

EDITORIAL

Going tray-less and 'green' an adjustment

At issue:

The road to sustainability is a long and winding one.

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As many readers know, the new dining hall at Pennsylvania Avenue Residence Halls opened at the beginning of the year. Called "Penn Station," it boasts spiffy new architecture and new a la carte format where different serving islands host a variety of food options.

It also has no trays.

No, not a misprint. The trays that everyone who ever lived in University housing has become accustomed to aren't there. A sign on the entrance way explains, "In the interest of sustainability, PAR is a TRAY-LESS facility."

No doubt this change has made using Penn Station somewhat inconvenient to students, especial-

ly those who use trays. But if we believe the hype, going tray-less will help the environment and cut down on operating costs, both which of course, benefit everyone.

But is it really worth it? We won't really know until housing analyzes its 'experiment.' In the meantime though, it's hard to get really excited about something like going tray-less, especially considering the moderate hassle dining without them poses.

We know that making this University a green one will be a painfully slow process and that in the end, it will be a testament to innovation and institutional responsibility. But for now we're

left wondering.

Why is it so hard to find a recycling bin on Quad Day? It would be a logical thing to have considering that thousands of students end up with dozens of pieces of paper that they'll never read. But the event that presents one of the biggest opportunities of the year for responsible disposal passes normally.

And it wouldn't take a lot of funding, even for temporary recycling bins to be brought in just for the day. But then again, if a school like Grand Valley State University in Michigan (roughly 25,000 students) can save about \$80,000, surely the University can top that.

Some of those savings could

be re-invested in sustainability projects around campus such as replacing lights with energy efficient bulbs and "green" University vehicles.

We're told constantly that it's up to everyone to do his or her part to help the environment. We individually do these little tasks that eventually add up to a big gain for planet and hopefully we figure out how to save money along the way. As the University attempts to go green, we have to keep missed opportunities in mind.

If we don't, people will only get to feel like they're helping the planet. But then, wouldn't it feel good to be able to use those trays again, too?

SCOTT GREEN

Two conventions, two deep comas

It's Barack Obama's big night! Democratic National Convention organizers have moved the final evening of the week-long event from the Pepsi Center in downtown Denver to Invesco Field at Mile High, home of the Denver Broncos. It will be there where Obama will be named the party's candidate, provided he can make a 50-yard field goal to defeat the Bengals. Otherwise the nomination goes to Adam Vinatieri. Rules are rules.

Actually Obama will just come out and give a speech about the future of America and how we all have to blah blah together for blah blah unity or whatever. Unfortunately this is what's happened to political conventions, which, over 100 years ago, were really exciting. In 1880, for example, the Republicans took 30 ballots to nominate James A. Garfield, and that was only after a compromise wherein, to appease his detractors, he agreed to be assassinated the following September.

But back then the delegates chose the nominee right on the convention floor. Now, the candidates are popularly elected, and everyone knows ahead of time whom it'll be. This year, for example, the Republicans will nominate John McCain, and the Democrats selected James A. Garfield. No, sorry, McCain hasn't run against Garfield in 128 years. The Democrats instead nominated Barack Hussein Qaddafi Castro Mussolini Strawberry Shortcake Obama.

They did this very slowly. For those of you watching on TV — or for McCain, who followed via telegraph — the actual nomination sounded something like this: "Ladies and gentlemen, the great state of Wyoming, 'The Gerund State,' home of the world's largest mustard seed, the state that totally does not owe Nebraska \$50, is proud to cast our seven-eighths of a vote to what's-his-face, uh, the black one."

At least I think that's what happened. I've never watched these parts of past conventions, and there was no need to start now. I like to spend that time doing less boring things, like making sure my arm hairs are all the same length.

Things won't be any better next week at the Republican National Convention in St. Paul, Minn. The theme there will be "Country First," to honor McCain's decades and decades and decades and decades of national service, from now as a United States Senator all the way



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back to his days in the cavalry.

A veritable who's-who of old white guys will take the podium in support of McCain. The speeches not about McCain will be for McCain, in the sense that he should be able to learn something from them.

