Tuesday Talks

PRESENTS

Dr. Thomas Burl

Computer Science Department

Speaking on

“Encoding Pedagogy in Database Design: Lessons from the Oliver Einstein Engine”

It is a well-established fact that databases are, on the whole, profoundly uninteresting. They sit in their servers, quietly holding numbers in neat little rows, asking nothing of the universe. They are, in the most fundamental sense, inert.

Which is what makes it so deeply irritating when they turn out to matter.

The Oliver Einstein Engine generates dynamic mathematics questions — swapping numbers into word problem templates so no two students get the same test. The trouble began when someone asked, "What does this field actually *do*?"

The field — misleadingly called "Multiplier" — was scheduled for deletion. It was saved by the discovery that it was quietly controlling whether students understood area formulas or wept over two-digit multiplication. It was renamed, promoted, and allowed to remain.

This was only the first of many uncomfortable revelations.

The lesson: your database schema is not plumbing. It is *philosophy*.

LIGHT REFRESHMENTS TO BE SERVED

Tuesday, April 28, 2026

5pm-6:30pm

Angell College Center

Alumni Conference Room

OPEN TO ALL

FREE OF CHARGE