

ALT News 50 marks the start of our switch to an online newsletter. For full versions of all the articles here go to the ALT Online Newsletter at newsletter.alt.ac.uk. We welcome feedback on the new online newsletter.

More than just e-learning: Sakai so far

Started in January 2004, the Sakai project aims to develop a flexible, collaborative learning environment which goes beyond that of a traditional virtual learning environment (VLE). Version 2 has more than many of the tools typically available in a VLE with more available to add on, including OSPI, the open-source e-portfolio system.

Ian Dolphin provides us with an overview of the project, planned developments and its link to commercial companies including IBM, Sun and Pearson. He also explains the role of the Sakai Community and the Sakai Educational Partners Programme, drawn from further and higher education, and how it will maintain and develop the software when funding has expired. Sakai is currently being trialled in some of the JISC Virtual Research Environment projects and will be integrated with uPortal 3. Finally, if you are still worrying about how to pronounce Sakai, Ian explains the background to the name and offers some hints...

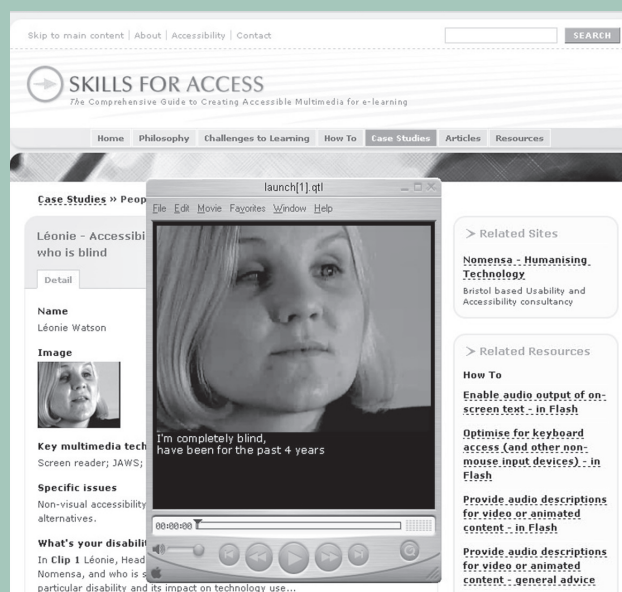
Members' update

As part of our new online format we are pleased to announce a new section of the newsletter: **Members' update**. The world of e-learning and learning technology is constantly undergoing change, whether it be new policies and legislation imposed from above, rapidly evolving technologies driven by the IT industry at large, or new pedagogical frameworks being devised by researchers and educationalists. As Learning Technologists, we are often responsible for providing a cohesive view of these disparate themes for our institutions, as well as implementing the inevitable changes in practice.

This new section is a forum for you to air your views and experiences on the issues that affect you "on the ground". In the coming issues we hope to bring you articles that range from the pragmatic and practical, to the polemical and pithy. Three years after the introduction of the SENDA legislation, in this first issue we asked members for their thoughts on accessibility.

Project news

Skills for access – putting the world to rights for accessibility and multimedia



Skills for Access (www.skillsforaccess.org.uk) is a comprehensive web-based guide to creating accessible multimedia for e-learning. The site is aimed at anyone involved in commissioning or developing digital learning materials. John Stratford and David Sloan report on a joint initiative between the Digital Media Access Group at the University of Dundee and the Learning Development and Media Unit at the University of Sheffield.

The site sets out to dispel the myth that there is such a thing as a fully accessible resource, and that to develop one, all you need to do is to run down a checklist and follow the instructions. Instead, the site encourages a holistic approach to accessibility that considers all of its dimensions.

A number of case studies are provided, some written by practitioners who have confronted practical accessibility issues, and others by disabled students who talk about their experiences - both good and bad - of studying using multimedia.

Catering for accessibility needs to become an accepted part of professional design practice for all e-learning developers. The authors hope that the Skills for Access site will play its part in helping that view to become more widely accepted.

NEWS AND REVIEWS

Executive Secretary's Report

News from Seb Schmoller

Research Assessment Exercise 2008: During May and June we have been working with the DfES to ensure that a response is made to the July 2005 "Consultation on RAE Panel Draft Criteria and Working Methods" that takes account of the needs of the learning technology research discipline. Two meetings are being hosted by DfES in July and August, from which we intend to circulate a document during early September, in time for it to be drawn upon by colleagues wishing to respond directly to the consultation. The URL of this document will be circulated to members and member organisations using ALT-Announce.

