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The changing role of Becta

Christine Vincent

The last twelve months has been an exciting and challenging time for Becta, moving from being a government agency that has supported the development and delivery of ICT and e-learning for schools and the learning and skills sector, to an agency that directly supports government in the leadership and co-ordination of the DfES e-strategy "Harnessing Technology". Becta has now moved away from direct delivery of programmes to the sector (such as the ILT champions and Ferl Practitioners programmes). In future Becta will work with the DfES Transformation Directorate to lead the co-ordination, evidential base, strategic advice and direction and (where appropriate) the strategic delivery of the e-strategy.

Partnership agreement signed with JISC



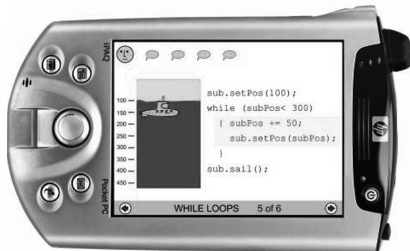
Malcolm Read, Executive Secretary of the JISC, and Seb Schmoller, Executive Secretary of ALT, sign the Memorandum of Understanding at the JISC conference.

Case studies

Design for multimedia mLearning

Claire Bradley, Richard Haynes and Tom Boyle

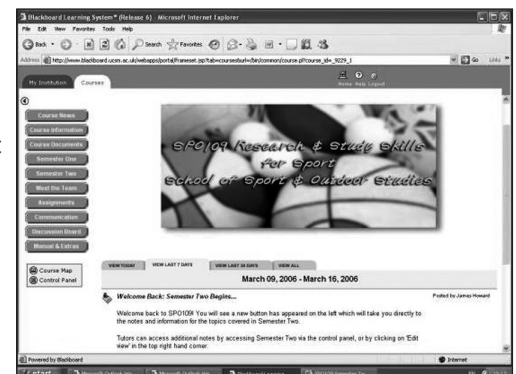
This article presents two case studies of projects developed for Personal Digital Assistants (PDAs). The research team were interested to find out if engaging, interactive multimedia resources could be effectively designed for this small but mobile device and whether real 'any time, any place' multimedia learning experiences could be achieved. The article briefly describes the two projects, feedback from their use, and the issues encountered in designing and developing the resources. It was found that the resulting rich learning experiences offer a number of advantages that only portable, personal devices can offer.



Coaching students for success

James Howard and Nick Pearce

This case study describes one element of a continuing research project into how best to integrate study skills and research methods into undergraduate degree schemes on the first-year Sports Studies course at St Martin's College, and investigates the role that online learning may play in this process. The authors examine the rationale for the project, the project design and implications for assessment.



NEWS AND REVIEWS

Executive Secretary's report

News from Seb Schmoller

Staff changes Marion O'Dea, who began working for ALT as Operations Manager in January 2004, went on maternity leave on 6 March 2006, after a suitable send-off. Marion gave birth to a beautiful girl, Erin Siobhain, on Wednesday 5 April (which also happens to be ALT's birthday!). Marion will return on 2 October 2006. Bob Green, a management accountant with previous senior experience in the e-learning industry, is covering Marion's post during her absence.

We have also just appointed Melanie Fox as a half-time Administrative Assistant. Melanie will start on 4 May 2006. Melanie previously worked in publishing for CABI as a Marketing Administrator. Note that brief biographies of all ALT staff can be found at www.alt.ac.uk/team.html.

Research Committee Following on from my report in the January 2006 Newsletter we issued a call for expressions of interest to join a new ALT Research Committee, chaired by Professor Robin Mason, from the Open University's Institute of Educational Technology; and we received a strong response. The full membership of the Committee can be found on the online version at newsletter.alt.ac.uk.

RAE 2008 – ALT makes a difference We were grateful for the opportunity afforded us by Diana Laurillard to collaborate 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". John Cook, Vice-Chair of the ALT Research Committee, has reviewed the final panel criteria and working methods for Unit of Assessment 45 (Education) – www.rae.ac.uk/pubs/2006/01/byuoa.asp?uk and writes: I think we can claim 4 small successes from our submission to the consultation (for UoA 45).

