

ASSOCIATION FOR LEARNING TECHNOLOGY NEWSLETTER

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ALT-C 2002: challenges for the community?

ALT-C 2002 proved to be somewhat different from the expectations that we had built up through colleagues' descriptions of last year's conference. One crucial element was the scale - a smaller conference with a more restricted number of sessions, the delightfully compact St Peter's campus at Sunderland University and some organisational differences that made the conference easier to navigate. The smaller nature of the conference can be illustrated by the fact that there were 7 Panel Sessions to the previous year's 23, and less than half the number of Workshops and 53 Short Papers in comparison to 136 at ALT-C 2001.

One factor that seems to have increased, rather than decreased, is the range within ALT delegates; we challenge even our own learners in terms of interests, experience and expectations! This report is therefore a purely personal perspective in that it reflects the experience of two ALT members who could be described, we hope, as 'experienced in the field', but who had never attended an ALT conference before. ALT-C 'old-hands', however, pointed out some major differences between this and previous conferences, which we have incorporated in this article.

The first keynote speech, Diana Oblinger's "From Connection to Community", set the scene by illustrating the breadth of the conference theme. Her comprehensive overview of significant issues in e-learning identified key factors as: the educational framework, change management, tools selection, principles of effective learning, and our own 'guiding principles of belief' as educators. The structure of educational provision was expanded on by Martin Valke, whose engaging keynote, "Moving from IT to ICT", analysed the 'macro' level issues in HE (such as re-thinking the educational organisation and definitions of learning), 'meso' level issues (such as policies and strategic objectives) and 'micro'

issues (such as teachers' and learners' perspectives and experience, and the impact of emerging technologies and learning theories). Employing enormous tact, his examples from his own experience outside the UK HE system resonated with many, highlighting the communality of concerns shared by all involved in online learning. Both these speakers, as well as David Puttnam in the closing address, underlined the differences in 'mindset' between older learners/teachers and those that have grown up with technology (the 'Nintendo' generation), and the consequent need for continuing technological innovation, informed by structures which promote quality learning outcomes.

Within the theme of "Learning Technologies for Communication" it was hardly surprising that over a third of the total sessions referred to some aspect of using a Virtual Learning Environment. However, it was interesting that presentations moved far beyond broader issues to a more problem-solving and case-based focus on specific issues. This grounded focus was, we felt, one of the major strengths of the conference. Some sessions also challenged or informed our individual and collective 'mindset'. A number of sessions within the

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ANNETTE ODELL AND
MARIA-CHRISTIANA PAPAETHIMIOU



*Prof Martin Valcke presents the
LTSN GC eTutor Award for 2002*



Dr Diana Oblinger



Lord David Puttnam

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Widening Participation theme were designed to increase our understanding of accessibility issues. Amongst these, Elaine Pearson's session entitled "Supporting and facilitating accessibility and inclusion in online courses and resources" (SP41), which used a video of a blind student talking us through the process of accessing materials within a VLE, is memorable. Other sessions encouraged us to re-evaluate traditional perspectives: Charles Duncan encouraged us to re-assess the role of digital repositories (Research Paper RP06); Bernard Lisewski challenged our 'mindset' in relation to staff development courses, asking us whether we were adopting process models of online tutoring unquestioningly (SP11); Oleg Liber illustrated a pedagogical approach which "tackle[d] the prevailing content-centric view of e-learning" (SP33).

Although the conference seemed to create its own recurrent themes, there were six designated themes: Concepts, Networks for Learning, Widening Participation, Distance Learning, The Future, and Colleagues New to Learning Technology. The last theme attracted only a few presenters but, given our understanding of the delegate mix, seems one worth retaining permanently and promoting in future conferences.

The decision to restrict Short Papers to six parallel sessions was a popular one. Each session was also chaired this year in order to ensure rigorous time-keeping and an even balance between presentation and discussion. This careful time-keeping ensured that it was easy to move between sessions without 'creeping in at the back' syndrome. The restricted number of sessions, in combination with the new A5 summary "Programme Handbook", also made the process of choosing which session to attend - and checking where you intended to be next - much easier.

