

EVENTS

ALT Conferences

Spring conference & research seminar 2006

6-7 April 2006, Leiden, The Netherlands

In association with SURF and ILTA

This popular event promises to be even better next year, with a new look at themes developed in the past year. Look out for more information and booking deadlines shortly.

ALT-C 2006: the next generation

5-7 September 2006, Edinburgh

ALT-C 2006 will feature four themes, capturing the main strands of development current in the field:

- next generation learning
- next generation learners
- next generation technology
- next generation providers

The conference is for practitioners and researchers from all sectors involved in learning technology, as well as those new to the field. The conference welcomes research papers for publication in the peer-reviewed Proceedings of ALT-C 2006, as well as short papers, symposia, workshops, demonstrations and posters.

www.alt.ac.uk/altc2006

Vacancies

Head of eLearning

Department for Curriculum and Quality Enhancement
£45,444 - £54,528

Leading our established team, you'll provide e-learning and multi-media support. Working with senior colleagues including those leading the University's two CETLs, you'll take a strategic role in progressing the Learning, Teaching and Assessment Strategy and embedding e-learning within the core curriculum.

With significant experience in implementing e-learning technologies in higher education, you'll have the ability to work closely with academic staff and technologists. Knowledge of developments in e-learning pedagogy will ideally be supported by your experience of securing external project funding and a relevant research record. In addition, you'll have excellent communication skills and a track record of successful project management.

For an informal discussion, please contact Dr Valda Bunker, Director of Curriculum and Quality Enhancement, tel: 023 9284 3568 or email: valda.bunker@port.ac.uk

For an application pack, please contact us at the number (24-hour answerphone) or address below, quoting ref ACAD 1273/ALT. Closing date: 4th November 2005

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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 only summary versions are published in the printed newsletter. Full versions appear in the online newsletter at newsletter.alt.ac.uk.

Advertising rates

£300 for quarter page advert or £400 to insert a one-page flyer (no VAT)

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Reduced rate (student, retired, unemployed) £25
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Corporate and institutional membership on application.

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For full versions of all the articles here go to the ALT Online Newsletter at newsletter.alt.ac.uk

Reflections on ALT-C 2005

Jacquie Kelly and Janette Hillicks from JISC infoNet provide us with an overview of ALT-C 2005 held at Manchester, which attracted over 600 delegates. They offer us a comprehensive review of the keynote speakers, including Carol Twigg and Etienne Wenger, as well as the four main themes of the conference: design and development; implementation;

collaboration; and architectures and infrastructures. Updates on new publications, details of the research paper and poster prize winners, links to additional information, blogs and photos are provided in the online report, and for those who were unable to attend the event, there is an exhaustive resources section.

Faces from ALT-C 2005...



Stephen Downes, Sal Cooke and Etienne Wenger

NEWS

Blackboard and WebCT to merge

On 12 October Blackboard and WebCT, the world's two largest commercial providers of VLE solutions, announced a plan to merge, taking effect next year. Both companies stress that whilst ultimately their respective product set will also merge, "the combined company will continue to develop, innovate, upgrade, improve and support both Blackboard's and WebCT's products including WebCT Vista, WebCT Campus Edition, Blackboard Academic Suite and Blackboard Commerce Suite".

More information and a link to a joint press release can be found at: www.blackboard.com/WebCT

Donation to the Joe Homan Charity

Rosemary Phillimore

On behalf of the Joe Homan Charity I'd like to say a big, big 'thank you' to the staff and members of ALT for continuing to support the Joe Homan Charity (www.joehoman.org.uk). The cheque for £1,700 donated to the charity this year at the ALT conference will be used to support a Boys Town in Thailand where youngsters who have been lifted out of poverty and deprivation into a life of hope and opportunity will be given the chance of an education through to tertiary level.