- We suggested: "1.2. The UOA 45 descriptor lacked some structural rigour when compared, for example, with that for Unit of Assessment 23 (Computer Science and Informatics)." Result 1: this paragraph has been reshaped.
- We suggested: "1.3. We welcome the inclusion of 'ICT in education', but this would be expressed more accurately as 'use of ICT in all aspects of education'." Result 2: ICT is now seen as a substantive area whereas before it was grouped in with other 'cross-sectoral issues'.
- We suggested: "1.4. The descriptor should also include; ... under 'Sectors', 'informal learning'." Result 3: Informal learning is now included and regarded as an 'educational system'.
- We suggested (in relation to the submission of learning materials as research outputs): "3.1. Paragraph 20 [now 21] ... The phrase 'Such materials must embody original research and make a contribution to knowledge in its field.' would make the position much clearer." Result 4: the phrase 'must embody original research' has been included.

Membership Services Committee I reported in the January 2006 Newsletter on our plans to merge ALT's Membership and Events Committees to form a new Membership Services Committee. The new committee, which will be co-chaired by John Phelps and Barbara Newland, will hold its first meeting on 3 May. An open call for new members was issued recently and confirmation of the full membership will be reported soon.

CMALT I wrote last month to all members and member organisations concerning an introductory offer we have made to encourage uptake of CMALT our certified membership scheme. Stemming from this ALT is in discussions with a number of organisations that are interested in assessing the value of CMALT by putting staff through it on an employer-funded basis. If your organisation falls into this category, please email cmalt@alt.ac.uk so that we can take things further. Full scheme details can be found at www.alt.ac.uk/cmalt/.

JISC Partnership We signed a formal Partnership Agreement with JISC at the JISC Conference on 14 March. Over the next few weeks we will be agreeing with JISC a plan of activities. We intend to summarise this in the next issue of the Newsletter.

sschmoller@brookes.ac.uk 25 April 2006

Conference review

International workshop on wireless and mobile technologies in education

Bob Harrison

Bob reports from the Institute of Electrical and Electronic Engineers (IEEE) workshop on mobile learning held in Tokushima City, Japan, in November 2005. Although attended by over 200 delegates from all over the world, it was participants from the United Kingdom who played a lead role.

Project updates

Designing spaces for effective learning

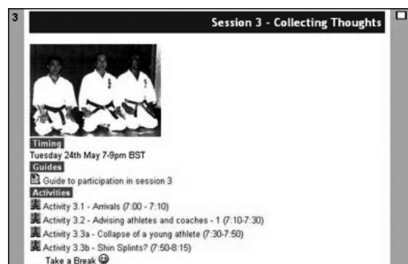
Ros Smith

A new publication from the JISC e-Learning and Innovation strand will soon be arriving on managers' desks. 'Designing Spaces for Effective Learning' features some innovative designs of physical learning spaces in further education as well as higher education institutions. 'Designing Spaces for Effective Learning' will also be featured as part of a forthcoming JISC infoKit on managing the redesign of learning spaces, produced in conjunction with JISC infoNet. For more information go to www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/infokits/learning-space-design.

Case studies

Virtual Clinics: Online places for problem-based learning (PBL)

Geraldine Jones, Stuart Miller, Michael England and Tim Bilham



Virtual Clinics were conceived as a mechanism to bring rare or inaccessible but authentic practice based learning opportunities to doctors studying at a distance on the School for Health's MSc/PG Diploma in Sport and Exercise Medicine (SEM) at the University of Bath. This case study reports on the first stage in a larger project to design and develop problem based approaches for learning about professional practice. The aim of this pilot phase is to act as a 'proof of concept' providing insights into designing and managing online problem based learning (PBL) processes for learning about clinical practice.

Assistive technology: developing a loans scheme for all

Rebecca McCready

In September 2004 Newcastle University launched a Hardware Loans Scheme to provide assistive technology to any member of staff, student or visitor to the campus. Since then there have been many developments including a new, more accessible and visible location and online registration and referral. These improvements, as well as continued publicity, have significantly increased the use of the Scheme in the second year.

Director's report

News from Rhonda Riachi

ALT-C 2006: registration information Authors will receive news about the status of their submissions by 19 May. If you have not heard the outcome of your submission by 19 May, please email alt_administrator@brookes.ac.uk.

Registration opens on 8 May. All principal presenters must register by 9 June; and all remaining presenters must register by the early bird rate deadline on 30 June. Exhibition bookings also close on 30 June. Registration closes on 11 August. For more information see the back page or go www.alt.ac.uk/altc2006.

