Children from the Manhattanville Neighborhood Center, at 514 West 126th St., were thrilled to receive a visit from a toy-laden Santa on Dec. 22, 1953. The center, which provided space for child care and local clubs and classes, was cooperatively run by Columbia and other community groups.

Columbia Launches New Homepage

By Kristin Styrling

Columbia launched a newly designed Web homepage on Monday with improved information architecture and design, making it easier to navigate the site and to obtain information much more efficiently.

“The new homepage and the first-level pages beneath it will now have an energetic and contemporary look reflecting more accurately the University’s culture,” said Frank Wolf, dean of the School of Continuing Education and chair of the Web Advisory Committee. “In addition, the consistent navigation and style of the main pages will facilitate far more coherent access to the many resources of the University.”

The redesign was created using input from the Web Advisory Committee, administrators, faculty, staff and students. Groundwork began during the summer when Columbia University’s Digital Knowledge Ventures (DKV), the organization that developed the award-winning Columbia Interactive e-learning site, analyzed other universities’ sites to ensure that Columbia’s new homepage would reflect the best practices in higher education. DKV also solicited input on the various designs under consideration from student and faculty groups.

The result is a more coherent architecture and consistent navigation system, fewer and more targeted links, a clearer visual identity and a consistent look and feel for most of the top-level pages.

“The new homepage is now organized around a select number of resources and user groups to better serve the Columbia community,” said Todd Hardy, executive director of DKV. “In addition to providing a friendlier, more efficient communications channel, the flexible design of the new homepage also helps to celebrate Columbia’s active role in both the daily life of the city of New York and the evolution of worldwide affairs.”

User input and recommendations were a key component of the redesign strategy. Representatives from 24 groups across campus have been involved, including: ACE, Student Services, University Development and Alumni Relations (UDAR), the executive committee of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences, University Senate Committee on Online Learning and Digital Media, as well as representatives from Columbia College, the Fu Foundation School of Engineering and Applied Science, General Studies student council, and the Graduate Student Advisory Council.

The redesign is part of an ongoing process. In the coming months DKV will continue to work on improvements throughout the site.

Legislative Update

Student Aid Briefing in Congress

By Ellen S. Smith

On Dec. 5, Columbia’s Office of Government Affairs organized a New York delegation Congressional staff briefing in Washington, D.C., to detail what is at stake for New York institutions in the Higher Education Reauthorization Act. Nicholas Mousotakis, government relations associate, worked with representatives from Cornell University, Pace University, New York University, Stony Brook University, Syracuse University and Pace University, and despite the inclement weather, more than half of the delegation attended along with key staff from committees of jurisdiction. The briefing is the second in a series on higher education reauthorization provided by New York universities.

Ellen Smith served as the moderator and reviewed what was at stake for all New York institutions in the Pell Grant program, the campus-based programs and student loan programs. Chris Simmons, assistant director of government relations at the American Council on Education (ACE) and a previous member of the National Commission on the Costs of Higher Education, described the state of play for the Higher Education Reauthorization Act and some of the priorities of ACE.

Barbara Hall, associate provost for admissions and financial aid at NYU, gave an overview of financial aid and distributed a glossary of terms. Paul Streeten, senior project director in the Division of Planning and Budget at Cornell, described the impact of changes on major universities and detailed a cut-costing initiative that Cornell has taken to address these issues.

For Columbia, the Higher Education Reauthorization Act is very important. Columbia has more than 1,000 students receiving a total of $2.66 million in Pell grants; close to 1,500 students receiving Supplemental Educational Opportunity Grants, totaling $1.12 million; more than 4,700 students receiving Federal Work Study funds ($6.2 million); and 5,307 students receiving Perkins Loans ($801,000). In addition to these programs, students and families receive $139 million in federally guaranteed subsidized, unsubsidized and PLUS loans.

Also covered in the briefing was the impact of changes in the Pell Grant program and the American Council on Education (ACE) and a previous member of the National Commission on the Costs of Higher Education, described the state of play for the