New York School of Philanthropy, Class of 1910—Established in 1888 as the First Summer School in Philanthropy by the Charity Organization Society, the school began offering full-time graduate courses and eventually became affiliated with Columbia University. The school underwent three name changes: New York School of Philanthropy (1904), New York School of Social Work (1917), and Columbia University School of Social Work (1963). Originally located at 105 East 22nd Street (1909), the school moved to 122 East 22nd Street (1931), the Carnegie Mansion at 2 East 91st Street (1940), and McCullar Hall at 222 West 13th Street (1971). A new building is under construction at 1255 Amsterdam Avenue between 121st Street and Morningside Drive, slated for use in fall 2004.

A Glimpse of Columbia History . . .

New Web Site Links Columbians with Services Across Campus

BY JASON HOLLANDER

Need 1,000 color copies made and don’t know where to turn? Wondering how to reserve a space in Lerner for your next office party? Tired of struggling with the broken desk drawer you can never get open? There is a new Web site that can steer Columbians towards a solution to nearly every office problem. Since its inception last summer, the site, Getting Things Done (http://www.ais. columbia.edu/svg/index), has been providing Columbia employees with a central location to find information on many services offered by the University. Faculty and staff are certainly responding; the site has received almost 600,000 hits already, now averaging more than 4,000 per day.

“I’ve been at Columbia since 1969, and even so, I am learning things from this Web site,” said Lalla R. Grimes, administrative coordinator for the Department of Physics.

Getting Things Done provides a repository for thousands of services available through various Columbia departments. With more than 60 service categories to choose from—including “Elevators and Escalators,” “Carpentry Services,” and “Catering, Dining and Special Events”—the site is a welcome response to a longtime concern. Victoria Prince, deputy vice president for Administration and Vice President for Administration, notes that for years it has been repeated among faculty, administrators and staff on campus that “it’s tough to get things done” at Columbia. Thus, a task force was formed by a working group of the University Planning and Budgeting Committee, whose members set out to finally address the problem.

A team of representatives from each department was assembled with the assistance of the Office of the Executive Vice President for Administration. This group developed a detailed list of services from all departments along with descriptions of each for the site, complete with methods of obtaining estimates and, in some cases, order forms that can be filled out directly online. The site also provides contact information for those managing each service, as well as brief descriptions of the service departments involved.

Michael van Biema, who helped coordinate the effort out of the Office of then-Executive Vice President for Administration Emily Lloyd, called the site a sort of “buyer’s guide” for Columbia administrators and faculty, an effort to “be transparent about services offered, how to obtain them, and what they cost.” He noted that a group of departmental administrators from a wide range of schools reviewed and tested the site during development, and that the site’s original “soft launch” last year was designed to generate user feedback that might be used for improvements.

Several changes were made in response to this feedback, including establishment of a link to the site from the University search page; upgrading the site’s search engine; placement of a button at the top of each page providing access to on-line forms, and the addition of several services. The positive response and the steady growth in volume indicate that most people seem to find the system useful. But van Biema insists that user feedback will continue to be used to improve the site’s utility to the community.

“Regular use and feedback will challenge us to keep the site up to date,” said van Biema. By using the site’s feedback button, users can automatically send a note to an administrator in order to seek answers to questions or additional information. The feature represents the attention to customer service the site was designed to provide.

“I think [the site] is going to become more and more useful to administrators on campus and more and more useful in everyday life,” said Prince, adding, “If this is a big success, it’s because we were able to gather the right people at the right time.”