

Graduation Speech

By Kevin Lim & Igor Pesenson

UC Berkeley School of Information Commencement Ceremony

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Intro - (1 min)

Hi I'm Igor and this is Kevin.

Igor: First of all a big thank you all of you for joining us here today. Thanks to the faculty and staff, who did such a fabulous job of organizing the Thursday presentations and today's ceremony. And welcome to our families and friends.

Kevin: To our classmates, we are honored that you asked us to speak. We're going to give you some fun, and some noise. And then later, we can all beat each other senseless trying to make that distinction.

When we all met - Kevin (2 min)

Kevin: Geez, it really has been two years. What did we all look like coming in? Well one of us really looks like the founder of Google, see if you can spot him. But our class has a NASA engineer, a few DJs, Designers, architects, spear-

fishers, museum coordinators, librarians, an NSA operative, classics scholars. We also had engineers, ethnographers, mathematicians, cognitive scientists, oh yeah, and a professional snake sexer. We came from China, Italy, Russia, Germany, Thailand, India, and ... did someone say Topeka, Kansas?!

What does this (becoming MASTER OF INFORMATION) mean? (10 min total)

Igor: And now we're all masters of information! But what does that mean... to be a Master of Information?

Kevin Well, Igor you've seen the Matrix? I just assumed that being a master of information would mean that I'd see the world for what it is, a bunch of green ones and zeroes. And I'd be able to stop bullets... with information. Because I learned that even a bullet can be expressed as an XML document. But seriously, what ties us all together... maybe it's... we all really like the internet?

Realize: Igor: no wait, we can't answer that question for all, we will answer that question for OURSELVES.

- *MODULE 1: Curriculum (2 min) - Igor*

To be a Master of Information is to have taken a whole lot of classes. Not just any classes like spider biology or swimming or introduction to acting or the like. You need to have taken serious information classes. How do you know you're taking a serious information class? There are a number of give-aways. You know you're in the right class if your professor does a little dance every time she tells a particularly entertaining copyright story, especially one involving chicken costumes. Another test is whether the class requires blogging to reflect on door closers — are they highly moral and social actors or not? Master of Information classes take bland subjects like, you know, information and make them exciting by introducing terminology like "the document spectrum." Master of Information classes are ambitious. During our time here a number of us have figured out the future of storytelling. Natural language processing? Mastered. The problem of search? Mastered. User interfaces? We learned all about 'those people out there' that can't design their way out of a paper bag. Serious Master of Information classes are cheaper and wiler than regular classes. How do you think we took all those MOT classes? We took business school classes, did not pay business school tuition and made fun of business students at the same time! Now sure the folks over at the engineering department make some pretty cool stuff. But if not us, who is going to design the next generation talking and flashing potty? Do you think their class would allow you to design a gigantic vibrating wooden stick that detects Wi-Fi? And finally any serious master of information class does not allow people in who can't check email and take notes at the same time.

- *MODULE 2: The space we shared* (2 min): Kevin

To me, being a Master of Information means I have been forged in the oldest little building in the entire UC system. South Hall! As much as I'd LIKE to believe the rumors that Mary Poppins was filmed here at South, I can't, as a licensed master of information, let you believe those lies... But look around you, behold these new Masters of Information, dressed in their floppy new wizard costumes. We, like Harry Potter, lived under the stairs during these formative years. Ah, that basement that we like to call... THE LOUNGE. There were many days where I would just sit in our smelly old couch and wait for the excitement to come to me! And it often did; the lounge was a launchpad for social gatherings and cool projects. Because we sorta lived together, we had to endure a few crises, like that time incident of the spilled milk. Which quickly became spoiled milk. Then thanks to a generous donor, and a team of hard working people, we redid the lounge! Goodbye smelly couch, helloooo \$700 office chairs. In the lounge, we filled our cupboards with cup o noodles, trail mix and energy drinks, so, eat your chubby little heart out, Google. Our parental snack team took care of us. South Hall is one of the most beautiful buildings on campus, a great place to host guests, like the ones who are here today. South Hall is a home to creativity was a place where we spent late nights hacking, built cool hardware gaming devices, researching papers... Sometimes as we'd work we'd overhear the undergrad tour guides walk by, proclaiming us, THE MINISTRY OF

INFORMATION... That aside, I wouldn't be a Master of Information, if it weren't for the beautiful, South Hall home of the littlest bear and "GRRRRRRR! Information".

