ASSOCIATION FOR LEARNING TECHNOLOGY

ALT

ANNUAL REPORT 2001-2002

INTRODUCTION

JOHN O'DONOGHUE
CHAIR, CENTRAL
EXECUTIVE COMMITTEE

This report covers the twelve-month period of operation of ALT to 31 July 2002. During the past year we have seen a significant growth in the role, practice, implementation and expectations of learning technology in Further and Higher Education. This is particularly so for Further Education, where the implementation of wider networks and institutional learning environments have been at the forefront of technological change. ALT has played a pivotal role in facilitating the cross-fertilisation of expertise and experience across both sectors of tertiary education.

In this context of change, development and realignment, ALT continues to be the primary Association within the UK for representing the views of practitioners and for promoting good practice. ALT committees hold an annual Strategy Day to review activities and plan services to the members. A new strategy document for 2003-2006 is now in development, which will be published and distributed to all members. The 2002 Strategy Day followed our annual Policy Board meeting for institutional and corporate members, which focussed on the evidence of the benefits of learning technology.

ALT continues to be respected internationally and has signed Memoranda of Understanding with SURF (the Dutch higher education ICT organisation) and with ASCILITE (the Australasian ALT equivalent). Activities over the year with those organisations are described in the Membership report.

I am forever impressed by my ALT committee colleagues, who, despite their demanding occupations, are able to manage significant programmes for and on behalf of ALT. This cannot be achieved in isolation and thanks must be given to the ALT office who form the backbone of what is increasingly becoming the most highly respected learning technology association in the UK.

MEMBERS OF ALT COMMITTEES 2001-2002

* denotes member of the Central Executive (Trustee)

Ms Sue Brady ALT-C 2002 Conference Organiser, sue.brady@sunderland.ac.uk

Mr John Brown* EKMA/EASA Co-ordinator, jbrown@ufi.com

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Dr Gayle Calverley Occasional Publications Editor, gayle.j.calverley@man.ac.uk

Professor Grainne Conole* Editor of ALT-J; Honorary Secretary, g.c.conole@soton.ac.uk

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Ms Joyce Martin* Vice-Chair of Central Executive Committee, joyce_martin@becta.org.uk

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Mr Peter Murray* Executive Secretary, alt.execsec@btopenworld.com

Mr John O'Donoghue* Chair of Central Executive Committee, j.odonoghue@wlv.ac.uk

Ms Ros O'Leary* Chair of Membership Executive Committee, ros.oleary@bristol.ac.uk

Dr Martin Oliver Deputy Editor of ALT-J, martin.oliver@ucl.ac.uk

Ms Susi Peacock Editor of ALT-N, speacock@qmuc.ac.uk

Mrs Rosemary Phillimore rphillimore@brookes.ac.uk

Ms Rhonda Riachi* Director, rriachi@brookes.ac.uk

Professor Suzanne Robertson ALT-C 2002 Conference Chair, suzanne.robertson@sunderland.ac.uk

Ms Alison Robinson ILT Representative, alison.robinson@ilt.ac.uk

Dr Jane Seale* Chair of Publications Executive Committee; Deputy Editor of ALT-J, j.k.seale@soton.ac.uk

Mr John Stratford ALT-C 2003 Conference Organiser, j.stratford@sheffield.ac.uk

Dr Barbara Watson b.a.watson@durham.ac.uk

Mr Joe Wilson joe.wilson@sfeu.ac.uk

PUBLICATIONS

JANE K SEALE
CHAIR, PUBLICATIONS
EXECUTIVE

1. NEW COMMITTEE MEMBERS

Last year we identified a need to increase the membership of our committee in order to enable us to maintain and build on our current activities. I am therefore very pleased to welcome three new committee members. Martin Oliver joined as deputy editor of ALT-J in October 2001; Allison Littlejohn joined as deputy editor of ALT-N in February 2002 and Gayle Calverley joined as occasional publications editor in February 2002.

2. ALT-J

Following the death of Professor David Squires, Grainne Conole has taken over the editorship of ALT-J with Jane Seale and Martin Oliver becoming deputy editors. A special memorial issue for David is due out in December. In this issue key researchers in the field (many of whom had worked with David) will attempt to reflect and focus on key issues and themes that David focused on in his own work. As part of a move to develop a more interactive dialogue with ALT-J readers the editorial team have begun to invite comments and discussions on certain articles and the resulting debates (and replies) have been published as separate papers. On the administrative side, the editorial board has been strengthened to include more international members. The editors are also currently working on changes/improvements to the submission and refereeing system. We are also pleased that this year we have been able to work with the ALT-C 2002 Organising Committee to create a separate research strand within the conference, together with a separate book of papers. This book was edited by John Cook and David McConnell and was given to all ALT-C delegates as part of their conference pack. This is something that we plan to continue and develop at future conferences.

