

The Hamilton Spectator

Pubdate: October 14, 2005

Section: Business

Edition: MET

Click tricks: Mac students holding symposium on 'e-retailing'

Byline/Source: Lisa Grace Marr The Hamilton Spectator

lmarr@thespec.com

Some university students take up lacrosse, or chugging, or chess.

Students who are members of the DeGroot Marketing Association (DMA) take up advertising, sales, or this year for a change, retail.

This Tuesday the student-run organization will be staging its annual MARS Forum -- entitled Retail: New Myths, New Mantras.

MARS is an acronym for Marketing, Advertising, Retail and Sales. Each year the student group hosts a symposium around one of those topics. This year includes a mid-day career fair, an "e-retailing" symposium co-hosted by the University of Alberta which runs from 8:15 a.m. to 4 p.m., and three company workshops which run from 9:15 a.m. to 12:30 p.m.

The evening event starts with a dinner at 5:30 and includes keynote speeches by retail consultants and authors John Torella, of the J.C. Williams Group in Toronto and **Kevin Graff**, president of the Oakville-based Graff Retail Group.

David Sherrard, MARS Forum Chair, said about 200 students will attend, along with about 100 to 150 industry representatives.

Mandeep Malik, a faculty advisor, said it's a way for the students to learn about retailing and for local small businesses to attend an invaluable seminar.

"John Torella and **Kevin Graff** are big time consultants ... (large retail) organizations pay them tens of thousands of dollars to get their advice. For the small time retailer who cannot access these consultants ... they can get an idea about what makes market leaders so successful."

"Our students can learn the science behind retailing ... the science of eye-level displays, the science of merchandising."

Malik said most local retailers have "poor to minimal" awareness of the many resources the DeGroot School has for them.

Malik said local retailers can find ways to differentiate themselves from competitors, recruit staff or embark on market research projects.

For example, Chris Marrone, a student and vice-president of DMA's communications and media said every year as many as 500 third-year marketing students are hunting for small- to medium-sized businesses for projects. Marrone is currently working with a team at a local golf course to see how it can expand its business.

"It's a lot of fun to roll up your sleeves and get your hands into it You feel pride in helping a small business."

On the web: <http://mars.mcmaster.ca/home.html> or <http://merc.mcmaster.ca/symposium/eRetailing2005.html>.