- *MODULE 3: The rituals* (2 min) - Igor

To be a Master of Information is to partake in honored traditions and rituals and, of course, analyze them. Take Wednesday Tea and Cookies for example. It takes a budding Master of Information to analyze the pattern of when and if they actually happened. If you got it right, you got cookies — we're into incentivized learning here. Thirsty Thursday: now there's a deceptively simple pattern. If it's Thursday you go to a bar. As a Master of Information you have only two years to partake and try to distill the informational value of the ritual. Let me tell you, that's not enough time. Then there's the star event — the Distinguished Lecture Series. We invite the most hip and smart people here to talk and then allow outsiders to come in and think about how cool we are for having such connections. True Masters of Information, however, all know that the speaker is actually a decoy set out for the outsiders. While they get autographs we go straight for the breaded portabella mushrooms and garlic dip from the Information caterers — Rick and Anne's. To be a Master of Information is to lose all softball games and remain morally undefeated. It is to sit in room 202 with Kevin plugged into his laptop and to have Chris walk in behind you an hour late.

- *MODULE 4: People: (2 min) Kevin*

To be a Master of Information means having a link to a rich peer-to-peer network, of top-notch human beings. On our blog, and boy howdy do we ever blog, we had a fascinating discussion about whether the internet would survive without any humans around. "Tree falls in the forest" for internet nerds. But for us, the network is foremost about our fellow humans: our classmates, our study participants, and two years later, our good friends. And this program allowed me to meet people from worlds that I never would have known. At first, it was humbling, because our diversity pointed out all the things I just didn't know. Before coming here, I'd never witnessed a beautiful opalescent sea slug, I didn't know how to safely handle a softball bat, and I didn't speak a word of Telegu. I wanted to know everything, but soon I realized that my personal desire to fill myself with raw information was a fool's errand. Instead I found that the aggregate of our relationships formed this amazing generator of energy and wisdom, where we pooled funny videos, dating advice, engineering know-how, exam notes, and secret dance moves. No question was left unanswered. And we surprised each other! The DJ and the a capella singer? Changed the way I think about intellectual property policy in the realm of music. Those crazy Google interns? Met up in Taiwan and ate at a toilet-themed restaurant. The NSA operative? She finagled a parking spot that even the Nobel Laureates would envy. Our resident Jazz Singer, she's also a code ninja. And the builder our arcade machine? He made complex security economics seem real, and down to

earth.

So, to Nate, Kate, Jimmy, Matt, EunKyoung, Ethan, Matt, Neal, Zach, Hannes, Karen, Bindiya, Jess, Lawan, Jill, Yiming, Kesava, Andrew, Johnson, Elisa, Alana, Srini, Daniela, Megha, Evynn, Bryan, Ken-ichi, Chris, Bernt, John, Jerry and... of course Igor, I'm grateful for having met you, and definitely am a richer person for having learned from you.

Onwards - Igor (2 min)

So here we are, Masters of Information. Most of us will not wear our superhero capes past today but with a title like that... Well, it leaves us no choice — we're off to take over the world. We all have different plans of attack. Some are going back to our previous jobs better paid and re-energized. Others are trying completely new and exciting directions — some paid some with... well — options. Some of us will begin with infiltrating the youth hostels of South America while others are off to... That's right!... that first job ever. And then there are those who will spend another 3, 4, (7?) years planning their assault on the world some day as Doctors of Information.

You — the faculty, the staff, fellow students — have made these two years a warm, inspiring, fun and yes, a great place to learn. As we go on to master the world's information one bit at a time, we will never forget the friends and memories we made at the I School.