

2009

Inquiro 3 (Front Matter)

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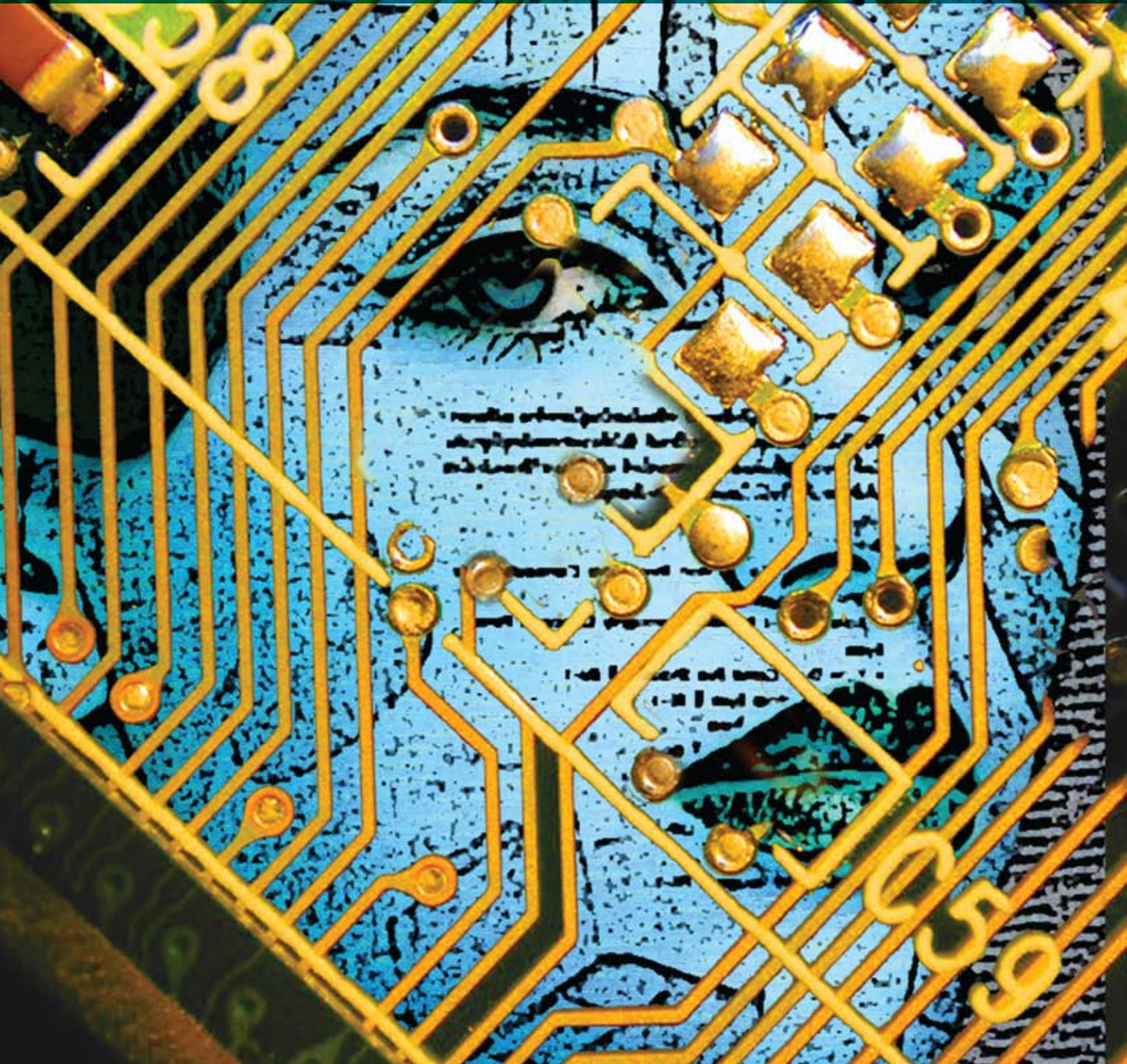
Staff, Inquiro (2009) "Inquiro 3 (Front Matter)," *Inquiro, the UAB undergraduate science research journal*:
Vol. 2009: No. 3, Article 4.

Available at: <https://digitalcommons.library.uab.edu/inquiro/vol2009/iss3/4>


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inquire

Volume 3 • 2009



THE UNIVERSITY OF ALABAMA AT BIRMINGHAM

The background of the entire page is an abstract, artistic photograph of ink splashing into water. The ink is dark, almost black, and forms intricate, swirling patterns. The water is a mix of warm colors, including shades of orange, yellow, and light pink, creating a soft, ethereal atmosphere. The ink trails are thin and delicate, with some larger, more dense clusters.

