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Partnerships with Palestinians

James Everett

The Mediterranean Virtual University Project (MVU), funded by the European Community for two years, led by the University of Strathclyde with partners from Denmark, Cyprus, Malta, Turkey, Egypt, Jordan, Lebanon and the Palestinian Territories, has just finished. As part of the EUMEDIS Programme, it focussed on information and communication technologies applied to education. Reflecting the disciplinary affiliation of the university departments involved, the MVU developed online courses in computer science and related fields. The Project also sought to address the question of access to online learning by procuring equipment for partner institutions in the Mediterranean basin. This article discusses some of the achievements of this Project but also describes some of the issues that arose when working with Palestinian partners.

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The Leitch review of skills in the UK

We provide four perspectives on the Leitch Review. First, **Bob Harrison** offers an overview of this Review published in December 2006 in: **Where is the E in Leitch? Embedded or Invisible?** The Review presents the case for investing in skills, provides a vision for the UK economy and makes some recommendations including a reform agenda. However, Bob questions how this review, prepared with an "Industrial Age" mindset, can help deliver world-class skills for the "Information Age" without a major shift in perspective.

In **Leitch: "For skills to benefit the economy, they must be economically valuable" or "don't get too excited"**, **Kevin Donovan** offers a slightly different perspective on the review. He criticises the Review's faith in employers, which he feels is entirely misplaced and will result in a corruption of the role of educational institutions. He worries about the Review's inherent belief in prosperity for all through globalisation, which he believes is not necessarily delivered.

Leitch is no Occam by **Donald Clark** has a jaundiced view of the Review: another report about skills which does not adhere to Occam's principle. Clark describes the Review as "stillborn prose," and written so that only the most hardened of educational professionals will read it. According to Clark the Review fails to acknowledge the real problem: the poverty of imagination in our schools. He is highly critical of the creation of yet another Commission and describes the multiplication and duplication of such entities within education.

The final perspective comes from The **Quality Improvement Agency (QIA)**, which welcomes Leitch's report and supports his ambition that the UK should become a world leader in skills by 2020. It is QIA's belief that, given the further education system's track record of improvement and responsiveness, this ambition – and the major changes that the move to demand-led funding implies – can be achieved. However, the QIA also believe that it would be easy to underestimate the challenge that this ambition presents and that the colleges and providers that the QIA works with will want support. The QIA outlines how it will help colleges and providers to achieve Leitch's targets.

Executive secretary's report

news from Seb Schmoller

ALT strategy: The 2007-2010 ALT Strategy was approved by the Central Executive Committee during autumn 2006 and can be accessed from the ALT home page at www.alt.ac.uk. The new strategy redefines our aims, increasing them in number from 3 to 6. Our new aims are to:

- represent and support our members, and provide services for them;
- facilitate collaboration between practitioners, researchers, and policy makers;
- spread good practice in the use of learning technology;
- raise the profile of research in learning technology;
- support the professionalisation of learning technologists;
- contribute to the development of policy.

Against each of these aims the strategy summarises our priorities over the next 3 years, setting target dates for completion. We will revise the strategy annually, from autumn 2007 onwards. In the meantime any comments on, questions about and criticisms of the strategy will be very welcome. Please direct them to me at the address below.

2007 "FE Practitioner" Conference: In 2005 we ran with the (then) Learning and Skills Development Agency a very successful conference for e-learning practitioners from FE, Adult and Community, and Work-based Learning. The main materials from the event, consisting of 20 thoroughly described good practice case studies, are freely available from the ALT web site at www.alt.ac.uk/fepc2005.html. Currently we are planning a similar event in autumn 2007, sponsored by the Quality Improvement Agency, and with support from partners including Becta, the Learning and Skills Network, and the LSC.

CMALT – introductory offer extended: Now that our Projects Manager Teresa Prochazka is in post, work on CMALT (our Certified Membership Scheme) is picking up. We have also extended our CMALT Introductory Offer to July 2007; staff of current ALT member organisations are eligible to apply for CMALT at the CMALT certification fee of £95 per person, and with the £52 individual membership fee for such staff waived until the end of July 2007. For information about CMALT, go to www.alt.ac.uk/cmalt. To discuss the provision of a workshop about CMALT for staff at your institution, email cmalt@alt.ac.uk.

Membership services survey: One of the priorities shown in the ALT Strategy is that every other year we will organise a comprehensive survey of our individual, organisational, and sponsoring members *and potential members*, and use the results to:

- i inform the long-term development of this 3 year strategy;
- ii shape the benefits and costs of individual, organisational, and sponsoring membership.

ALT's Membership Services Committee, chaired by John Phelps from the Central Executive Committee, is currently working on the focus and design of the survey, with the help of Caroline Ingram who is experienced in survey design, and a member of the Membership Services Committee. We will be issuing the survey in the spring. Please look out for it.

sschmoller@alt.ac.uk 14/01/2007

Project updates

The Tribal Education Innovation Challenge

John Simpson

Tribal has launched its first ever Education Innovation Challenge campaign: a competition to attract new business start-up ideas for services and products in all sectors of education. Many innovative and original proposals have been received from all over the UK and cover all aspects of learning, teaching and administration. Although Tribal will only be able to work with a few of the applicants, others will be provided with suggestions for further development. Such has been the success of the competition that Tribal is now considering turning the Challenge into a continuous process.

Further information is available at www.educationinnovation.co.uk/what.php.

Simulations as a motivational tool in accessibility awareness raising and continuing professional development

George Papadopoulos and Elaine Pearson, Accessibility Research Centre, University of Teesside

This project sets out to examine the use of accessibility simulations and their potential to raise awareness, help staff appreciate these barriers and encourage them to adopt inclusive online practices, which consequently could offer an improved learning experience for disabled students.