CMALT: By the time you read this, the first 15 people to achieve CMALT will have received their certificates. The formal launch of the ALT Certified Membership scheme (CMALT) will be at ALT-C 2005. Discussions are taking place between ALT and a range of HE- and FE-related organisations concerning how to dovetail CMALT into existing and emerging accreditation systems, including the Higher Education Academy's. From the ALT home page you can join a low volume e-mail list through which we will keep subscribers informed of progress. Please do so if you are potentially interested in applying for Certified Membership of ALT.

CAMEL: Earlier this year JISC infoNet, in partnership with ALT, JISC Development, and the Higher Education Academy, secured funding under the HEFCE "Leadership, Governance, and Management Programme" to fund a project – "Collaborative Approaches to the Management of Lifelong Learning" (CAMEL) – which will identify and develop good practice in the management of ICT to support lifelong learning. We invited institutions to bid to be involved in CAMEL and have selected Leeds College of Technology, Loughborough College, Staffordshire University, and the University of Greenwich to take part in the project, with a start-up meeting held in July. A more detailed report on CAMEL will appear in ALT-N 51.

ALT/LSDA conference for practitioners: With the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) we are organising a one-day conference in London on 13 October 2005 for FE, Work Based Learning, and Adult and Community Education practitioners. The aim of the conference is to bring together a diverse and interesting range of over 20 presentations about successful e-learning implementation in UK post-16 education and training. Please see the back page for more details.

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Hardware and software reviews

Macromedia Breeze 5

Review by Kevan Williams, University of Central Lancashire

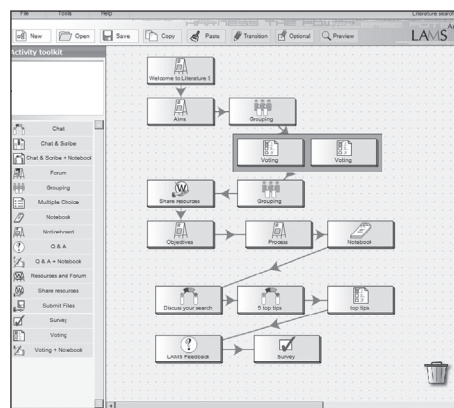
Macromedia Breeze enables the combination of video, audio, software simulations, and other multimedia content to produce e-learning and training packages that are engaging and effective, while providing tracking and reporting capabilities. Breeze can be used both as a tool to record high quality PowerPoint presentations for on-demand access and also to engage with students online in a highly interactive environment.

This review describes the four modules that Breeze provides (Presenter, Training, Meeting and Event), using Breeze (including feedback from academics currently using Breeze at the University of Central Lancashire) and the pricing options available.

Macromedia Breeze: www.macromedia.com/software/breeze/

Learning Activity Management Sequences (LAMS)

Review by Vivien Sieber, University of Oxford



Learning Activity Management Sequences (LAMS) is one of a range of open-source, web-based tools that are becoming freely available to the community. Based on learning design, where groups of people use re-

sources to carry out activities within an environment, LAMS presents a contrast to conventional virtual learning environments as it is activity-centred rather than content-centred. It can be used to present learners with a sequence of activities, forming a single teaching session or a whole course.

This review describes the use of LAMS as an Author, a Monitor and a Learner and discusses the types of activities that can be set up using the system. It also provides feedback from students at the University of Oxford who used LAMS as part of a JISC funded Tools Integration Project (TIP).

LAMS Foundation: www.lamsfoundation.org/

Tools Integration Project:
users.ox.ac.uk/~jiscpub/JISC_TIP/Index.htm

Hints and tips

Scenario-based learning using Powerpoint

Penny Everett, University College London

Scenario-based learning puts students in a situation or context and exposes them to issues, challenges and dilemmas and asks them to apply knowledge and practice skills relevant to the situation. The students navigate through by choosing options and are given feedback based upon their choice.

Many people already use software that will enable them to offer scenario-based learning activities to their students. This article describes how you can use Microsoft PowerPoint to create interactive scenario-based learning activities by using hyperlinks and Action buttons to move between slides, documents and URLs.

Conference reviews

EdTech 2005, the sixth annual Irish educational technology users' conference

Dún Laoghaire, 26 and 27 May 2005

Review by Dermot Brabazon

Dún Laoghaire, a charming coastal town south of Dublin, was the setting for EdTech 2005. The conference is organised by the Irish Learning Technology Association (ILTA), and is a focal point for Irish Educators involved in research and application of learning technologies (www.ilta.net).