The greatest innovation this year was the Research thread. Although there were only nine papers, the introduction of a research focus also seemed to have influenced the Short Papers, some of which - such as Shirley Evans' "Visually Impaired

Students: Accessing, Using and Task Performing in a VLE" (SP43) - described interim findings from research in progress. These 'Short Research Papers' probably need to be clearly flagged up as such, but, like the full research papers, appeared to be greatly welcomed. They also seemed to be an opportunity to present 'work in progress' that could be followed up at a future conference, or, perhaps, published within ALT-J.

The fact that sessions were never repeated meant that there was no opportunity to take advantage of recommendations from those who shared similar backgrounds or interests. This one-off opportunity to attend sessions was particularly difficult in relation to the Panel discussions, which seemed the most interesting and valuable opportunity for in-depth peer discussion and, therefore, worth splitting up and offering as an alternative to other sessions throughout the conference. Again, with several research papers being delivered concurrently, it was often difficult to choose which to attend and it was therefore a boon to have all the papers available in full, rather than just the abstracts.

Whilst discussing this conference on our train journey home, our overall impressions as ALT-C 'newbies' were that, with the unpredictable variations in the numbers who will attend, reliance on those who volunteer their time for our collective benefit and, above all, increasing diversity of interests within the ALT community, ALT-C must become more difficult to plan and run year on year. In the following week we all received the e-mail regarding the ALT committee's timely decision to commission a report to help in establishing the role of future conferences. We look forward to the outcome and to ALT-C 2003 in Sheffield.

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Continued exchange: our experiences of the ALT-Conference

PETRA FISSER AND WIM DE BOER

We were part of a Dutch delegation who travelled to ALT-C 2002 in Sunderland hoping to listen, be inspired by interesting keynotes and present our own learning technology research. We enjoyed a well-organised conference in the modern buildings at the University of Sunderland.

The first day started with Diana Oblinger's keynote in which she encouraged educators to be more aware of what constitutes meaningful learning for students, citing some examples of current, successful, distance learning projects. After lunch there were short paper presentations, many of which reviewed current practice at a meso or macro level. Although we found this work interesting, reflecting similar current developments in the Netherlands, we had expected more detail about comparative

studies, the impact at the organisational level and on policies (though, with so many concurrent sessions, we may well have missed sessions which included this information). In the evening, a Latin American theme buffet was an excellent opportunity to meet colleagues from the UK and Australia with whom we had established contacts during the recent ALT-SURF study trips to these countries. After the buffet, we had time to explore Sunderland by night and to reflect upon the first day of the conference.

The second day began with a keynote by Martin Valcke who contrasted the use of ICT in education in Flanders and the Netherlands. Afterwards we were presented with a choice of research papers, interactive workshops, short papers, demonstrations and posters. The demonstrations in the large computer hall seemed interesting, though some were difficult to locate. The presenters had too little space and therefore probably did not get the attention they deserved. On the other hand, the poster demonstrations were organised around the coffee and lunch area, allowing easy viewing.

The conference dinner in the Stadium of Light was a huge success. Many of the SURF delegates shared a table with ALT colleagues to discuss the forthcoming ALT-SURF study trip to

Director's corner

ALT-C 2002

I won't repeat the positive comments made elsewhere in this issue, but will simply say thank you to all who helped make this year's conference a success. Put the dates for ALT-C 2003, 8-10 September, in your diary now (see back page for details).

Meet the new ALT committee members

The constitutional amendments (changing the election of President, Chair and Vice-Chair) were approved at the AGM and come into effect this month. This means that each role is only held for one year. At next year's AGM the Vice-Chair will be elected by the members, who will succeed the Chair in the following year and the President in the third year.