JanET voice service

This new service will allow users from within the JANET community to collaborate using voice, instant messaging, and potentially other features such as shared whiteboards, slides and desktops.

NEWS AND REVIEWS

Software review

using Wink to create software presentations

Athina Chatzigavriil and Julie voce

Wink is a free, easy-to-use application for creating tutorials and presentations. It is very useful for creating software presentations that guide the user through a specific task. This review describes the functionality offered by Wink.

Conference reviews

mLearn 2006: across generations and cultures

Bob Harrison and Andy Black

The 5th mLearn Conference was held in Banff, Canada, in October 2006 and featured researchers and practitioners from over 30 countries. The UK was well represented and ALT members continue to make a significant contribution to this emerging and developing field. Mike Sharples, University of Nottingham, and co-chair of ALT-C 2007, is one of the founders of this movement and hosted the first mLearn in Birmingham in 2002.

LAMs Conference and AsCILITE 2006

Linda Creanor and simon Walker

The first International LAMS Conference and the 23rd ASCILITE Conference were held back-to-back in Sydney, Australia, during December 2006. Simon Walker (eLIDA CAMEL member, Greenwich University) and Linda Creanor (ALT Chair, Glasgow Caledonian University) share their impressions of these two complementary events.

Online Educa Berlin 2006

rhonda riachi

ALT had an exhibition stand at OEB for the first time in December 2006. Rhonda offers a brief glimpse of the many sessions on offer and of the pre-conference farewell workshop from the European Academic Software Awards (www.easa-award.net)

Director's report

news from rhonda riachi

ALT-C 2007 - submission deadlines approaching: Submissions will close on **14 February** for research papers and **28 February** for all other session types. Please help us to spread the word by circulating a brief email message to colleagues – contact Hayley Willis for the text (h.willis@brookes.ac.uk). The submission instructions and forms have changed this year, so be sure to read the presentation guidelines and conference themes at www.alt.ac.uk/altc2007/papers.html

Registration for presenters will close on 9 June, early-bird registrations close on 30 June, and final registrations close on 10 August. We had to close bookings three weeks early in 2006, so don't miss out! www.alt.ac.uk/altc2007

ALT-C 2006 archive: For ideas from previous ALT-C presenters you can read the abstracts and download presentations from the ALT-C 2006 timetable at www.alt.ac.uk/altc2006/timetable/timetable.php. Click on the themes at the beginning of each day to see a full list of presentations in that theme, run your mouse slowly over ID numbers to see the full title, or search by name, title or keyword in the search box at the top of the page.

Limited copies of the ALT-C 2006 Abstracts and the Research Proceedings are available from the ALT office and can be ordered from our publications page at www.alt.ac.uk/alt_p_orders.html

Christmas donations: Thank you to all who responded to our call for donations to Oxfam in lieu of Christmas cards. Money is still coming in, so we will issue a short report soon indicating the amount raised and how this has been put to good use through Oxfam.

ELI 2007 conference: Jacquie Kelly and Steve Warburton will be representing ALT at the EDUCAUSE ELI 2007 conference in Atlanta, Georgia, USA. They will be writing a blog and a joint conference report which will be sent to all members. Read their blog at conference-weblog.alt.ac.uk/eli2007/

spring Conference 2007: With regret we decided to cancel the spring conference in 2007, as there has been increasing competition for events during March/April. Instead we have begun planning for 2008, and are aiming to incorporate some new ideas and to rework the research day with assistance from members of the Research Committee.

New Co-Editors for ALT-N: We are delighted that Guin Glasfurd-Brown and Morag Munro will succeed Susi Peacock as Co-Editors of ALT-N in June 2007. Morag has been a Deputy Editor of ALT-N since 2005, and Guin has worked as Assistant Producer on the BBC History Website, as well as working as a freelance journalist for a weekly newspaper. They will be supported by the Deputy Editors, Julie Voce and Graham McElearney.

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Workshop

Publishing research in learning technology

venue: Oxford or London (TBC)

17 April 2007, 10:30 - 16:00

Presenters: Martin Oliver, Institute of Education, and Jane seale, University of southampton (ALT-J Editors)

This workshop is essential for anyone interested in publishing research in learning technology and particularly for those new to the field. The presenters will provide an overview of how research papers are reviewed for publication in ALT-J and will give some information on other research journals. Participants will discuss paper-writing strategies and what to avoid.

For more information go to www.alt.ac.uk/workshops.php

Conference

ALT-C 2007: Beyond control Learning technology for the social network generation

Nottingham, UK, 4-6 september

Keynote speakers:

Professor sir Colin Campbell, Vice-Chancellor of the University of Nottingham

Dr Michelle selinger, Education Strategist, Cisco Systems

Dr Peter Norvig, Director of Research, Google

Professor Dylan Wiliam, Institute of Education

CALL FOR PAPERS

ALT-C 2007 will feature four areas, capturing the main strands of development current in the field:

- learning and internationalism
- designing learning spaces
- large-scale implementation
- learning technology for the social network generation

Each submission must address **at least two** of the following:

- theory of learning and technology
- innovative practice
- evaluation

The conference welcomes proposals for research papers for publication in the peer-reviewed Proceedings of ALT-C 2007, as well as short papers, symposia, workshops, demonstrations and posters.

Key dates

Research papers close: **14 February**

Other streams close: **28 February**

Presenters' registration deadline: **8 June** Earlybird registration deadline: **29 June**

Registrations close: **10 august**

www.alt.ac.uk/altc2007



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>

advertising rates

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

Deadline: **16 March 2007**

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Individual UK £52

Reduced rate (student, retired, unemployed) £25

Individual non-UK £65

For organisational membership and other details go to

www.alt.ac.uk/membership.html

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