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The ALT paperweight

Ray McAleese

The ALT paperweight is presented as a special token given to ALT members and others when appropriate. Ray McAleese reflects on his experience designing and commissioning the original set of twenty ALT Paperweights produced in 2001, and on his commissioning a new batch in 2007. The design of the ALT paperweight is not random: it owes its origins to the choices made by ALT's founders. Ray explains the significance of the materials, colours and design of these commemorative items, as well as describing the skilled, painstaking, and intricate story of their production by master craftsman Peter Holmes of Scottish Borders Glass in Hawick.



Peter Holmes working on the ALT paperweight and the final design

CMALT

Thanks to a generous grant from the JISC, ALT has launched a new time-limited scheme to enable individuals to apply for Certified Membership of ALT (CMALT) at preferential rates until 31st July 2008. The aim of this support is to build up a critical mass of CMALT holders.

Any individual working in UK higher or further education (including Adult and Community Learning and Work Based Learning) may apply for the discount.

Seb Schmoller, Chief Executive of ALT, says, *"We expect plenty of interest in the special offer for CMALT applicants. Learning technology is playing an increasingly important role in education and training in the UK, and certification is one way for learning technologists to have their experience and capabilities judged by peers, and to demonstrate that they are taking a committed and serious approach to their professional development."*

David Burrows, Director of Public Sector, Strategy and Marketing, Microsoft UK, says, *"[Alongside our own MCP brand] we recognise the value of schemes like CMALT, with its emphasis on enhancing the professional standing of people whose work involves the effective application of IT in teaching and learning, wherever they are employed."*

Full details of how to apply for CMALT, and the reduced rates and support offered, can be found at: www.alt.ac.uk/cmalt where you will also find details of how to join the low volume Jiscmail list to stay informed about CMALT initiatives.

In a further new development, a team working towards CMALT at Salford University has launched an online group portfolio initiative that offers collaborative and individual spaces for CMALT applicants to reflect on their practice and professional challenges. The system will use a software platform called freefolio, and provide online peer support to help break the 'circles of isolation' that learning technologists can experience when working within a single institution.

In this edition

Welcome to the Spring 2008 Edition of ALT-N!

- ALT's new commemorative paperweight
- Exciting new Web Science Research Initiative (WSRI)
- Redesigned eLearning Network (eLN) website
- A dynamic and vibrant community of practice (CoP) from the 'eLIDA CAMEL' project
- Current IMS initiatives for interoperability standards for dynamic "born-digital" resources
- A peer support initiative to support CMALT applicants
- Members report on a number of recent conferences and discussion days.
- Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (Ascilite) Awards
- Experiences trialling JISC Pedagogy Planning Tools
- Outcomes of Future lab's recent research discussion day "The future of education".

Would you like to contribute to ALT-N?

The ALT-N team welcomes articles that reflect the fast-changing field of learning technologies, including case studies demonstrating good practice, reviews of software, project updates, book reviews and conference reviews. ALT-N is published quarterly online. A print edition containing summaries of the online articles is distributed to all ALT members via postal mail.

For further information and guidelines, please contact the Editor, Morag Munro: morag.munro@dcu.ie.

Chief Executive's Report

Director of Development

We are delighted to announce that early in April ALT's Trustees appointed Mark van Harmelen as our new Director of Development. Mark joins us from University of Manchester, and will take up post on 16th May 2008, but will be playing a role in ALT far sooner than this.

ALT-C 2008 – Rethinking the Digital Divide – September 9-11 2008

The total "crop" of submissions was marginally up on the 2007 figure, and is an all time high. Between now and the end of April colleagues on the conference Programme Committee will be refereeing and reviewing all proposals and the actual structure of the conference will be clear during May. Meanwhile we have announced our Major Anchor Sponsors for the conference: Becta, Blackboard, Department of Universities, Innovation, and Skills (DIUS), Desire2Learn, Digital 2010, Eduserv, Elluminate, Higher Education Academy, IMC (UK) Learning Limited, JISC, Learning and Skills Council, MyKnowledgeMap, Positive Internet, QIA, University of Leeds, Wimba, Yorkshire Forward.

