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

Finding common ground
Reflections on a recent British Council sponsored visit to East Jerusalem and the West Bank

John Cook and Seb Schmoller

Between 11 and 13 June 2006, as guests of the British Council, John Cook (ALT President) and Seb Schmoller (ALT Executive Secretary) visited East Jerusalem and the West Bank, and universities in Hebron, Ramallah, and Bethlehem, with a video-conference to institutions in Nablus and Gaza. The purpose of the visit was to set up study exchanges and meet colleagues from Palestinian Higher Education.

John and Seb met heads of centres, heads of quality, learning technologists, directors of technology, lecturers and students. Their general impression was that colleagues in Palestine are using learning technology to provide flexible learning opportunities and to promote commerce. Plans are now being made for a British Council pre-conference workshop at ALT-C 2006.

Imad Hodali, Director, and Saada Shalabi, Head of Networks and Systems, Al-Quds Open University, show their 45 MB/s connection between Palestinian Universities and London
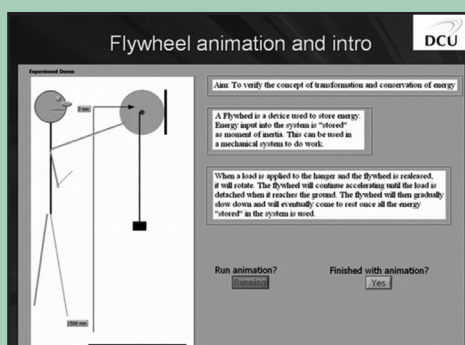
Case study

Virtual Instruments: Visualising and Logging Science and Engineering experiments

Philip Smyth, Dermot Brabazon and Eilish McLoughlin

A virtual instrument (VI) is a multimedia tool that can be used to present information on an experiment prior to students performing it in the laboratory. What makes a VI unique is its capability to automatically log experimental data as the experiment progresses. Seven VIs have recently been piloted with over 200 engineering and physics students at Dublin City University (DCU). This case study presents evidence that students learn more effectively from VIs compared to the non-instrumented traditional laboratories. The method of implementation of these VIs, which can be adapted to any discipline area, is also discussed.

Project update

CAMEL train heads for oasis

Jacquie Kelly and Rhonda Riachi

Greenwich University hosted the final exchange meeting of the CAMEL partners in June. In the course of just 12 months this HEFCE-funded project has examined a range of learning technology approaches for institutional change, forged new friendships across the HE/FE divide, and led to a successful bid for a new project now being run by one of the partners. The project evaluation is being conducted by Inspire Research Ltd, and will be completed over the summer. Find CAMEL at **www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/camel.**

Collaborative Approaches to the Management of E-Learning

NEWS AND REVIEWS

Executive Secretary's report

News from Seb Schmoller

New organisational membership tariffs: We are in the process of inviting the large number of smaller HE institutions, FE Colleges, and Sixth Form Colleges who are not organisational members to join ALT, by drawing their attention to the new (and substantially lower!) membership fees. This has resulted from ALT having adopted a banded membership tariff. You can check if your organisation is a member, on the ALT web site.

ALT Strategy: Since early 2003 we have had an annually revised three-year strategy. The current version is at: **www.alt.ac.uk/docs/ALT_strategy_20060223.pdf**. On 22 June 2006 members of the ALT Central Executive Committee and all four of our main committees (Further Education, Membership Services, Research, and Publications), along with most of the ALT staff, attended an "away-day" at Glasgow Caledonian University's Saltire Learning Centre. The purpose of the day was to review the strategy and to propose revisions. A wide range of major changes to the strategy were identified. Over the next three months a new strategy will be written. This is likely to be finalised by the ALT Central Executive Committee in November, to take effect early in 2007.

DfES e-Strategy: Last year DfES finalised its "Harnessing Technology" e-Strategy. On 7 November 2006, Becta will be hosting, for England, a national conference about the e-Strategy, involving representatives from all types of publicly funded educational institutions. A "National Partners Group" has been set up to shape the event and ALT is one of the 20 or so organisations represented on the Group.