The new Chair for 2002-03 is Joyce Martin and the Vice-Chair is Stephen Brown. Nick Hammond has decided to retire early from the Presidency and will be succeeded by John O'Donoghue at the end of October (in keeping with the new constitution). We send a special thank you to Nick for his work as President over the past two years. Many thanks also to Gab Jacobs and Ray McAleese, who both retired from the Central Executive Committee in September after nine years of service to ALT. We welcome George Roberts and Paul Bacsich onto the new committee, elected nem con at the AGM. A full list of all ALT committee members will be on the web site shortly.

EASA 2002 finalists announced

As we go to press the finalists for the European Academic Software Awards have just been announced. Out of a total of 146 entries, 30 entries have been selected to go to the

finals in Ronneby, Sweden in November. 10 UK finalists have been selected – the highest number from any country.

UK participation in EASA 2002 is supported by the JISC Committee for Awareness, Liaison and Training (JCALT).

ALT's tenth birthday

Lots of ideas are buzzing around the ALT committee lists about how to celebrate our tenth anniversary next year. In addition to giving a special anniversary flavour to ALT-C 2003, we are planning a one-day conference to coincide with the trip to the Netherlands (more below). If you have any bright ideas to mark the tenth anniversary, please email them to Helen Harwood: harwood@brookes.ac.uk

Tulips from Amsterdam?

Thanks to all who responded to my call for more participants for the spring visit to the Netherlands – 15 members have now signed up and we would like another 30 or more. Suggestions for institutions to visit include the Universities of Amsterdam, Twente, Leiden and Groningen. Look out for more news about the trip on the web site and in my fortnightly email digest.

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the Netherlands. Our time at dinner was mainly spent talking, laughing and listening to live music. The dinner was so enjoyable and informal that we didn't want to leave.

We didn't expect to see many delegates the next morning but, to our surprise, most were present. Our panel explored the outcomes of our ALT-SURF study trip to the UK and decided on key areas for the return trip to the Netherlands. We outlined the areas in which we had established collaboration and discussed the positive aspects of the exchange trip from the perspective of the Dutch delegation. There were suggestions how we could strengthen collaboration including an informal twinning of institutions, setting up databases of expertise as well as encouraging links between staff development programmes by, for example, sharing materials.

In the return trip for UK colleagues visiting the Netherlands, we will include a general introduction to the Dutch higher education system, followed by seminars on two or three topics of particular interest. After this visit, we may establish a special interest group. The return trip will take place in April 2003 - we are looking forward to welcoming you to the Netherlands!

The final keynote, from Lord David Puttnam, was an inspiring finale to the conference. He drew parallels between the medical "revolution" which has taken place over the last century and the revolution that he feels is about to occur in education. Despite all the technology available, there has been little change in teaching methodology over the past century. Now, however, students are demanding better quality, faster communication which teachers have to get to grips with. He believes the key factor in education is still the teacher and he advocated that teacher creativity should be encouraged and supported.

So, in conclusion, we think we have learned, talked, seen, listened, laughed, caught up with colleagues, compared and exchanged ideas at what we felt was a very interesting conference. We can see the importance of ALT-C for teachers, learning technologists, and others involved in learning technology. We send you our compliments!

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FEATURES

What do staff and students value in online learning? A case study from the north

DR LIZ BROUMLEY

The desire for a University to serve the people of the Highlands and Islands of Scotland goes back almost four hundred years; had this desire been achieved before the twenty-first century then the outcome would have been a conventional institution based in one location. The rapid development of computer networking technology and changing attitudes to higher education by the 1990s meant, however, that new options were possible. Instead of a single campus with students and staff meeting face to face, technology enabled the creation of a networked institution founded on a collaboration of fifteen further education colleges and specialist research centres, spread over an area almost one fifth of the UK landmass. This network enables an integrated approach to lifelong learning and provides access to learning opportunities for people in their own communities.