Read more about the young people we have supported through our previous donations from ALT-C 2003 and 2004 and see their photos on our online newsletter: newsletter.alt.ac.uk

For full versions of all the articles here go to the ALT Online Newsletter at newsletter.alt.ac.uk

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Executive Secretary's report

News from Seb Schmoller

Research Assessment Exercise 2008. I reported in ALT-N 50 that during July and August ALT would be working with the Department for Education and Skills (DfES) to ensure that a response was made to the July 2005 "Consultation on RAE Panel Draft Criteria and Working Methods" www.rae.ac.uk/pubs/2005/04/ that took account of the needs of the learning technology research discipline. Two meetings were hosted by DfES, attended by a wide range of people who are active in e-learning research, with a further meeting and a short paper at the ALT Conference. A compilation of the 4 responses which ALT submitted can be accessed from www.alt.ac.uk/documents.html. According to RAE 2008, the outcomes of the consultation will be considered by the main and sub-panels in the autumn, and the final criteria statements will be published in early 2006.

CMALT. We launched the new ALT Certified Membership Scheme (CMALT) at the ALT Conference. Full details of the scheme, including the prospectus, guidelines for applicants and assessors, and the full application form, can be accessed from www.alt.ac.uk/cmalt/, from where you can also join a low volume e-mail list through which we will keep subscribers informed of development with the CMALT scheme. An e-portfolio based version of CMALT will be available later this year, which we have developed in partnership with the JISC part-funded Petal and MyWorld projects.

Research Committee. We are in the process of establishing an ALT Research Committee, which will be chaired at its inception by John Cook (ALT President). The remit of the committee will include:

- developing the ALT Learning Technology Research Strategy;
 - advising ALT on research related events and workshops, including the Spring Conference research strand;
 - drafting responses for the Central Executive to research-related consultations;
 - advising on research-related collaborations.
- Further details will be provided in ALT-N 52.

Rule changes. At the ALT AGM in September the necessary two-thirds majority was obtained for a wide range of changes to ALT Constitution, which has remained almost unchanged since the new constitution was adopted in 1997, despite our growth and the increasing complexity of our operations. A summary of the rule changes will be issued later this year or early next. For the moment please note that a key change is that the revised rules now permit voting by proxy and postal balloting. As a result it will be possible for members who are not present or represented in person at the ALT Conference to vote in elections and at General Meetings.

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Software review

TalisList: web-based reading lists made simple!

Review by Michael White, University of Stirling

TalisList is a system for creating and managing easy to use web based reading lists. Lists can contain linked entries that take students directly to any web based electronic resources, such as relevant websites or eJournal articles, or straight to the appropriate library catalogue record. This review describes the functionality offered by TalisList and the implementation of the system at the University of Stirling.

Talis can be found at: www.talis.com

Conference reviews

OECD conference: e-learning in post-secondary education

Review by Paul Bacsich

"Post-secondary e-Learning" was the title of the Organisation for Economic Co-operation and Development (OECD) conference in Calgary, Alberta, 26-28 June 2005. The delegates, from over 20 OECD countries, included a large contingent from Canada; full details including all presentations are available at www.education.gov.ab.ca/oecd2005/

Paul extended his stay to include a visit to the Knowledge Media Design Institute (KMDI) at the University of Toronto and to the Surrey Campus of Simon Fraser University in Vancouver. In the online article ([at newsletter.alt.ac.uk](http://at.newsletter.alt.ac.uk)) he gives his impressions of how e-learning developments are progressing in Canada as well as comments on the speakers at the OECD conference.

e-learning: making it work

Review by Kevin Donovan, LSDA

Staff from across the tertiary education sector found out how to 'make it work' in October at a conference organised by ALT and the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA). Delegates met to discuss transformation in a gathering designed for everyone except experts, for sceptics as well as for those who were already convinced about the value of using technology in teaching, learning and managing. The day's core was a series of workshops led by practitioners who discussed the outcomes of twenty e-learning development projects, which they had managed and which had transformed an area of work involving e-learning as a tool or a focus. The closing keynote was given by Michael Stevenson, Director of Technology at the DfES. A publication based upon the workshops will be available shortly from ALT.

