initial six years, Trilogy developments were valued at more than $250 million, including the Weslin Grand and OPUS hotels in downtown Vancouver and Whistler’s Marketplace. Evans holds a commerce degree from UBC.

There are also four re-appointments to the board. They are: lawyer Trudi Brown; business consultant Eric Donald; public relations consultant Gail Flinton; and businessman Murray Farmer. All four will serve until July 31, 2008. Donald is currently board chair and Brown is vice-chair.

Other board members are: business executive Peter Ciceri; cultural advocate Linda Jules; business executive Jane Peetsman; faculty members Tom Cleary (English) and Bill Pfaffenberger (math and statistics); staff member Jill Tate (physical education); and students Jonas Gafford and Michelle Kinney. Chancellor Ron Lou-Poy and President David Turpin are also ex-officio members.

Ciceri and Pfaffenberger will end their terms on June 30, and be replaced by recently acclaimed faculty members Peter Driesen (electrical and computer engineering/music) and Peter Liddell (Germanic and Russian studies). At the same time Tate will be replaced by newly elected staff representative Katherine Wilson (facilities management).

The 15-member board of governors is one of the two primary governing bodies of the university. It includes elected faculty, staff and students, and eight members appointed by the provincial government. Two of the government appointees (Donald and Ciceri) are nominated by the UVic Alumni Association.

The board is responsible for the management, administration and business affairs of the university. It administers university assets, approves the university budget framework, determines fees and student aid, and is responsible for faculty and staff appointments.

University communications plan enters construction phase

A draft of a strategic communications plan for UVic is beginning to take shape. The plan is based on the thoughts of faculty, students and staff. As a second, follow-up survey will soon be sent to the same people to evaluate their actual activity.

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In Memoriam

Paul Kling, violinist, professor emeritus and director of UVic’s school of music from 1980-86, died Jan. 2. Kling was born in Czechoslovakia in 1928. A child prodigy, he performed with the Vienna Symphony at the age of seven and was soon playing concerts throughout Austria and Czechoslovakia. At the age of 13 he was sent to the Terezin concentration camp where, thanks to the presence of many other Jewish artists and musicians, he continued to study and perform. In 1944, he was sent to Auschwitz. After the war he resumed a performing career and in 1952 became concert master of the NHK orchestra in Tokyo. In 1977 he joined UVIC. After retirement, Kling continued to teach in Vancouver and gave master classes in Europe.

Contributed by Michael Longton, professor emeritus and former chair of the school of music.

Distinguished Canadian oceanographer R.W. Stewart, died in Victoria on Jan. 19. Bob played a major role in the development of ocean sciences at UVic. He was the founding director from 1970-79 of the Institute of Ocean Sciences in Sidney. Later in his career, Bob was the first director (1987-93) of UVic’s centre for earth and ocean research. After his retirement in 1989, Bob continued to serve on graduate student committees, attend seminars, and have lunch with UVic friends and colleagues. He received an honorary degree from UVic in 1993. Bob is famous for his studies of turbulence, ocean waves, and air-sea interaction and is held in very high regard for his leadership in international projects and organizations. He’s a founding father of Canadian oceanography and will have a lasting influence.

Contributed by friend and colleague, Chris Garrett.

Indigenous plants continued from p.1

Thompson. “All students, aboriginal and non-aboriginal, need to know that modern science is not the only way to look at relationships with nature,” she says.

For First Nations students, seeing themselves and their people in school course work is vital,” she adds. The Hartley Bay school has now incorporated Thompson’s project into the curriculum.

“The project built a rapport and special bonding between our students and elders,” says elder and school principal Ernie Hill. “The elders were thrilled to be part of it, and are gratified to know that this knowledge is going to stay.”

For Thompson, one student in the project stands out in her mind.

“When we first started the project this student went to Old Town, where the old village used to be, and started talking to the chief and his wife about their plant, devil’s club.”

