

TECHNOLOGY TRANSFER: ANOTHER MATCHMAKER SETS UP SHOP

BY STACEY HIGGINBOTHAM

It's no secret that connecting university technology with a company that could use it is a complex process, and there's no shortage of organizations trying to simplify the task. There are for-profit research aggregators such as Yet2.com, and nonprofits including the Massachusetts Technology Transfer Center and the University of California at San Diego's Connect that aim to catalyze technology transfer for the greater good of their communities.

This hasn't deterred the nonprofit Kauffman Innovation Network, funded by the Ewing Marion Kauffman Foundation, from jumping in with an effort of its own. The iBridge Network, launched in January, hopes to distinguish itself from the crowd with its easy-to-navigate Web site (ibridgenetwork.org), rewriting service and a nifty e-commerce feature that allows for collection of licensing fees and other transactions to be managed on the site. But its biggest contribution may well be its mission to become a clearinghouse for best practices in tech transfer.

There are more than 700 technologies available for license on the iBridge Network from seven universities. That's just a fraction of those listed on the commercial site Yet2.com, which has almost 5,000. But Laura Dorival Paglione, director of the Kauffman Innovation Network, believes the iBridge Network's nonprofit status may make it a more attractive option for universities.

"While there are lots of networks in this area, we didn't see any gaining huge traction," says Paglione. "They acted as a for-profit with self-interest and we hope that acting as a nonprofit might help move technology because universities might be more comfortable joining us."

click on the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and you'll find three drug-delivery related technologies available for license. When a match is made, the iBridge Network can help close the deal by facilitating some transactions using the e-commerce feature.

Technology for sale A sampling of the university technology available at iBridge

University	Technology	Potential licensees
University of Arizona	Video imaging technology that uses two cameras to increase picture quality while requiring less bandwidth	Video software such as Microsoft Corp. and entertainment companies like Sony Corp.
University of Chicago	A technology that maximizes the amount of information traveling over millimeter or microwave spectrum	Satellite companies like Intelsat Ltd. or military communications companies like Loral Space Communications or Northrop Grumman Corp.
University of North Carolina Chapel Hill	Semiconductor manufacturing technology that uses carbon dioxide to make immersion lithography more effective	Semiconductor companies and equipment makers such as Tokyo Electron Ltd. or Applied Materials Inc.
Washington University	Wrinkle-free mice that have a mutation in a fatty acid transport protein that is involved in fatty acid uptake	Pharmaceutical companies with anti-aging drugs and cosmetics companies with anti-aging products
Cornell University	Small molecule compounds that can target a cancerous tumor more effectively than current large molecules	Pharmaceutical and biotech companies targeting cancer therapies

Source: Corporate Dealmaker

Universities can list technologies on the site for \$7 to \$25 per technology, which includes rewriting services to turn complex research into a readable listing, and information is organized so that visitors can quickly narrow their search. For instance, click on the drug delivery category on the homepage and you'll get 62 relevant technologies. Click the cancer tag and you'll find 14 cancer-specific drug-delivery technologies. Or

These online management tools certainly offer more to fledgling university tech transfer offices than to sophisticated industry R&D shops. "I might use [the iBridge Network] as a first-pass clearinghouse ... but I believe that the Web site would not eliminate the need for one to go to the university for appropriate due diligence," says Eric Lee, senior manager of the U.S. Technology Development Center with chipmaker

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Tokyo Electron Ltd.

Still, Lee's associate Kevin Lally, a strategic technology accounts manager at Tokyo Electron, says the iBridge Network's easy-to-navigate database may be of use to corporate venture groups who want to vet a startup's technology by looking for similar or complementary research.

The Kauffman Innovation Network

has been fine-tuning the iBridge Network over the past two years with guidance from its charter members, including the University of Arizona, Cornell University, the University of Chicago, Washington University in St. Louis, the Wisconsin Alumni Research Foundation and the University of Kansas.

As more universities sign on, Paglione hopes the iBridge Network's nonprofit

status will make universities comfortable sharing best practices and coming to the iBridge Network for help in setting up and managing licensing programs that result in efficient and profitable tech transfer. If it's successful, that's one feature that will benefit both corporations seeking innovation and universities looking to spin it out.



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