Case studies

Electronic Voting Systems (EVS) increase the "buzz factor"

Andreas Panayiotidis and George Masikunas, Faculty of Business and Law at Kingston University

Over the past two years staff at Kingston University have piloted Electronic Voting Systems (EVS) in undergraduate business studies lectures. This article presents the authors' experiences with EVS, and discusses some of the issues and opportunities encountered during the pilot. EVS allows students to respond to questions posed by the tutor during a lecture, via "Who Wants to be a Millionaire" type key-pads. Statistics on the group's responses can then be displayed to the class via a data projection screen. The authors found that both staff and students reacted positively to the use of EVS. They also found that students who had used EVS performed better than those who had not, and recorded increased attendance at lectures that utilised EVS.

Developing tools for visual communication

Evan Dickerson and Sam Kennedy, IT Research and Development Unit, University of the Arts London

University of the Arts London (UAL) is constituted of five leading art colleges, thus much of the currency of the university is founded upon visual literacy, interaction, creativity and image-based discourse. In response to the limitations of standard Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) for "visually focused" institutions such as UAL, it was decided to supplement the functionality of the institution's VLE (Blackboard) with tools tailored to UAL's particular needs. This was made possible via Blackboard's building blocks Application Programming Interface (API). Applications developed include a number of audiovisual tools that allow video and audio communications to be conducted via the VLE, and the "Image Board": a discussion forum which is designed to be more "image-friendly" than typical VLE discussion forums.

The FAIR Enough project – deploying JISC materials in tandem with in-house resources

Anne Atkins and James Clay, Western Colleges Consortium

Exploring e-learning within the Further Education sector can be like trying to decipher a complicated road map: there are many roads that can be taken, most seem to go somewhere that looks appealing, but few actually take the institution in the direction it wants to go. As with any journey, planning is key: without a clear e-learning strategy, or an agreed map for individual staff to follow, an institution can go round and round without a clear destination. The Fair Enough project examined how JISC collections and services might be embedded into the various Virtual Learning Environments and intranet delivery systems deployed by institutions in the Western Colleges Consortium. The project highlighted how JISC resources can successfully be presented in tandem with assets and services held by colleges. The Project URL is <http://fairenough.ac.uk/>

Director's report

News from Rhonda Riachi

ALT-C 2005 - in sunny Manchester. My thanks go to the ALT staff, the ALT-C 2005 helpers, staff at the University of Manchester, the programme committee, session chairs, our sponsors and exhibitors, and all the members and presenters who made it a conference to remember. Papers by the presenters are being added to the conference web site at www.alt.ac.uk/altc2005

AGM news. Congratulations to **Linda Creanor** (Glasgow Caledonian University), who was elected Vice-Chair of ALT at the Annual General Meeting in Manchester. The Vice-Chair serves for 3 years, taking on the Chair and the Presidency in the second and third years respectively. **Jane Seale** (University of Southampton) is now Chair of ALT and **John Cook** (London Metropolitan University) is President for 2005-2006. Also elected to the Central Executive Committee (the ALT trustees) were **Dawn Leeder** (University of Cambridge) and **Tom Franklin** (Franklin Consulting), who will both serve three years. We noted our thanks to **Stephen Brown** and **George Roberts**, who retired from the committee in September.

Following the AGM, the Central Executive Committee made the following appointments to committee chairs:

- Chair of Events: **John Phelps**;
- Chair of FE Advisory Committee: **Cathy Ellis**;
- Chair of Membership: **Barbara Newland**;
- Chair of Publications: **Paul Bacsich**.

ALT-C 2006: deadlines. Be sure to register and book your accommodation early next year, because the conference follows on immediately after the Edinburgh Festival. The deadlines for submission to ALT-C 2006 are similar to this year:

- research papers close on **14 Feb 2006**;
 - all other streams close on **28 Feb 2006**;
 - registration for presenters closes **30 June 2006**;
 - final registrations close on **11 August 2006**.
- You have been warned!

Go to www.alt.ac.uk/altc2006

Spring Conference 2006. The University of Leiden in the Netherlands will host the 2006 Spring Conference and Research Seminar on 6 and 7 April. This popular annual event always fills early, so keep the dates free. We are planning four discussion themes - more to follow soon.

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