On another day, many months later, Thompson and her thesis supervisor, UVic ethnobotanist Nan- cey Turner, asked the student about devil’s club.

“He took us to where the plant grows and told us everything he knew—why it was important, and why he had to research things in a certain way because it was a medicine. He also explained the spiritual side of the plant,” says Thompson. “It was amazing to see that he knew so much. Just from him alone, I felt the plant project was a success.”

Cassels continued from p.1

200 extraordinarily talented new faculty members. We’re creating new programs of teaching and research of the highest quality. Our student body is increasingly diverse and engaged, and our national reputation has grown steadily. It’s a real honour to be part of this.”

Cassels joined UVic as a member of the faculty of law in 1981 and served as dean from 1999 to 2001. An accomplished scholar and teacher, he won the Canadian Association of Law Teachers Award for Academic Excellence for his research and teaching in 1999, and the prestigious national IM Teaching Fellowship for teaching excellence and educational leadership in 2002. He has also won the law faculty’s master teaching award twice (1996 and 1999) and the UVic Alumni Association’s Exellence in Teaching Award (1998).

Cassels holds a BA in law and philosophy from Carlton University, an LL.B (bachelor of law) from the University of Western Ontario and an LL.M (master of law) from Columbia University. His areas of teaching and research include contracts, legal theory, and remedies.

Other interests include environmental issues, law and society in India, and race and gender issues in the law of tort.

Cassels is the author of several books, including The Uncertain Promise: Lessons from Bhagavad Ram. The Law of Damages. His new book, The Law of Large Scale Claims: Product Liability, Mass Tort and Complex Litigation in Canada, will be published this month. He was named Queens Counsel in 2004 in recognition of his contributions to the legal profession.
Today, Brazil’s flourishing multimedia culture industry provides direct and indirect employment for thousands of people. There is greater concern for environmental protection and more emphasis on sustainable community development. And several Brazilian cities now hold community festivals based on shellfish culture.

The success of these programs, and the sweeping impact they’ve had at all levels of Brazil, society, earned Littlepage and UVic an Award of Excellence from CIDA in 2002.

The Craigdarroch Award for Research Communication goes to Dr. Reg Mitchell (chemistry). Whether he’s dazzling schoolchildren as his mad chemist alter-ego, “Dr. Zenk,” organizing the annual Vancouver Island Regional Science Fair, or talking on the radio about chemicals in everyday life, Mitchell is a born communicator.

Since joining UVic in 1972 Mitchell has dedicated himself to demystifying science, and chemistry in particular, for generations of university and high school students, try in particular, for generations of children as his mad chemist alter-ego, “Dr. Zenk,” organizing the annual Vancouver Island Regional Science Fair, or talking on the radio about chemicals in everyday life, Mitchell is a born communicator.

FAR LEFT: Mitchell at the Phoenix Theatre, where the third annual Sparks are flying at the Phoenix theatre students will be presented staged readings over the next several weeks. In That Elusive Spark, running March 8–19, Victoria playwright and UVic grad Janet Musiol and director Linda Moore explore the magnificence and fragility of the human brain. The play was inspired by the true story of New England construction foreman Phineas Gage, who, in 1848, survived a freak blasting accident that drove an iron spike through his skull. The incident changed the course of modern medicine and still serves as a reminder of the enduring and fascinating debate about how the mind works and what it means to be human.

Real life connections also influenced the production of Caryl Churchill’s powerful play, Fen, which opened the festival in February and runs until March 5. Director Yasmine Kandil, a master’s student, spent two summers teaching drama to street children and youth garbage collectors in her native Cairo. She sees parallels between the lives of the “garbage boys” and the women landworkers depicted in Churchill’s play. “We see the harshness of their lives but also their dreams, their courage and their day-to-day joys,” she says.