JISC Partnership Agreement: I reported in the last edition of the Newsletter that ALT had signed a formal Partnership Agreement with the JISC at the JISC Conference on 14 March. Subsequently we have agreed with JISC a plan of activities for the next 12 months. The main theme for these activities is "supporting the development of the community of learning technology researchers and practitioners in the UK, their professional development, and their engagement with the work of JISC and ALT." One of the first outcomes of the plan in action is the inclusion in the web-based version of the ALT Newsletter of a regular column by Craig Wentworth, JISC Development Director for User Environments. Other aspects of the plan include a commitment to work with ALT to raise awareness of CMALT, ALT's certified membership scheme, and jointly to investigate the need for and feasibility of developing a learning technology community web site.

CMALT: Briefings about CMALT, ALT's accreditation scheme for learning technologists, have been run for Leeds, Sheffield and Anglia Ruskin Universities. Email **cmalt@alt.ac.uk** if you would like a similar event for your institution.

sschmoller@brookes.ac.uk   27 June 2006

Software reviews

PebblePad

by Neal Sumner

PebblePad is an eportfolio system developed by Pebble Learning in collaboration with the University of Wolverhampton. This review sets out the main functions of the Pebblepad eportfolio system and describes the experience of setting up and running a year-long pilot project using this tool at City University. The scheme has been running for eight months and the review reports informally on experience to date in advance of the formal evaluation that will be completed at the end of the year's trial.

Sound opportunities with Horizon Wimba Voice Tools
The Horizon Wimba Voice Tools (as PowerLinks within a VLE)

by Marina Orsini-Jones

The Horizon Wimba Voice Tools consist of a suite of tools that can be easily integrated as PowerLinks within a Virtual Learning Environment (VLE) like WebCT or Blackboard and/or used as stand-alone web tools. This review looks at the four voice tools available (Voice Board, Voice Email, Voice Direct and Voice Recorder) and focuses on how they can be integrated into WebCT.

JISC update

Engaging with users and learners

Lawrie Phipps and Lisa Gray

£81 million of funding is available to the academic community in the United Kingdom over the next three years to support higher and further education research into Information Communication Technologies (ICT) through the JISC Capital Programme. Six programmes building on existing activities and promoting innovation have been launched in the areas of network infrastructure (SuperJANET 5), digitisation, digital repositories and preservation, e-Infrastructure, e-Learning and user environments. In the online article Lawrie Phipps and Lisa Gray provide details about two of these programmes. Further information about all programmes can be found on the JISC website: **www.jisc.ac.uk/capital.html**

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

Conference reviews

ALT Spring conference and research seminar 2006

Dr Jen Harvey

Leiden University in the Netherlands was the beautiful setting for the ALT Spring Conference and Research Seminar 'New connections, new challenges' organised in association with the Irish Learning Technology Association (ILTA) and SURF and held from 6-7 April 2006. This year's conference chair was Steve Warburton from Kings College London. The themes for the event were:

- Emerging technologies and the 'Net generation'.
- Digital games: play and simulation.
- Tools for lifelong learning: identity, movement and standards (including e-portfolios and digital repositories).

EdTech 2006, the seventh annual conference for educational technology users in Ireland

Claire McAvinia

The landscape that inspired W B Yeats provided the backdrop to the seventh annual conference for educational technology users in Ireland. Organised by the Irish Learning Technology Association (ILTA), EdTech 2006 was held at the Institute of Technology, Sligo, on 25 and 26 May. EdTech is the main annual event for colleagues involved in developing, using and researching learning technology in Ireland. This year it included keynote addresses from international experts, and over 40 papers from all education sectors. Recurring themes during the conference were: personal technologies and social software, the development of digital content and repositories for this, and the management of costs in e-learning.

Director's report

News from Rhonda Riachi

ALT-C 2006 registration information: Bookings are coming in faster than ever for ALT-C 2006; we may have to close bookings earlier than our current **11 August deadline**. The draft programme and list of session titles are now online at **www.alt.ac.uk/altc2006/timetable.html**. Avoid disappointment by registering now at **www.alt.ac.uk/altc2006/registering.html.**

En suite accommodation with dial-up Internet access and telephones is available on campus next to the conference venue; book well before the deadline to secure this. Hotels in the city centre (a 30min bus ride away – see **www.alt.ac.uk/altc2006/travel.html**) are also offering discounts for ALT-C delegates, which can be booked online via Travelocity Business **until 4 August**.