This new organisation, UHI Millennium Institute (<http://www.uhi.ac.uk>), received higher education institutional status in 2001. Offering a range of networked degrees since 1998, it has been using a mixture of face-to-face and electronic support (both synchronous using video and audio conferencing and asynchronous using email and web-based resources). The first completely online degree courses started in September 2001 with two vocational programmes, an MSc in Infection Control and a BA in Child and Youth Studies. As we reach the end of the first year of these programmes it is a good opportunity to find out what staff and student value in online learning.

The students who enrolled did so because they were attracted to courses that did not demand college attendance and which would fit in with their own lifestyles and locations. The MSc students work predominantly in the NHS or Health Boards and are studying part-time, accessing the learning resources from home or work. The BA attracts both full and part-time students who study from home, local learning centres or their local college. Both programmes use WebCT, which affords online resources and communications tools. The MSc was designed to integrate course material and professional practice, although similar opportunities exist in the BA programme. The two programmes differ in the extent to which online interactions are

embedded in the learning activities. Online discussions are more central for the BA, whereas individual activities are more important for the students studying for the masters.

What have the students and staff valued in their online studies so far? Overwhelmingly, the flexibility offered by online learning, the ability to study any time, place and pace is important. As one student says:

“For me this is the ideal arena in which to study as it is flexible enough to fit in with busy family life. I can study in the early part of the day when the rest of the family is asleep and everyone is happy.”

Online learning is practical, it can be fitted around family and work and it doesn't depend on getting to a specific place at a specific time. However, students are more guarded when they compare online learning with face-to-face, while 48% think that online is better, 40% prefer face-to-face. Two students typify the different views:

Online or face-to-face: two views

“Learning online is handy because you don't have to spend so much time in college, but face to face tutorials help to explain things to you there and then, especially if there's something you don't understand.”

“In the classroom you may be 1 of 30, in a strange sort of way this feels more personal. You do not feel silly asking questions whereas you may think twice about it in a classroom...”

“Learning online is handy because you don't have to spend so much time in college, but face to face tutorials help to explain things to you there and then, especially if there's something you don't understand.”

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The view that online learning can be more personal is echoed by some of the tutors who found they could give more personal attention to students online.

The two groups differed in their attitudes to online discussions, with the BA students finding these more helpful than the MSc students. Students' comments suggest that what they do find valuable is not simply the opportunity to discuss anything, but discussions which are focused on academic tasks, which therefore help them to check and develop their understanding of the course materials. When these types of tasks were provided, tutors observed improvements in the quality of the interactions (for example, critical thinking, logical argument, and recognition of differing viewpoints). When discussions were more general, students found them less helpful and therefore taking part in online debate was not a priority in a busy life.

For online learning to be effective from the students' point of view they need to receive regular feedback from tutors. Not surprisingly, we found a strong positive correlation ($p=0.01$) between the level of satisfaction with tutor support and frequency of that support. This finding has important implications for both timetable allowances and staff student ratios online; tutor groups need to be a realistic size and tutors given sufficient time to provide effective online support.

And finally, what about technical support? Well, systems, motivation and tempers were sorely tested in September and October when several problems meant that the UHI network was down over consecutive weekends. This highlighted the

importance of alternative systems for part-time students who often schedule weekends for study. As the technical difficulties were overcome and the system ran smoothly, it became clear that what students and staff value in online learning is good quality educational experiences with supportive tutors. The high retention rates on both courses to date suggest that these are (at least in part) being delivered.

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Looking for evidence: ALT Policy Board 2002

PETER J MURRAY

The ALT Policy Board provides an opportunity for our institutional and corporate members to meet and discuss one of the 'issues of the day' in learning technologies. This year's Policy Board, at Aston University, Birmingham, brought together nearly 60 representatives from institutional and corporate members. The theme focused on evidence concerning the need for and effectiveness of e-learning, and the implications for strategic developments within further and higher educational institutions. The aim was to look at, or for, evidence that should underpin the use of both digitised learning resources and electronic communication environments, and to explore the implications for the future.



