

by harley jebens

american-statesman staff

Dewey Winburne is a busy guy. As director of research and development at the American Institute for Learning, an Austin alternative learning center that focuses its attention on public school dropouts and adults lacking basic skills, he oversees the institute's multimedia training studio and helped put together a series of award-winning interactive laser-disc programs on substance abuse and recovery. *Addiction and its Processes* and *LifeMoves: The Process of Recovery* were deemed the Best of Show at the 1994 International New Media/Invision competition.

Winburne also is spearheading the South By Southwest Multimedia Conference, running Tuesday through March 16 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel. "Multimedia" is a catch phrase referring to the convergence of the world of computers with those of filmmaking, music and animation. Last year, the multimedia presence at the SXSW Film Festival was limited to a series of panels and a few exhibits. This year, it's a whole

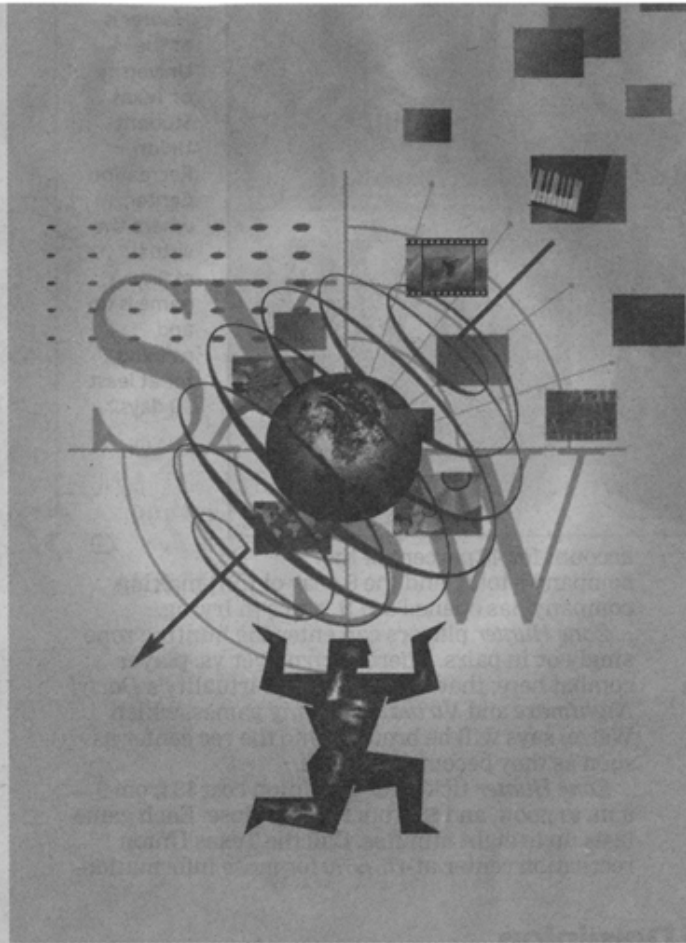
ballgame unto itself, complete with a keynote presentation, panels, workshops and a closing party.

Winburne sat down on a recent afternoon and, amid near constant phone calls, a request to round up a surplus computer for one of the institute's clients and a chat

session with one of his former students, talked about how the conference came together.

"I was a member of the International Interactive Communications Society here in Austin, and we had formed a subcommittee to investigate ways to raise state and national awareness of the pool of talented people doing multimedia work in the city," he explained. "We thought, 'What can we do? We're a nonprofit organization, so we don't have much money. We already have our monthly meetings. What's the next step?'"

The next step turned out to be a confer-



Dewey Winburne, above, director of research and development at the American Institute for Learning, heads up the South By Southwest Multimedia Conference, running Tuesday through March 16 at the Hyatt Regency Hotel.

ence, a festival of Austin's multimedia talent. Meetings with SXSW's Roland Swenson and Louis Black led to multimedia being included in last year's inaugural SXSW Film Festival. That track proved popular enough — and the field of multimedia has grown quickly enough — to warrant its own event.

"I'm hoping for 500 to 700 registrants this year," Winburne said. As of Friday morning, 370 registrants had signed up for the conference, and Winburne said that registrations were coming in at the rate of about 25 a day.

Those registrants will participate in a number of activities that should showcase the fact that Austin has a multimedia force with which to be reckoned.

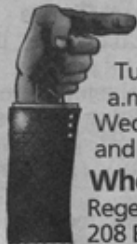
Things kick off on Tuesday with an open house, a

self-guided tour for conference registrants of local multimedia production facilities, among them design firm Virtual Studio and multimedia developer Human Code.

City Council members are set to join Winburne on a tour of some of these facilities. "I'm going to take them around to each of these facilities and introduce the city to its multimedia community," Winburne said.

Things kick into high gear on Wednesday, when the conference panels begin. Science fiction author Bruce Sterling and others will

SXSW Multimedia Festival



When:
7 p.m.
Tuesday; 9
a.m. to 5 p.m.
Wednesday
and March 16

Where: Hyatt
Regency Hotel,
208 Barton
Springs Road

How much: \$150
walk-up registration

Information:
467-7979

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Opening Communications

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discuss writing for multimedia. Representatives from local companies Go-Go Studio, Lion Entertainment, Starjammer Studios and Origin will speak on multimedia games development.

The New York Times' Peter Lewis speaks on "living in cyberspace."

Running through March 16, panel discussions will cover virtual reality, making multimedia music, educational applications, business issues such as marketing opportunities and securing finances, the Internet, CD-ROM mastering and other issues.

Wednesday evening, Origin founder Richard Garriott and musician and multimedia pioneer Todd Rundgren will address conference attendees, a speech that will be simulcast to the New Media Festival in progress in Los Angeles and to a multimedia festival in Paris.

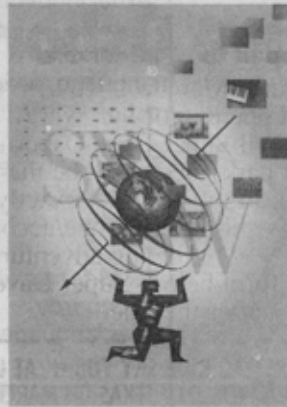
Events from the New Media Festival will be simulcast back to the Hyatt in Austin as well.

Developers will display their latest products and technological advances in the "Multimedia Playroom," set up Wednesday and March 16 at the Hyatt.

A concert benefiting the American Institute of Learning with performances from the Jayhawks, Lucinda Williams, Doyle Bramhall and others closes out the multimedia conference on March 16, just in time for the SXSW Music Festival to kick into full gear.

Winburne's goals for this year's

conference are simple. "I hope to see people having a good time. I hope to see sparks happening between people. I hope to highlight the fact that we are an international presence. We



are *the* unrecognized multimedia gulch of the country. People here can go head to head with anyone, in San Francisco or anywhere," Winburne

said. "Chipp Walters (and Austin's Human Code) have racked up as many awards as anyone out there.

"Multimedia is a hybrid ground where two cultures, business and the arts, meet," Winburne said. "The business people see how to make money at this, and the arts people see an opportunity to make a living and get their message out there. It's interesting sociologically how these two cultures need each other."

The synthesis of the business and art of multimedia will doubtless be a prime topic of conference conversation.