Call for ALT-C 2007 Programme Committee: ALT-C 2007 will be chaired by Prof Mike Sharples (Nottingham University) and Dr Sharon Waller (Anglia Ruskin University), and the venue will be Nottingham University. We are now seeking Programme Committee (PC) members to take an active part in planning the programme, reviewing papers and chairing sessions at the conference. PC members must be able to commit to reviewing at least 15 abstracts for sessions, and/or refereeing at least 2 research papers during March and April 2007. The full call will go out on alt-announce shortly; for informal queries please contact me on **rriachi@brookes.ac.uk**. Deadline for expressions of interest: **Friday 16 September**

AGM 2006: Our thirteenth Annual General Meeting will take place at Heriot-Watt University on **Wednesday 6 September, 1200-1230**. All members are warmly invited to attend. All candidates were elected unopposed to the three vacancies on the Central Executive Committee so there will be no ballot this year. The following people will take up their places after the AGM in September: Trustees: **Liz Bennett** (Huddersfield University) and **Gayle Calverley** (Manchester University), Vice-Chair: **Cathy Ellis** (Brooklands College)

These important roles are on three-year terms and will commence from the Annual General Meeting in Edinburgh on 6 September.

Staff news: Teresa Prochazka will start with ALT as Projects Manager on Monday 7 August. Teresa has worked for the past three years supporting the large accountancy certification programme (ACCA) in the Oxford Brookes School of Business, and recently completed a Diploma in Management Studies. She will be managing the application process for CMALT and a range of internal and external projects with ALT's partners.

Prizes and promotions... Congratulations to the following ALT members who were awarded National Teaching Fellowships in July:**Dr John Phelps** (Co-Chair, ALT Membership Services Committee); **Prof Gilly Salmon** (Member of ALT Research Committee); and **Simon Walker** (Member of CAMEL project team). For the full list go to **www.heacademy.ac.uk/news/20_4597.htm.** Congratulations also to former ALT Trustee and President **John O'Donoghue**, who will be moving to the University of Central Lancashire to take up the post of Professor in Learning Technology in September, and also to **Prof Allison Littlejohn** who joined Glasgow Caledonian University in June as Director of the Caledonian Academy.

Send your news for the digest: Email your learning technology vacancies, events, calls for papers, etc, as brief text to alt@brookes.ac.uk with the subject line "For the digest", and include a URL where more information can be found. The digest goes out fortnightly to everyone on the alt-announce list (nearly 1,100 UK and international subscribers).

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NEWS / EVENTS

News from the Netherlands

Publications from the SURF e-learning website

Marja Verstelle, Peter B Sloep, Gayle Calverley

From time to time ALT-N will provide summaries of articles which have been published in English on the SURF E-learning Theme Site (**http://elearning.surf. nl/e-learning/english**). Links to PDFs of the work and contact details will be provided online.

The E-learning Theme Site focuses on developments in Dutch institutions of higher education. It publishes information on practical evaluations, instruments, and research results related to Information and Communications Technology (ICT) and educational innovation. The site also contains discussions about leading publications and websites. It is aimed at all Learning Technologists involved in the use of ICT in educational innovation.

Conferences

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**

Please note: Places for the conference are going fast and we may have to close the bookings early. Register now at **www.alt.ac.uk/altc2006/registering.html**

www.alt.ac.uk/altc2006

Web Futures (www.ilrt.bris.ac.uk/projects/web_futures)
and the
Labgroup (www.labgroup.org.uk/)
present:

The Present and Future Semantic Web

13 September 2006, Hewlett Packard Labs, Bristol

A one-day Round Table event where participants from commercial and research backgrounds will examine how far along the visionary path of the Semantic Web (as outlined in Tim Berners-Lee's 1998 Road map) we have travelled.

Call for contributions: Talks with a pragmatic focus are invited to stimulate discussion around current and future use cases where semantic web technology has its strongest application.

Contributions on these topics are particularly encouraged:

- The Semantic Web and Information and Knowledge Management.
- The Semantic Web and eLearning.
- The Semantic Web and Social Software.
- The Semantic Web and Mobile Devices.

For more information see **www.ilrt.bris.ac.uk/projects/web_futures**