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inquireo

Volume 3 • 2009

Founded and staffed by undergraduate students at the University of Alabama at Birmingham, *Inquireo* is an annual research journal produced as an outlet for the publication of undergraduate scientific research. UAB is an excellent undergraduate research university, and with the addition of a journal such as *Inquireo* in which to publish their findings, the package is complete. Any undergraduate student at UAB, as well as any student participating in a summer program at the university, is eligible to submit research. The rights to every paper published in *Inquireo* are retained by the author, leaving each individual free to submit to and publish in a larger national journal or magazine. Students are invited to submit research papers, short reports derived from posters or research narratives throughout the year.

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from the editors

Inquire: to search; to know. Curiosity about the natural world has been a defining trait of our species since the beginning of time. Ancient civilizations all over the world developed methods to harness the power of nature and to explain the mysteries of the universe. The human spirit of discovery has survived millennia and flourishes now more than ever before. As we uncover the secrets of the human genome, the laws of modern physics, and the delicate balance of our environment, we embark on unprecedented journeys into the unknown. Furthermore, it is a journey which allows us to escape national borders, age differences, and even language barriers. This journey is for all humanity.

This journey of inquiry is like gravity: its potency pulls us in to discover the answers of the unknown. Because of the atmosphere at the University of Alabama at Birmingham (UAB) and its dedication to scientific research, many students have been enticed by the world of research, like Andrew and I. However, we don't just stop there; we don't just stop at finding solutions. We want to share our findings, our passion, with our peers. Why do research if you don't share it with others to allow for further discoveries and improvements? *Inquire* is our solution.

The first issue of *Inquire* was published in 2007 when Andrew and I were in our first year in college. We realized quickly what an impressive journal it was because it solely involved undergraduates as contributors and editors. Our first step was to join the 2008 *Inquire* editorial board. As staff writers our sophomore year, we were deeply involved in the process of editing and reviewing submissions, writing articles, or conducting interviews. This was not our first time being part of a publication committee: in high school, Andrew was involved his school's yearbook and I was involved in my school's literary magazine. Despite our prior experience that rooted our joy for producing publications, working on *Inquire* was perhaps more satisfying and exhilarating because of its relatedness to scientific curiosity, being a part of a process that displayed our peers' hard work to the community.

After a successful second issue of *Inquire*, we wanted to remain a part of the editorial board. Our growing passion for the journal and constant need to seek the next tier of challenges motivated us to apply for the Chief Editor positions. Receiving this position, we were overwhelmed with excitement to play an integral part in the publication of the journal. We had ambitions of making the journal bigger and more diverse, a feat we like to think we have accomplished.

Inquire, now in its third issue, has exceeded all of the expectations set by the inaugural issue. This journal is admired and supported by all students, faculty, and administration. UAB, more than any other institution in the state, encourages students to participate in research, and students are certainly responding. This year, not only did we have more involvement and submissions than previous years, but we had more diversity in submissions as well. For instance, in this issue, we have published papers on neuroscience, we have more research narratives outside of the editorial board, and we have

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accepted our first computer science paper. With more high-quality submissions also came more competition for acceptance. The success of *Inquire* is a testament to the unique atmosphere at UAB that encourages undergraduate students to participate in research.

Because UAB is research-oriented, *Inquire* was established from the need of an outlet through which UAB undergraduates can display their ground-breaking research. Every year, students have the opportunity to work in research labs, whether it is through summer programs, departmental honors, or independent studies. Although many university departments hold research symposiums throughout the year, such as the annual UAB Expo held in April, it is rare for students to have the opportunity to display their work before peers and faculty from other disciplines, as well as to the university community as a whole. These symposiums provide undergraduates ample opportunity to perfect their presenting skills; however, *Inquire* allows undergraduates to polish their scientific-writing skills. While undergraduates may work in labs for a few semesters or a summer, it is unusual for students to publish their work in internationally peer-reviewed journals, simply due to time constraints.

This third issue of *Inquire* helps to embody the unyielding legacy of the University of Alabama at Birmingham. This journal gives students the opportunity to partake in the scientific process and prepare their research for publication. Each paper is reviewed by at least one or two faculty members, so that students get a feel for submission and revision processes, preparing students for the graduate and professional world. The concept of the undergraduate journal has previously been embraced by other universities such as Harvard, Columbia, and Yale. With the continued success of *Inquire*, UAB students now have the opportunity of ascending to the undergraduate publishing ranks with the best and brightest students in the nation. Please join us as we blaze the trail for the future of undergraduate research at the University of Alabama at Birmingham!

—Andrew Buie and Shweta Patel
Chief Editors