3. ALT-N

In July, Susi Peacock took over from Jane Seale as editor of ALT-N and together with Allison Littlejohn is keen to develop the strong profile that ALT-N has obtained in the past few years. ALT-N acts as an important "mirror" of ALT's vision and activities and also plays a key role in engaging ALT members. It is particularly pleasing that the submission rate to ALT-N is high enough to mean that we rarely struggle for copy and that we are receiving an increasing number of requests to use articles from ALT-N in institutional staff development materials. Susi and Allison will shortly advertise for a second deputy editor.

4. OCCASIONAL PUBLICATIONS

This year, a lot of effort has been put in to increasing our occasional publication portfolio. We have published key introductory texts all of which have been given free to ALT members. Each publication has been the result of successful collaborations with key partners and have been very well received by the learning technology community (particularly those working within staff development):

◆ *An Introduction to Learning Technology,* edited by Jane Seale and Merce Rius-Riu

- *Access All Areas,* edited by Lawrie Phipps, Allan Sutherland and Jane Seale and funded by TechDis
- *LTSN Generic Centre Starter Guides:* Members of both MX and PX have been working with LTSN-GC on these guides. The first four have been published and a second set is in the pipeline.

Gayle Calverley has been exploring ways of expanding our occasional publication portfolio and identifying key issues and targets. We anticipate that she may need to recruit additional people to the committee in order to help her develop her ideas and plans further.

To conclude, all the activities of the Publications Committee have helped to raise ALT's profile, give ALT members a good service and has resulted in some important and fruitful partnerships which we hope to build on in the coming year.

MEMBERSHIP SERVICES

Following Joyce Martin's election to the Chair of the ALT Central Executive in June 2002, I took over as Chair of Membership Services (MX). I'd like to thank Joyce for her time and effort as Chair and wish her luck in her challenging new role. The response to a call in June 2002 for new members of MX was overwhelming so Joyce and I held an open meeting which enabled us to get feedback on the needs of the members, their perceptions of the Association and its aims and objectives. MX now comprises 11 members, including Alison Robinson of ILT and Barbara Watson of Durham, who are both former members of the committee. The committee now has a good mix of representatives from different sectors and areas of the UK. Due to the high number of people wishing to join MX, we are trialling 'online' membership for a further 10 members, which should allow us to draw on an even larger field of experience and expertise.

MEMBERSHIP

As last year institutional membership has increased – from 113 in August 2001 to 125 in September 2002. Most of this increase is a result of more FE colleges joining the Association, which reinforces MX's commitment to identifying more ways in which it can support FE members.

Individual membership has fallen from 562 to 466. A small sample of those who had not renewed individual membership stated this was due to their institution becoming members. One of MXs tasks over the next year will be to examine the different membership packages and ensure the individual membership package remains attractive over and above institutional membership.

ROS O'LEARY
CHAIR, MEMBERSHIP
SERVICES EXECUTIVE

Again, there has been an increase in Corporate members from 10 to 13. The list of corporate members now includes:

◆ Becta
◆ Blackboard
◆ BT Education
◆ Edvantage
◆ FD Learning
◆ Granada Media
◆ JISC
◆ LTSN
◆ Microsoft UK
◆ Richmond Systems
◆ SURF
◆ Ufl
◆ UKERNA

Another of MX's tasks over the next year will be to consider the relationship between ALT and its Corporate members, how we can best support these members whilst identifying ways in which individual and institutional members can further benefit from this relationship.

MEMBERSHIP SURVEY

The last membership survey was conducted in 1999; another one is planned during 2003. The survey is seen as key in focusing MX in its work over the next year, helping the committee to concentrate on issues and areas close to our members' hearts.

REGIONAL NETWORKS

During the last year MX has encouraged and supported regional networking. In addition to a programme of workshops and events across the country, a joint meeting between ALT and ILT members took place in the North East during February. MX will be examining other ways it can support regional networks over the coming year.

INTERNATIONAL NETWORKS

ALT has been building on its relationship with SURF, a higher education ICT organisation based in the Netherlands. A successful ALT/SURF study trip to Australia in March included visits to universities in Sydney, Brisbane, Perth and Melbourne. Eight participants from the UK and eight from the Netherlands went on the trip. The delegation looked at ICT developments in the universities and reported back in the form of case studies, perspective reports and an event during July. A book containing all reports will be published in 2003, sponsored by the LTSN Generic Centre.