Presenters included Robin Mason, delivering her thoughts on a research agenda for the e-university, as well as standing in at very short notice to deliver Diana Laurillard's overview of The Open University's experience. Among other presenters, Anna

Rosetti from the Land Based Colleges Consortium, Joe Wilson (Scottish Further Education Unit), Seb Schmoller (Sheffield College), and Chris O'Hagan (University of Derby) provided a number of perspectives from a range of tertiary education environments, that nevertheless resulted in some similar themes emerging. FD Learning, sponsors of the day, provided a view from the commercial sector.

The jury is still 'out' on how much evidence emerged as to the best ways forward for the development of e-learning. Issues that arose throughout the day included what we mean by evidence and what kind of evidence we are looking for, or will accept, and so what might influence our educational practice. From the plethora of small-scale, often case-based evaluative studies of e-learning that exist, common themes seem to emerge, and perhaps the need now is for meta-analyses of these case studies. One of the other major items that arose in discussions was whether the principles and evidence from one type of learner and/or learning situation are necessarily applicable to others.

It seems clear that there is still a lot of work to do and this might provide the basis for a substantial research agenda for the e-university, for individual further and higher education institutions and consortia, and for work at the European level. More detailed reports will be developed from the day and will be available later in the year.

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Software agent technology

STEPHEN BROWN

The Internet provides learners with too much information to be useful. Software agents can help by providing personalised information. For example, agents can help learners find the information they want and help tutors cope with the volume of information coming from students. At the ALT workshop in spring 2002, hosted by Salford University, Janice Whatley, Elaine Fernley, Ruth Aylett and Martin Beer gave a provocative critique of the shortcomings of contemporary online learning and argued the case for using intelligent software agents to assist learners and tutors.

The presenters showed us how agents can be passive or active. Passive agents observe and record their environment; they may receive messages but not respond. In comparison, active agents can respond to events and messages in their environment and initiate actions/communications. Agents can be given an explicit model of their environment, of other agents they may encounter in their environment and a history or model of themselves, which they can remember. We can also program them with skills, such as negotiation and the ability to lie (for example, in the context of diary management). It is worth remembering that agents do not have to be invisible, behind the scenes; they can be graphically represented as icons, avatars or 'synthetic characters'. Agents may perform a range of tasks, including:

- Information finding
- Collaboration: finding other agents/people to help with topics
- Support agents: assisting individuals or groups with achieving goals more effectively
- Brokering: building groups of students to undertake projects by matching characteristics.
- Tutorial/Counselling: providing 24x7 teaching support online.

The speakers raised a number of issues that took the delegates way beyond mere programming. For example, agents can develop a user's profile by analysing the material their users read in relation to key concepts or terms. They can develop with the user over years and potentially over a lifetime. Problems arise, however, when the user leaves the organisation that owns the agent. Is the agent then allocated to a new recruit to provide training and assistance, and what about IPR? In the learning environment, if the learner becomes dependent on the agent embedded in their PDA, how do we assess their learning in traditional exams? Measuring the interaction/learning that takes place between the learner/agent may be a measure of learning. Is how good the agent ends up a measure of learning or of how good/limited the agent was to start with? Finally, if all students and tutors have agents then will the tutor/student ratios be any different?

Delegates were shown a broad range of examples. These included I-Help, a simple threaded text message system developed by Aries Lab, Saskatchewan University through to 'Steve', a 'synthetic character' used to train engineers by the US Navy. I-Help is designed to encourage collaborative working through a built-in incentive system. Users can set the levels of their help preferences, for example, what kind of help they want from others, what help they are prepared to offer others, when, how much and how often. 'Steve' was developed by the University of Southern California (see: <http://www.isi.edu/isd/VET/steve-demo.html>). It comprises a 3D graphical environment that can be populated by one or more synthetic characters who demonstrate how to perform specific tasks. The characters can also monitor trainee performance and offer advice. 'Steve' is particularly useful for team training situations where it would be too expensive to organise a full team of real skilled users, and too chaotic to try to train a fully naive team. 'Steve' is similar to 'Carmens Bright Ideas', also developed by the University of Southern California. This is a counselling package that models emotions in the characters depicted. It is a branched program: the user selects conversation branches and so directs the interaction.

