If Facebook is the future, then Boris Krasniansky is on the frontlines, as he studies for a degree in information science with the help of Bar-Ilan’s Program for Honors Scholars, which targets the most outstanding students on campus. Now in his second year, Krasniansky has been focusing on understanding – and improving – how social media is used.

While there are technical elements to his program – building websites and programming, for example – his real interest is how social media and Web 2.0 are affecting us; what are the latest findings relating to user-computer interaction; and how can linguistics help deliver more accurate results? “I wanted to get a full picture of how computers are changing our lives,” he explains. Bar-Ilan is Israel’s only university offering an undergraduate program specifically in information science.

Krasniansky served in a computer unit that was part of the Military Police during his army service. The course of his life was influenced by a commander who had a vision to create a comprehensive computerized information system.

“Everything was being done by hand with paper and faxes at the time,” he continues. “My commander came with his idea and pushed it through. There was a lot of resistance. It took him seven years but he never gave up. This was the first time in my life I saw how so many details could come together into a final product. It was inspiring.”

Krasniansky immigrated to Israel with his family in 1998 at the age of 12 and settled in Jerusalem, where he still lives. Now entirely bi-lingual, Krasniansky remains close to his Russian roots and two summers ago volunteered at a summer camp for Jewish teens in Riga, Latvia. “We covered the field of Jewish identity and informal education,” he says. He hopes to repeat the experience again this summer.

The Program for Honors Scholars has allowed Krasniansky to focus on his studies. “I already work a part-time student shift in information security,” he says. Without the program’s help, I’d have to hold down a full-time job together with my classes I might have needed to take time off, a gap year, to earn enough money to attend Bar-Ilan.” That would have delayed the entry of this future leader into the work force.

Krasniansky’s dream is to land a job at Google. That may not be as wild as it sounds. Krasniansky’s social media teacher Sharon Greenberg has submitted him as a part of the Google Online Marketing Challenge taking place worldwide and sponsored by Google.

“Boris is a very creative guy; very clever, very curious, with a passion for all things Internet,” Greenberg says. “In fact, he was the one who alerted us to the Google competition. And he doesn’t care only for himself. He asked that the whole class be registered and now they are.”

It looks like Greenberg has picked a winner: already in high school Krasniansky participated in an Internet search contest organized by Yandex, Google’s main competitor in Russia. “I placed on the final list and they flew me to Russia for the final game,” Krasniansky says proudly. “I was the only student there not from Russia.”

Whether he’s representing Israel at the next search engine competition or researching the latest algorithms at Google, keep your eye out for Boris Krasniansky. Or maybe better yet: friend him on Facebook. He’s sure to be there.