Another successful SURF study trip took place during April which included visits by SURF members to eight UK HE institutions, as well as ALT, the LTSN and the ILT. A return trip to the Netherlands is planned for Spring 2003 and will include a joint ALT/SURF one day conference – 'Making Connections: Connecting People, Connecting Technology'.

USING THE ZING CONFERENCING SYSTEM DURING THE AUSTRALIA STUDY TRIP

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EVENTS

Events continued to grow in scale and impact during 2001-2 with a lively programme of conferences, workshops and other events.

The annual conference held in September 2001 at Edinburgh was the largest we have held so far. With 650 delegates it was judged a great success, although inevitably the proceedings were overshadowed by the tragedy that unfolded in the US during the conference. Delegates to ALT-C 2002 at Sunderland enjoyed a more intimate conference (and sunny weather) which launched some important changes to the conference format. In particular these included the introduction of the refereed research papers stream, which was widely appreciated by delegates. Looking forward to 2002-3, ALT-C 2003 at Sheffield will be host to the 10th Anniversary celebrations of the Association and the last ALT annual conference to be hosted by a member institution. After much debate, and a careful review of the options, we have decided, from 2004 onwards, to bring the conference management in-house. This is a major step forwards which reflects the growing popularity of the conference and the maturity of the Association. Exeter University has been chosen as the venue for the first of these new-style annual conferences.

In addition to the annual conferences, other events for members included a one-day conference at Sheffield Hallam University that was well received by the 150 delegates. It had a wide variety of sessions presenting different perspectives around the theme of 'eContent'. The University of Central England was host to a one-day focus group on the use of VLEs to support problem-based learning. This event, sponsored by FD Learning, was very popular, attracting 36 participants.

During the year there was also an expanded and varied programme of 15 workshops and a research symposium called 'Ideas in Cyberspace Education'. ALT workshops continue to be a popular way of learning about new developments and the latest technologies, while meeting other members. Once again we are very grateful to all the presenters who hosted and ran them and as usual we will be asking members and delegates at ALT-C 2003 to propose workshops for inclusion in the new year's programme.

Events table follows

STEPHEN BROWN
CHAIR, EVENTS EXECUTIVE

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HANDS-ON WORKSHOP
AT THE ECONTENT
CONFERENCE

ALT WORKSHOPS AND FOCUS GROUPS, 2001-2002

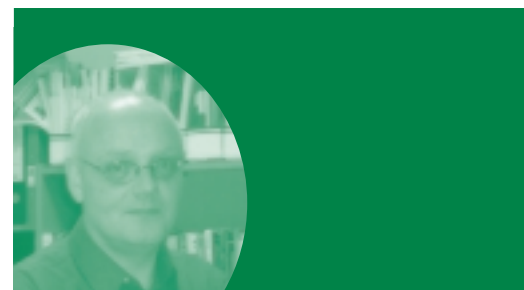| TYPE OF EVENT	DATE	TITLE	VENUE	NUMBER ATTENDING
Focus Group	21/Nov/01	VLEs to Support problem based learning with Fretwell-Downing Education	University of Central England	36
Workshop	29/Nov/01	Getting yourself published in the academic domain	University of Wolverhampton, Telford	34
Workshop	22Jan 2002	VLEs by 3	Huddersfield	40
Workshop	5 Feb 2002	Getting yourself published in the academic domain	Manchester Metropolitan University	34
Workshop	13 Mar 2002	ILT Accreditation workshop	University of Northumbria at Newcastle	8
Workshop	20 Mar 2001	Software agents and Internet learning	Salford University	13
Workshop	5 Mar 2002	FirstClass	Oxford Brookes University	7
Workshop	13 Feb 2002	XML & Content Management	Oxford Brookes University	22
Workshop	4 April 2002	Assessment tools and interoperability	Sheffield Hallam University	39
Workshop	4 April 2002	Understanding the eUniversity learning platform	University of Sheffield	48
Workshop	28 May 2002	Design Principles for Learning and Teaching Web sites	University of Southampton	23
Workshop	9 May 2002	VLE by three	Reading Business College	27
Workshop	19 June 2002	RESULTS (two workshops)	University of Warwick	20
Workshop	2 July 2002		UMIST	11
Workshop	11 July 02	Video streaming and pedagogy	Manchester Metropolitan University	50
Workshop	9 July 02	Keeping up with our Neighbours: e-learning in Australian higher education	Manchester Metropolitan University	49
Workshop	9 Sep 2002	UK eUniversities Worldwide: Plans and opportunities (a free pre-ALT-C 2002 workshop)	University of Sunderland	51
Symposium	30 Oct - 1 Nov 2002	Ideas in Cyberspace Education (ICE)	Higham Hall	40

RESEARCH AND POLICY

The Research and Policy Committee came into being as the newest ALT executive committee towards the end of the year of this report. It was established with the aims of strengthening ALT's involvement in policy formulation and contribution to national debate, and promoting and encouraging research into the role and effectiveness of learning technologies in further and higher education. The committee had its inaugural meeting under my acting chairmanship during July 2002. This meeting discussed terms of reference, membership and ways of working, and laid down the foundations for the work of the committee.