For example, on Wednesday night, former eBay CEO Meg Whitman will give a speech explaining the existence of the Internet; former Hewlett-Packard CEO Carly Fiorina will explain the existence of computers; and Tesla Electric Light & Manufacturing CEO Nikola Tesla will explain the existence of electricity.

More notable than who speaks is who's not going to attend. At least eight GOP Senators are skipping the convention, including Ted Stevens, who is preparing for his trial in Alaska on charges that he may be older than McCain, and Larry Craig, who is flying into Minneapolis for the convention but not expected to leave the airport.

But over 14 people are expected to actually show up for the convention, so for them and the viewing audience at home, here are some speakers to look forward to:

Rosario Marin: The California Secretary of State will spend her time at the podium being a Hispanic woman.

George W. Bush: His speech is about 20 seconds short, so convention organizers will fill the time with a video highlighting all his accomplishments as president.

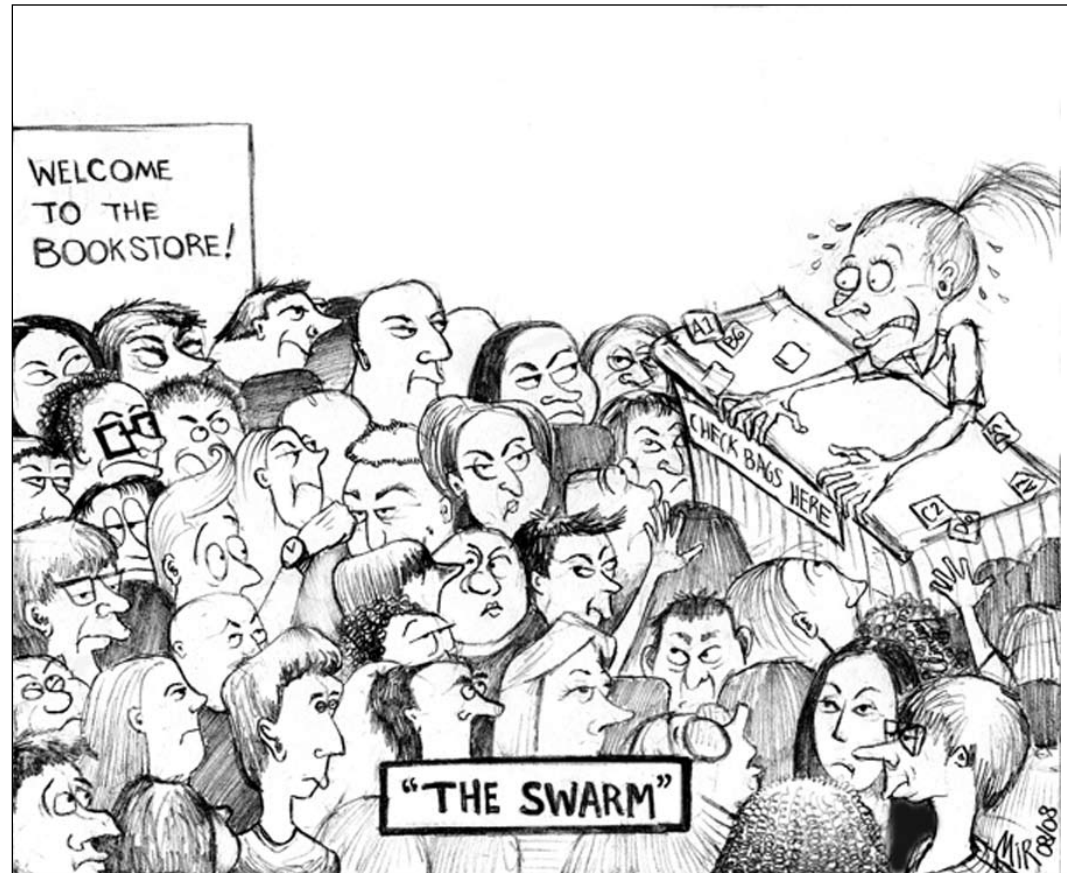
Dick Cheney: The vice president will give delegates a 30-second head start before he begins hunting them for sport.