FIND 2005 will end with three evenings of staged play readings at the Phoenix on March 18, 19 and 20. Eight new plays written by students in the department of writing and directed and acted by theatre students will be presented in back-to-back fashion. Audience members can take in one, two or all eight plays in a single evening and enjoy a Phoenix-style coffee house in between readings.

For tickets and information, call the Phoenix box office at 721-8000 or visit www.phoenixtheatres.ca

Larry Yore (curriculum & instruction) has won the Outstanding Science Teacher of the Year Award from the Association of Education Teachers in Science. The international organization presents two annual awards and Yore won in the category recognizing individuals whose career has spanned at least 15 years. He was honoured for his work promoting the important role that language plays in science learning. Yore received a $1,000 award and a plaque at a ceremony last month in Colorado Springs. “I’ve never been much into awards, but this gave me a very nice feeling,” he says. “It’s the frosting on the cake.”

Three exceptional women were honoured with recognition awards during the UVic Women’s Network Conference on Feb. 16. The awards celebrate women who have made an extraordinary impact on the UVic community. Master’s history student Lisa Helps combines academic study with social justice advocacy and volunteerism.

Help’s research is on progressive historical and social theory. Anissa St. Pierre is the co-ordinator for women in computer science at UVic, and works to increase the enrolment and retention of women in the discipline. Barbara Whittington is a faculty member in the school of social work and co-ordinator of the UVic Family Centre. She advocates for the interests, perspectives and experiences of UVic women and students with families.

Health information science professor Denis Protti was awarded a 2004 “Who’s Who in Healthcare” Award from Canadian Healthcare Manager magazine. The annual awards honour individuals who have demonstrated leadership and innovation and who have made a difference in the delivery of health care in Canada. Protti was honoured in the health informatics category for being instrumental in improving the use and management of health information to improve health outcomes, efficiency and safety.

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The Ring March 2005 Page 5
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Wednesday, March 9
Orion Lecture 12:30 p.m. Wifing Suspensions of Dikieda's Yamatai Marie Kucheren, Uvic. Phoenix Blvd. 732-7993

Thursday, March 10
Centre for Global Studies Lecture 7:30 p.m. Barriers and Bridge: Addressing Women, Muslims, Mostro, Fay Blayney, Janet Wiegand, Jo-Anne Lee, Uvic. Fraser lounge 721-4789.


Continuing Studies Lecture 7:30 p.m. Urban Institute. Nan Ellin, Arizona State University. MacLaurin A144. 721-6129.

Spring 2005 Community Forum 7:30 p.m. Confronting Abuse: At Work and in the Home. Elder. Danielle Des Champlian and Jean Feyr, Victoria Women’s Transition House Society; Rosa Goldenstein, VHIA; Fraser Ass. Register 747-4747.

Friday, March 11

Music 12:30 p.m. Fridaysmic. School of music guitar students. MacLaurin B132. 732-7903.


Storytelling Symposium 7 p.m. Relfing the River of Story: a Storytelling Symposium. Fourteen authors and storytellers from Canada, U.S. and South Africa share their ideas. Sponsored by the dept. of writing. Continues March 5. Strong C102. 732-7903.

Saturday, March 5
Centre for Studies in Religion and Society Distinguished Speaker Lecture Series 2 p.m. An Islamic Perspective on Stem Cell Research and Therapeutics. Bashir Jiwani, Providence Health Care, Vancouver. Hickson 101. 266.05 747-4747.

Sunday, March 6
Music 2:30 p.m. Donors’ Concert. A special program in appreciation of those who support school of music scholarships and bursaries. MacLauring B125. 732-7903.

Tuesday, March 8


Wednesday, March 16
Lansdowne Lecture 7:30 p.m. Policies, People and a Transition to Hydrogen Energy. Dr. David Hart, Imperial College, England. MacLaurin A144. 721-6595.


Friday, March 18
Music 12:30 p.m. Fridaysmic. School of music percussion students. MacLaurin B125. 732-7903.