Innovations for 2008 will include:

- several contributions from invited speakers in addition to the three major keynotes, see back page;
- extensive use of software to capture, and enable remote participation in, conference sessions;
- a Gala Dinner, sponsored by Digital 2010 and Yorkshire Forward (the Regional Development Agency for Yorkshire & Humber), that will showcase the capabilities of Yorkshire's catering and hospitality students, and which will without doubt provide conference delegates with an evening to remember.

Consultation responses

Since ALT-N 60 we have responded to:

- the funding councils' consultation on the post-2008 Research Assessment Exercise;
- the DIUS consultation on the merger of the Quality Improvement Agency and the Centre for Excellence in Leadership (two FE sector bodies with whom we work closely);
- Becta's Harnessing Technology for FE, Skills, and Regeneration progress report.

At the time of writing we are finalising our responses to the Higher Education Academy's consultation on its Draft 2008-13 Strategic Plan, and on the UK Intellectual Property Office's "Gowers" consultation on changes to copyright restrictions. In the coming weeks we will be responding to the major DIUS consultation on informal adult learning, and HEFCE's consultation on its e-Learning Strategy (see below). All our consultation responses are published at www.alt.ac.uk/documents.html.

Process for reviewing the HEFCE e-Learning Strategy

HEFCE has commissioned Glenaffric Ltd to write an evaluation report on the existing HEFCE 2005/2012 e-Learning Strategy.

ALT has contributed to Glenaffric's evaluation, a draft of which should have been submitted to HEFCE by Glenaffric by the end of March. Following this HEFCE, working with the HE Academy and JISC, will reposition the existing strategy taking into account changes to policy, advances in technology and the recommendations in the evaluation. HEFCE intends then to seek feedback on this revised strategy in April, with final publication set for May/June. The strategy will be broadly aligned with other national e-learning strategies including those of HEFCW (publishing in April), SFC, and Becta, with the latter intending to publish a draft of Phase II of the Government's Harnessing Technology strategy (for England) in May for consultation over the summer.

Getting directly involved in ALT

During April we issued a call for nominations:

- to express an interest in membership of several of ALT's operational committees;
- for nominations for elections for Trustees of ALT, and as Vice Chair of the Association (open only to those who were individual members of ALT on 1 September 2007).

You can access the form from: www.alt.ac.uk

Experiences from making e-Learning work

A collection of papers is available based on the presentations at the Making e-learning work conference held at the National College for School Leadership in Nottingham on 11 October 2007. Sponsored by the Quality Improvement Agency (QIA) in partnership with ALT and with the support of CEL, LSC, JISC, LSN and Becta, the event was attended by around 200 representatives from Further Education.

A printed copy is available to ALT members and you can download individual papers or the collective proceedings in PDF format at: www.alt.ac.uk/fepec2007.html.

2008 Learning Technologist of the Year Award:

Earlier this month we announced the 2008 Learning Technologist of the Year Award, which this year has been generously sponsored by the Tribal Group. The award's overall purpose is to celebrate and reward excellent practice and outstanding achievement in the learning technology field. First, second and third prizes will be awarded in each of two categories: individual, and team, as follows: 1st prize £1000; 2nd prize £600; 3rd prize £300.

The award will be judged by a panel chaired by Professor Stephen Heppell, and will be presented in Leeds at the ALT conference on the evening of 10 September 2008, by David Cavallo, Chief Learning Architect of One Laptop Per Child, and Head of the Future of Learning Research Group at MIT Media Lab. The award is open to all individual members of ALT, and to individuals and teams based in ALT member organisations worldwide. The closing date for completed applications is 8 May 2008, and the full rubric for applicants is at www.alt.ac.uk/docs/lt2008_rubric_final.pdf.

seb.schmoller@alt.ac.uk 11/4/2008

NEWS AND REVIEWS

Working together to build a thriving e-learning community

Clive Shepherd

The eLearning Network (eLN) is a non-profit organisation run by the e-learning community for the e-learning community. In this article Clive Shepherd, recently appointed Chair of eLN, provides an update on the network's new website and membership options. The new eLN website provides extensive facilities for collaboration and social networking via forums, messaging and wikis, in order to build the largest and most valuable community possible. The eLN now also offer a new, completely free, associate membership level. Associate members can enjoy all the benefits of online networking, with the option to upgrade to full membership at any time.