A different example demonstrated was 'Socialiser', a commercial program developed at Salford University and now used by the Advanced Product Development group of Ford (see: www.casimir.net/socialiser/). Socialiser employs user profiling, document analysis, query by reformulation, enhanced knowledge push to individuals and leverage of individuals' knowledge to create a powerful, shared information environment. The underlying agent is an algorithm with a set of data tables. It can search the Web for items that relate to the content of a document the user has created. When the results are returned the user can ask peers in a defined workgroup to comment on the search results. A major advantage of this system for workgroups is that a new member of staff joining the organisation can see knowledge elicited in this way by other members of their workgroup.

Delegates wishing to develop graphical agents themselves were advised to try out Microsoft Agent, a toolbox of technologies including speech recognition and text to speech conversion. It is based on an object-oriented scripting language which controls animation at a high level. Pre-designed characters and voices are available, but you can create your own characters with the tools available. It is, however, only viewable with Active X (see: <http://msch.microsoft.com/workshop/media/agent/agentdl.asp>).

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Flashlight Online: an evaluation toolkit

CATRIONA KEMP AND SUSI PEACOCK

The toolkit

Flashlight Online is part of the American Association for Higher Education, Teaching Learning and Technology Group's (TLTG) Flashlight Program (<http://www.tltgroup.org/programs/flashlight.html>). The core of Flashlight Online is the Current Student Inventory (CSI); a bank of approximately 500 ready-made questions that can be used to create an online survey. The questions are designed to help institutions obtain relevant information about common issues relating to learning technologies and their use. Academics, staff developers and learning technologists can select questions, creating surveys which can be edited using Dreamweaver. Surveys can include the author's own questions as well as ones taken from the question bank. In addition, it is possible to change the font size and colour and tailor the background of the survey form.

Once a survey is created, a URL is provided for the survey author to distribute. Respondents can then complete the online form, with survey authors being able to select whether they prefer respondents to be identifiable or anonymous. Answers in either case can be analysed and comparisons made between questions. The responses are automatically compiled and results are transferable to packages such as Microsoft Excel and SPSS. They are also provided in a graphical format on the web for immediate reference.

Administration and support

Individual authoring permission is organised within an institution by a Flashlight Online administrator. Permissions can be set up and organised into groups to facilitate collaboration and comparison of evaluations in-house. Online help is available for authors in using the toolkit, although the administrator may be seen as an additional source of guidance: academic staff are increasingly busy and, whilst concerned about evaluation, their focus is primarily in the final results.

Cost

The Flashlight Program is seen as a package: "Almost none of [the] instruments, tool kits, and services are sold separately... we bundle them together and site license [them]." (TLTG, 2001). Differing membership packages are available to meet individual institutional needs. The minimum subscription package with Flashlight Online is the 'Tool Series' which includes consultancy support at a cost of \$1,420-2,200 (approximately £914-1,416 per annum, as at Sep 2002).

Flashlight's role in evaluation

The Flashlight Online toolkit is only one of the resources available to support evaluation from the Flashlight Program. The core of the toolkit, the CSI, exists on the premise that 'very different educators need to ask similar questions' (Ehrmann, 1998). Although this gives it the strength of being a common resource, which can be used by different educators and institutions, it also limits it to the "middle ground" (Oliver & Conole, 1998). The Director of the Flashlight Program, Steve Ehrmann acknowledges that regardless of the similarity of concerns,

education is 'local' (1998). Ehrmann also expresses caution in seeing the toolkit, Flashlight Online, as the sole means of conducting an evaluation study and emphasises the need for an holistic approach through survey design and consultation: 'Flashlight's evaluative procedures will not answer all questions that an institution might have' (Ehrmann, 1995).