Tuesday, March 22
Community Health Promotion Research Seminar 12 p.m. Health Promotion in Action! Where and When? Find out about current health promotion research. Unit. House 3, room 102. 721-4602.

Studies in Policy and Practice Lecture 7 p.m. Expanding Women’s Rights through the International Criminal Court. Dr. Louise Chappelets, SFU and Univ. of Sydney, Australia. HSD A240. 383-7372.

Wednesday, March 23

Thursday, March 24
Lansdowne Lecture 3:30 p.m. Growth, Unemployment and Labour Market Policy. Dr. Dale Mortensen, Northwestern Univ. Hickson 110. 732-6107.


Thursday, March 31

Spring 2005 Ring Schedule
Calendar items should be sent by 6 p.m. on the copy deadline date shown below to Uvic Communications (Sedgewick C149, Fax 721-8955, e-mail ucom@uvic.ca) or entered into the online calendar (www.uvic.ca/events). For more information call 721-7636.

Sunday, April 10
Reading of the Dead. Strong C101.

Monday, April 11

Tuesday, April 12

Wednesday, April 13

Thursday, April 14

Friday, April 15

Saturday, April 16

Crazy Wisdom: Spirituality and Social Change Tuesday, March 8

Crazy Wisdom: Spirituality and Social Change Tuesday, March 8
Grants fund studies of privacy issues

by Lynda Hills

Two upcoming studies at UVic will investigate ways to protect privacy in an increasingly technologically advanced world. Through the Office of the Privacy Commissioner of Canada, Dr. Colin Bennett, a professor in social work, has received a grant of $27,990 to study the privacy implications of mobile technologies such as global positioning systems and location-based services.

"With the proliferation of hand-held devices, location-based services, cell phones, and personal digital assistants, it's now possible for organizations and employers to determine where you are at particular times of the day," says Bennett.

Mobile workers such as truck drivers, taxi drivers, courier services, 911 dispatchers, and even teenagers out in the field who carry cell phones can now be tracked by this emerging technology.

"Once the technology is in place, how is it used? Do law enforcement or marketing companies have access to the information?" asks Bennett. "Imagine the privacy implications arising from all of a sudden a message comes on your phone, 'Fancy a coffee?'

Bennett says that an emerging area of concern is online privacy. When you enter in your credit card number on a website, you possibly haven't thought of it, but then leads to more serious issues. "Age is not necessarily bad ones. "Age is a growing issue."

In a 2003 study called Older and Wiser Driver, 93 seniors self-assessed their driving skills, then participated in an information session about on-road safety and the use of alternative transportations. The study indicated a concern about health in relation to driving, and raised issues about medical symptoms, such as pain in the legs and feet.

One study gives us some information, but then leads to more questions," says Tuokko, who last summer conducted another survey of 200 drivers between the ages of 65 and 80. They were asked questions about their medical condition, activity levels, and attitudes toward driving.

"The questions were focused on which areas of driving people found difficult, such as pressing the brake pedal, turning the wheel, or getting out of the car. Preliminary results suggest that many problems are related to lower-body movement," says Tuokko.

"A fitness program designed to improve strength, endurance and flexibility in these problem areas may improve in-car performance," says Tuokko, who is working with Dr. Ryan Rhodes, a UVic exercise psychologist.

"Tuokko is less interested in identifying poor drivers than in helping seniors drive safely or use alternate modes of transportation. She's using her research to develop educational material and information sessions that deal with issues of fitness, driver safety and other transportation options such as buses and volunteer drivers.

"We're focusing on the enhancement of older drivers," said Tuokko. "But I've always felt that it's mobility we're dealing with. It's about keeping people moving."

Mainly, Tuokko hopes her work will lead to increased safety for seniors who drive, and an awareness that older drivers are not necessarily bad ones. "Age is equated with poor driving but I don't believe that's appropriate," she says. "I want the emphasis on driver age to be eliminated, and the focus to be on safety."