The primary purpose is to help meet the wish of ALT's membership to have a voice in research and in policy issues at the national level. Three activities identified early on were to assist with ALT's policy formulation and its presentation to others, to have a strong involvement in the planning and conduct of the policy board, and to represent and facilitate the research agenda within ALT and outwith it.

The initial membership was: John O'Donoghue, Robin Mason, Grainne Conole, Jane Seale, John Cook, Sarah Price, Paul Clark, Ursula Howard, Angela MacFarlane and Peter Murray.

JOHN O'DONOGHUE
ACTING CHAIR, ALT
RESEARCH AND POLICY
COMMITTEE

TREASURER'S REPORT

RAY MCALEESE
TREASURER

The last eighteen months has seen a watershed for ALT. We have moved from our initial dependent financial status to a more secure footing with an external bank account, better financial information and a new Treasurer! In addition we have seen changes in the Office in personnel and in accounting practices. We now have better and more timely information available for our Director and her staff and for the Executive Committee to use for the financial management of our Association.

The above words come first before comments on the last financial year as I am now "retired" and am looking back over eighteen months of activity, some of which is outwith my remit. In this last financial year the Association had a small surplus – in spite of my prediction of a deficit. Prudence has its rewards when a surplus ensues. Clearly the winner was ALT-C 2001, which generated a significant surplus for the Association and a healthy return to the host institutions. The success of a major event such as ALT-C gives the Association a safe income. However, as any Treasurer must note, this is a windfall, as the conference market is very volatile and depends on a lot of un-costed effort from volunteers. The Association needs to tune its annual conference to the market and members needs while maintaining this important cash flow. This must be one of the challenges for the Executive Committee over the next few years.

The flow of information within the Association has improved – in part due to the help provided by Oxford Brookes University and in part by the move to an external bank. In the period I report on, this had not fully happened, however steps taken by the Director and her staff to keep an eye on our finances are paying off.

Overall we have had a successful year. A surplus is always welcome. As the Association moves towards its tenth anniversary I feel that its financial standing is more secure than it was some five years ago when I took over as Treasurer. While I might seem to attribute this success to my stewardship, I would be wrong. Our growing confidence as an Association, along with detailed work in the Office, has been the main driver.

I wish the new Treasurer my good wishes and success in his stewardship.

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PRESIDENT'S REPORT

NICK HAMMOND
ALT PRESIDENT

The largest ever ALT conference, in Edinburgh, propelled ALT into its ninth year with a bang and the pace seems to have been relentless ever since, whether in terms of events, activities, membership or indeed the structural development of the Association.

National policies and initiatives relating to the adoption of learning technology are having an increasing influence in both the FE and HE sectors, and it is apposite that this year has seen the coming to fruition of several of ALT's long-term plans for structural development which will enhance our capacity for responding to and influencing policy issues. First, Peter Murray was appointed as our first Executive Secretary in March; the brief of the Executive Secretary post includes liaison with external bodies and policy development. More recently, the Association has set up a new Research and Policy Committee (ALT-RP), with the aim of increasing ALT's profile across the wide range of policy issues at the national level. We are extremely fortunate that Professor John Slater, with his unique breadth of experience has agreed to chair the new Committee. Finally, we have streamlined our procedures for the appointment to the honorary roles of Vice-Chair of the Central Executive, Chair of Central Executive and President, with a one-year successive tenure of each position, thus allowing a more continuous of supply of new faces and ideas into the Executive Committee.

A further role of the new ALT-RP is to promote research into learning technologies in further and higher education, and this increased focus on research is reflected in the introduction of a refereed research stream, with its own separate publication, at the ALT-C 2002 conference. The year has seen an impressive range of well-attended events (including a one-day conference on the theme of eContent), of international collaborations (including a joint British and Dutch study tour to Australia) and of publications, with the introduction of a series of occasional publications.

With the new succession arrangements, I stepped down from the ALT Presidency shortly after the end of the year covered by this report; I wish my successor, John O'Donoghue every success in the role. However, I have one final pleasure, which is to thank two of ALT's longest-serving stalwarts, Ray McAleese and Gab Jacobs, for their many years of unstinting and dedicated service to ALT. Their wisdom and, in their different ways, their good humour, enlivened many an ALT meeting and guaranteed intelligent and informed debate on any topic. I hope that we will see them both at many ALT events to come.