Over the last 10 years no further questions have been added to the CSI question bank. The current emphasis of the Flashlight Program is the development of consultation and guidance it offers. A primary focus has been in the Study Specific Support Materials. These offer a self-paced step-by-step approach to carrying out an evaluation study for academic staff. The development of the Study Specific Support Materials by the Flashlight Program parallels that of the Evaluation of Learning and Media Toolkit in the UK (<http://www.ltss.bris.ac.uk/jcalt/>). These both encourage a wide, self-tailoring yet disciplined approach to evaluation. Currently the latter provides a more structured and less discursive guide. Unfortunately, both have the limitation of being dependent on practitioners investing a significant amount of time to work through them.

Conclusion

Since its original creation, the Flashlight Program has developed into a substantial provider of evaluation resources and guidance relating to learning technologies. This building on and refining its existing work is one of the major strengths of the Program. It contrasts to the situation in the UK where projects have often been centrally funded but are of a limited or sporadic lifespan and thus are often not given the opportunity to fully reflect and develop. Despite this, it has become apparent through our research, that it is not enough to give people an evaluation tool if it is not backed up by structured guidance and support - this combination enables evaluation good practice to be achieved. We look forward to the continuing development of the Study Specific Support Material as a part solution to this problem.

A copy of the full JISC funded evaluation report of Flashlight Online can be found at <http://www.roundtable.ac.uk>

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ALT WORKSHOPS

Reusable learning objects in health professional education: from theory into practice

A series of ALT workshops organised jointly with UCEL

£30 (£20 for members of UCEL collaborating institutions)

University of Cambridge 21 November 2002
Deadline for bookings: 7 November 2002

University of Nottingham 26 November 2002
Deadline for bookings: 12 November 2002

University of Manchester 15 January 2003
Deadline for bookings: 1 January 2003

LTSN Health Sciences & Practice, King's College, London 23 January 2003
Deadline for bookings: 9 January 2003

LTSN-01, University of Newcastle 6 March 2003

Deadline for bookings: 20 February 2003

The aim of each workshop is to introduce participants to the concept of reusable learning objects (RLOs) with a step-by-step series of presentations and discussions that will show all the stages and processes required to create the resources. There will be a breakout session where participants will have hands-on experience of creating RLOs for themselves, guided by the presenters.

Presenters: Paul Garrud (University of Nottingham), Dawn Leeder (University of Cambridge), Heather Wharrad (University of Nottingham).

An introduction to getting research papers published

A one-day workshop

University College London
20 November 2002

£80 (ALT members) £130 (non-members)

This workshop will provide an overview of good practice, tips and hints on getting research and development activities published. Participants will receive a paper to review prior to attending the workshop, along with refereeing guidelines, and will discuss an area of their work and how to prepare it for publication. This will include discussion about the different types of journals and how participants can match their findings to the appropriate journal.

Presenters: Prof Gráinne Conole (University of Southampton), Dr Martin Oliver (University College London), Dr Jane Seale (University of Southampton)

Deadline for bookings: 6 November 2002

For booking forms and more information on ALT events please visit www.alt.ac.uk or email Helen Harwood on hharwood@brookes.ac.uk

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ALT-N

Articles, comment, reviews and previews are welcomed for the next issue. Please contact the Editor for further details and a style guide.

Please note that any articles submitted for the newsletter may be published in parallel on the ALT web site.

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Deadline: 20 December 2002

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Overseas education	£50
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ALT-C 2003: Communities of practice

Tenth anniversary conference

8-10 September 2003 Sheffield, UK www.shef.ac.uk/alt/

First call for papers

ALT-C 2003 will focus on communities of practice with the following sub-themes:

- Diversity of learning through technologies
- Learning designs
- The learners' experiences
- Inclusive approaches through technologies
- Learning, teaching and assessment strategies
- Developing learning environments

A distinctive feature of ALT-C 2003 will be its research strand for refereed papers on e-learning and use of learning technology. The last date for submission of full draft research papers (maximum 6,000 words) and accompanying abstracts is 1 March 2003. See the web site for submission dates for other types of papers: www.shef.ac.uk/alt/