See: www.elearningnetwork.org for further details.

In-source, out-source, open-source, right-source: Running a Service is Not a System

In 1998, the concept of a 'University for Industry' led to the creation of Ufi, branded as learndirect. In the eight years since its inception learndirect has become the largest e-learning network of its kind worldwide and has individualised the delivery of learning to a mass audience through a unique combination of flexibility, accessibility and support. Ufi's Director of Technology, Dick Moore, discusses the infrastructure underpinning learndirect's learner management system (LMS) and service characteristics and highlights the role that 'right sourcing' has played in learndirect's success.

The eLIDA CAMEL: Designed for Learning by Community

Jill Jameson reflects on the community of practice (CoP) aspects of the JISC-funded project e-Learning Independent Design Activities Collaborative Approaches to the Management of e-Learning (eLIDA CAMEL). A Design for Learning (D4L) project that grows an intentional e-learning CoP in higher and further education can stimulate challenging, illuminative processes to foster shared understandings about learning technology innovations and authentic dialogue between practitioners. The article discusses how technological and social insights can gradually emerge in a designed CoP, symbolised by camels riding across the desert to meet together in the oases of partner hosts. Honest peer-group exchanges, facilitated by a critical friend, aim to improve professional e-learning practice.

Web of Science

Our understanding of the Web has not kept pace with its development. It is engineered using formally specified languages and protocols, but has large scale effects on society. Certain human activities – including education – have been altered irretrievably. This article argues for the development of the discipline of Web Science, to understand the reciprocal relationship between the Web and society at a number of scales, from technical protocols to emergent social behaviour, to ensure that the Web's growth will continue, and will benefit society. The need for both analysis and engineering demands an inherently interdisciplinary approach. With this in mind, a new Web Science Research Initiative is briefly described.

Interoperability Standards Addressing Education Industry Challenges: Student Textbook Use and Pricing

The IMS Global Learning Consortium (IMS GLC) has recently formed an international Learning Technology Advisory Council (LTAC), aimed at addressing higher education challenges with the aid of learning technology-enabled solutions. John Falchi, IMS Global's Chief Program Strategist, provides an overview of current IMS GLC initiatives aimed at developing interoperability standards to support the development of a dynamic, "born-digital" alternative to paper-based student textbooks. In this article, John argues that the new textbook format could help address issues related to integration of rich digital content from multiple sources, while simultaneously enhancing the student learning experience and reducing the cost of student learning materials.

Ascilite Awards 2007

Frank Rennie provides a précis of the recent The Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (Ascilite) Awards, which were judged by members of the ALT Research Committee. Charles Darwin University received a small project award for a project that introduced computer programming concepts via an experiential learning approach. Large project awards went to the University of Otago, The Graduate School of Medicine at the University of Wollongong and the University of Queensland.

Futurelab's research discussion day on "The future of education"

Futurelab's remit is to explore and support new ways of learning, tapping into the potential of digital technologies. Bob Banks reports in this article on Futurelab's recent research discussion day "The future of education". As with much of Futurelab's work, most of the focus was on practices and cultures of teaching and learning, rather than on technology. Although specific examples tended to be from the schools sector, most of the discussion was applicable across all sectors of education. Discussion centred around four evolving Futurelab projects /themes: Enquiring Minds, Learning Spaces, Digital Inclusion, and Beyond Current Horizons.