Michael Steele: A black guy! Sure, Steele, the only African-American scheduled for a major speech at the convention, is a former one-term lieutenant governor of Maryland who currently holds no elected office. But still: A black guy! Just like Obama!

So get ready for week two of convention-mania, America! It'll be a rip-roarin' good time! Somebody wake me when it's over.

Scott is a third-year law student. He's voting for Vinatieri.

EDITORIAL CARTOON MIRANDA SINGLER, THE DAILY ILLINI



TALKBACKS

"With this action, there are many different levels of success. First and foremost, the complete abolition of the state (Unconventional Denver will foot the bill on the after-party) is our goal. Barring that, we are seeking to disrupt the convention."

-Web site of Unconventional Denver, an anarchist group on its efforts at the DNC.

If that still doesn't work, we'll go ahead and settle for some free cups.

"I'd like to see them in the trenches. They did a lot of damage against him, so they're going to have to do a lot more than the ordinary for him — not (just) for him but for the public to believe them."

-The Rev. Al Sharpton on Bill and Hillary Clinton.

Well, at least they didn't want his nuts like Jesse Jackson.

Think you can do better? Send your talkbacks to opinions@dailyillini.com

SCOTT GREEN

Roommates, snore at your own risk

Welcome to college! You and your new roommate will get along splendidly and soon be the closest of friends, unless he snores, in which case you'll have to kill him.

Just kidding. You'll want to kill him even if he doesn't snore. This is because it takes a lot of maturity to live with another human being, and the reason for freshman roommates is that you lack the low level of maturity needed to live on your own.

The University housing employees have done their best to assign you to someone who is the your total inverse. They say this is to promote diversity, but it's really because these people used to work in casting for "The Real World." So if you are a heavy drinking, late-sleeping, agnostic male, your roommate will be a teetotaler, early-rising, Mormon male. They go for opposites on a lot of things, but not gender.

Most of you probably let the school go through this process and assign you to someone. You probably heard all those stories about best friends who were freshman roommates and were each other's nemeses by the end of the year and decided to try to avoid such a calamity.

You were wrong. There's a good chance you'll wind up loathing your roommate no matter



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whom you pick. Who would you rather have as an enemy, some random weight lifting, needle using, revisionist-history enthusiast who keeps a pet viper in a rickety desktop terrarium, or the guy you've basically been brothers with for your entire life, on whom you've got so much dirt he could never risk doing anything horrible to you, because you would tell everybody about the time he was so scared doing the buckets game on the Bozo show that he wet himself?

I asked a bunch of undergrads about their worst roommate problems, and the number one complaint was: They didn't want to be bothered answering my question. But number two was roommates with boyfriends or girlfriends who took over the room.

This makes sense. Nobody wants to live with a reminder of how much sex he's not having. There's also the problem of a lack of privacy for both roommates, not to mention the threat of walking in on something you don't want to see. An example of this is a story someone

shared with me that I will not get into here, except to say that it involved Saran Wrap.

Of course, there are ways to mitigate any roommate problems you might have. I speak from personal experience. When I was a freshman, there were two things that eased my roommate situation. The first was that I didn't live in the dorms. I, instead, lived at Illini Tower, a University-certified private residence that has four-person suites instead of dorm rooms.

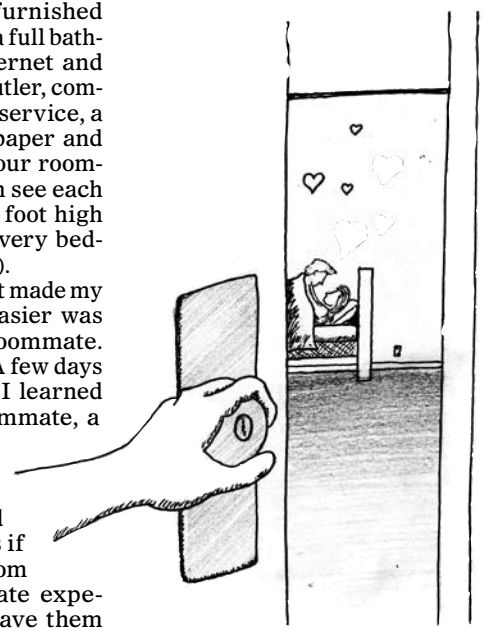
Each suite had a pair of two-person bedrooms, a furnished living room, a kitchen, a full bathroom, high-speed Internet and cable TV hook-ups, a butler, complimentary limousine service, a helipad, 14-ply toilet paper and a doorstop. You and your roommate might never even see each other, what with the 8 foot high piles of gold bars in every bedroom (complimentary).