Call for ALT-C 2007 Chair / Co-Chairs The venue for ALT-C 2007 is Nottingham University, which has a pleasant lakeside campus and dedicated conference facilities. We are now seeking an experienced Chair or Co-Chairs to lead the programme committee for this key event. Planning and organisation of ALT-C is the responsibility of the Director and the Chair/Co-Chairs, with support from other key committee members. The Conference Chair (or Co-Chairs) will also receive extensive support from ALT's permanent staff.

For more details about the role please contact me on rriachi@brookes.ac.uk. Deadline for expressions of interest: Friday 5 May. A call for programme committee members will go out when the chair or co-chairs have been confirmed. We also welcome expressions of interest to chair ALT-C in future years.

Nominations for vacancies: AGM 2006 There will be three vacancies on the Central Executive Committee for the Vice-Chair and two Trustee positions. These important roles are all three-year terms and will commence from the Annual General Meeting in Edinburgh on 6 September. If the posts are contested, the election will be conducted via secure Internet ballot (using Electoral Reform Services) and the results announced in the summer. Members must notify the office (alt@brookes.ac.uk) by 30 May if their email address has changed, as notification of the secure login procedure will be sent via email. The deadline for nominations is 30 May. Nominators should complete the form on the web site at www.alt.ac.uk/docs/agm_notice_2006.pdf or contact me for more details (rriachi@brookes.ac.uk).

CAMEL gets another hump! The CAMEL project partners (www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/camel) have been successful in bidding for funds from the JISC in a new project led by Greenwich University. Entitled "e-learning Independent Design Activities (eLIDA) for Collaborative Approaches to the Management of e-learning (CAMEL)", the project will be funded under the JISC Design for Learning Programme to explore the area of implementing and evaluating learning design tools. ALT is delighted to be participating in a collaborative project that plays to our members' strengths. The project will run from May 2006 till October 2007.

Spring Conference 2006 Leiden University provided a beautiful venue for stimulating discussions at our spring conference and research seminar in April. We are grateful to all the presenters and facilitators who contributed to make this event successful and enjoyable.

Jennifer Burke writes about the conference in the ILTA April newsletter: "...it was brilliantly organised and had a very worthwhile group of speakers and attendees. Often we attend conferences and return back to the office with loads of questions and answers in mind. What was really good about the conference in Leiden was it was followed by a research day which enabled delegates to reflect on everything they had heard the day before and then apply it to a working paper that was compiled using a Wiki". (The ILTA newsletter is at ilta.dcu.ie - requires login.)

A paper will be published jointly with SURF and ILTA in July to capture the key points raised at the research seminar. Slides from the presentations and a link to the research seminar discussions on the wiki can be found at www.alt.ac.uk/conferences.php.

rriachi@brookes.ac.uk 25 April 2006

Computer games in education

3 July 2006, Sheffield Hallam University

Presenters: David Squire, DESQ; Gavin Peake, West Nottinghamshire College; and Rob Woon, Nottingham City LEA and DVMS.

Three presenters will demonstrate how computer games are being developed and used in education, covering topics such as key skills assessment, and also as tools for widening participation. The workshop will feature case studies and feedback from students.

Booking deadline: 19 June 2006

For more information visit www.alt.ac.uk/workshops.php

Conference

ALT-C 2006: the next generation

5-7 September 2006, Edinburgh

Keynote speakers

Prof Stephen Heppell, Heppell.Net Ltd
Dr Diana Oblinger, Vice-President, EDUCAUSE
Prof Tim O'Shea, Principal & Vice-Chancellor, University of Edinburgh

ALT-C 2006 will feature four themes introduced by invited speakers as shown:

- Next generation learning: **Prof Gilly Salmon**
- Next generation learners: **Dr Phil Candy**
- Next generation technology: **Dr Terry Anderson**
- Next generation providers: **Dr Chris Yapp**

Key dates

Presenters' registration deadline: **9 June** Earlybird registration deadline: **30 June**
Exhibition booking deadline: **30 June** Registrations close: **11 August**

www.alt.ac.uk/altc2006



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 <http://newsletter.alt.ac.uk>

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

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MSc Multimedia and E learning

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