JISC e-Learning Programme - Pedagogy Planning Tools - Strategic Review meeting 4 March 2008

Ellen Lessner reports on the recent Pedagogy Planning Tools - Strategic Review meeting. Stakeholders from a range of educational contexts were invited to review the two new online pedagogic tools and to discuss their relevance and potential for the future. The first tool, 'Phoebe', was developed by a team from the Technology-Assisted Lifelong Learning Unit (TALL) at Oxford University and the Oxford University Computing Services (OUCS). Phoebe is designed to guide teachers 'through the construction of design for courses and/or individual learning session'. The second tool, The London Pedagogic Planner (LPP), was developed by London Knowledge Lab/Institute of Education, London Metropolitan University and LAMS International. It is a 'prototype for a collaborative online planning and design tool that supports lecturers in developing, analysing and sharing learning designs'.

ALT-C 2008: Rethinking the digital divide

9-11 September 2008, Leeds, UK

The conference is for practitioners, researchers and policy makers from all sectors involved in the application of technology to teaching and learning, as well as for those new to the field.

Online booking system opens in early May. To book a place, follow the booking link at: www.alt.ac.uk/altc2008

- Presenters' registration deadline: 6 June 2008
- Early bird registration deadline: 30 June 2008.
- Registrations close: 15 August 2008

Keynote speakers:

- **David Cavallo**, Chief Learning Architect for One Laptop per Child and Head of the Future of Learning Research Group at MIT Media Lab
- **Dr Itiel Dror**, Senior Lecturer in Cognitive Neuroscience, University of Southampton
- **Hans Rosling**, Professor of International Health, Karolinska Institute, Sweden, and Director of the Gapminder Foundation

Invited speakers:

Lizbeth Goodman • Jane Hart • Denise Kirkpatrick • Richard Noss • Gilly Salmon • George Siemens • Clive Shepherd
Full biographies can be found at: www.alt.ac.uk/altc2008

Programme Co-Chairs

Dr Jill Jameson, University of Greenwich and Dr John Sandars, University of Leeds

Organisations considering sponsoring ALT-C 2008 should contact Seb Schmoller, ALT CEO, on seb.schmoller@alt.ac.uk.

To book an exhibition space, contact hayley.willis@alt.ac.uk.

Workshops

For full details, booking deadlines and fees for these workshops, please visit: www.alt.ac.uk/events.php

Bidding and winning: the secrets of successful learning technology project bids

29 May 2008, 09.30 – 16.00

National College for School Leadership (NCSL), Nottingham

Presenters: Jeff Haywood, Seb Schmoller, and Mark Stiles

Project bids are time-consuming and should not be undertaken lightly; this workshop will give tips on how to avoid wasted effort and dashed hopes from three experienced learning technology project managers.

e-Learning, what's hot in Post-16 and wazzup?

2 July 2008, 09.30 – 16.00, University of Leeds

Presenters: Chris Barber, Theresa Beattie, Kevin Campbell-Wright - JISC Regional Support Centre for Yorkshire and Humber at University of Leeds.

JISC Regional Support Centres have an unrivalled grasp of what is happening on the ground in the post-16 sector. This workshop will highlight key current developments as well as consider what is in the pipeline in the way of tools, approaches, and techniques in the e-learning domain.

Can mobile devices be used in pedagogically effective ways?

9 July 2008, 09.30 – 16.00

The Graduate Centre, London Metropolitan University

Presenters: Carl Smith, Claire Bradley, Cecile Tschirhart, Christopher O'Reilly, Lilian Soon

A chance to experience state-of-the-art mobile learning developments, including learner-generated content, SMS, quizzes, and mobile blogging, to be followed by questions and discussion.

Second Life: education beyond the hype

23 October 2008, 09.30 – 16.00

National College for School Leadership (NCSL), Nottingham

Presenter: Steven Warburton of King's College, London

A practical introduction to immersive 3D environments and to explore the possibilities that massive multi-user virtual environments (MUVes) offer to learning and teaching practice.



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)

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Individual UK	£54
Reduced rate (student, retired, unemployed)	£26
Individual non-UK	£67

For organisational membership and other details go to www.alt.ac.uk/membership.html

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