The second thing that made my roommate situation easier was that I didn't have a roommate. This helped the most. A few days before school started I learned that my assigned roommate, a guy named Aaron, had decided not to go to Champaign. No one else ever got assigned to my room. So I guess if I had to give advice from my personal roommate experience, it would be: have them

assign you to Aaron.

The whole thing isn't as bad as it sounds. School years pass quickly in college, so just be civil and cordial and it'll be over before you know it. And don't really kill your roommate for snoring. Your new roommate in prison would probably just snore as well.

Scott is a third-year law student. The Daily Illini regrets that you had to see his photo on this page twice today. Really, really regrets it.



OTHER CAMPUSES ABHINAV KUMAR, THE DAILY TEXAN (UNIVERSITY OF TEXAS)

'Jennifer Government' author says running your own fictional e-country isn't e-easy

The unprecedented number of mainstream, non-white-male candidates in the presidential election gives me hope that with hard work and an honest campaign, truly anyone can become president of the U.S. But why do all that when you can become president right now?

Back in high school, at a time when teachers slammed me with "Anthem," "Animal Farm," "1984" and other books warning against the dangers of collectivism, I found a unique perspective in a lesser-known book — "Jennifer Government." Though the plot reads more like

a cheap script from a Hollywood blockbuster, the book takes the future in a different direction and explores a dystopian future of ultra-privatization.

In order to promote "Jennifer Government," Max Barry, the corporate satirist who secretly wrote his first novel while working for Hewlett-Packard, launched "NationStates" — a tiny online society game where players rule their own countries. Having been well-versed in the boredom that occurs while working in a cubicle for bland corporations, Barry designed the game to inject small, concentrated amounts of fun into

the nine-to-five workday. Unlike Facebook and MySpace, it is possible to play this game and still retain control of your real life (not to be confused with your SecondLife). But running a fictional e-country is not e-easy.

As president of the Republic of Bill Billferson, I had to make the right choices to lift my country out of poverty and create what the game describes as a "very strong economy" and a "civil-rights world benchmark." I am in charge of a growing population of 170 million people who live in perpetual fear because I accidentally abolished all prisons in favor of

rehabilitation programs instead. Not to worry, I made it legal for all Bill Billfersonians to buy automobiles with machine guns attached to the hoods.

I quickly discovered that each decision I made as president always had unintended consequences. Just yesterday I reaffirmed parents' rights to discipline their children and, as a result, set "record sales of 'child-whacking sticks.'" The decisions you make also determine the tone of your government, depending on your country's personal, political and economic freedoms. Some government types include left-lean-

ing college state, iron-fist consumerists, corporate bordello, civil rights lovefest and even a New York Times democracy.

Barry announced in April that he will be launching "NationStates 2" toward the end of the year. The new version is supposed to equip your e-nation with all the features of a real, live nation, including war, trade and diplomacy. These features alone can provide good practice for those of us who are presidential candidates with little foreign policy experience.

But before you file this game in the same brain-drawer as "World of Warcraft" and label

it as "nerdy," know that Barry's creation has a bit more clout. For example, "NationStates" had a world assembly function similar to our United Nations that was so popular and so e-influential that after January, Barry became the proud owner of a cease and desist letter from the real United Nations.

So the next time you see our elected officials making idiotic mistakes, take a deep breath, close your eyes, open your eyes, get on your computer and see if you can do a better job. In the meantime, my country has a biker gang problem that I need to fix.