With over 40 presentations, the event showcased a number of innovative e-learning initiatives and covered a range of topics including: online and multimedia pedagogy; learning styles; learning objects; mobile learning; communities of practice; computer-aided assessment; ubiquitous computing; and E-learning as an academic discipline.

Legal issues of Online Learning Environments: a JISC Legal conference

University of Warwick, 1 and 2 June 2005

Legal issues such as copyright, data protection, liability, e-commerce and disability discrimination influence our deployment of online learning environments. Some of these (for example, accessibility issues) have received a lot of publicity but, in general, our knowledge in these areas is patchy, especially with regard to the responsibilities faced by online learning practitioners. Evan Dickerson and colleagues provide us with an overview of the issues discussed at this conference.

Updates on licensing law as well as the importance of clarification of liability in online discussions are of particular relevance to learning technologists in this review. Links to further materials are provided, including presentations held on the JISC Legal website (www.jisclegal.ac.uk).

Director's Report

News from Rhonda Riachi

ALT-C 2005 places going faster than ever!

The timetable is now online at www.alt.ac.uk/altc2005/timetable/timetable.php. Register now for ALT-C 2005 and book your accommodation on the conference web site at www.alt.ac.uk/altc2005/booking.html. En suite accommodation with Internet access and telephones is available on campus next to the conference venue; book well before the deadline to secure this.

Registration closes on 12 August.

Annual General Meeting: Our twelfth Annual General Meeting will take place at the University of Manchester on **Wednesday 7 September, 1700-1730**. All members are warmly invited to attend.

Three nominations have been received for two vacancies for trustees on the Central Executive Committee, which means an election will be held at the AGM. The candidates are **Dawn Leeder, Tom Franklin** and **Jonathan Darby**. One nomination was received for the Vice-Chair: **Linda Creanor**. Linda Creanor is therefore elected unopposed. Along with reports on all ALT activities and committees, the trustees will be proposing amendments to the constitution, so make every effort to attend this important meeting.

Members on the move: We send our best wishes to **Prof Betty Collis**, who is retiring from the University of Twente in September after a distinguished career in learning technology. Congratulations to **Dr Hugh Davis** who was promoted to the new role of Director of Education at the University of Southampton last month. ALT was well represented in the National Teaching Fellowships this year, amongst whom we congratulate **Philip Barker, Barbara Newland, Richard Francis** and **Ranald MacDonald** (www.ntfs.ac.uk/2005_NTFlist.html). Au revoir to **Alison Hudson**, who begins a secondment to the University of Umea in Sweden in September, returning to Sheffield in December 2006.

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ALT Workshop

Edublogs: the educational use of weblogs, weblogging tools and really simple syndication (RSS)

King's College, London 17 November 2005

£95 (ALT members) £150 (non-members)

This timely workshop addresses the current theory and practice surrounding the use of weblogs and RSS (Really Simple Syndication) within a variety of educational settings. Weblogs, which most popularly appear in the form of online journals, have heralded a new era in personal publishing but what do these new tools offer in terms of enhancing the learning and teaching process? What are the advantages to combining them with technologies such as RSS news feeds?

Presenters: Josie Fraser, Wyggeston & Queen Elizabeth I College; Steven Warburton, King's College London.

Booking deadline: 3 November 2005

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

ALT Conferences

ALT-C 2005

Exploring the frontiers of e-learning

6-8 September 2005

Manchester, England

Keynote speakers: Alan Gilbert, Carol Twigg, Etienne Wenger

Theme speakers: Tom Boyle, Sal Cooke, Stephen Downes, Oleg Liber

The timetable is now available at www.alt.ac.uk/altc2005/timetable/timetable.php

Book now for pre-conference workshops at www.alt.ac.uk/altc2005/pre_and_post.html

Final call for bookings

Hotel booking deadline: 5 August 2005

Registration closes: 12 August 2005

www.alt.ac.uk/altc2005



E-learning: making it work

Examples of effective practice in the lifelong learning sector: from the preserve of enthusiasts to normal organisation-wide implementation

Venue – tbc (London)

13 October 2005

A major national one-day conference on embedding e-learning, organised by the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) in partnership with ALT. It is for practitioners and leaders in further, adult and community learning, both for sceptics as well as for those who are convinced about the worth of e-learning.

The conference is aimed at practitioners and leaders. It will give you an opportunity to explore and discuss how to embed e-learning successfully – with those who have done it. The detailed issues which the conference will address include these.

- What works and why?
- What are the key success factors to transform teaching and learning with e-learning and technology?
- What are the barriers to embedding e-learning successfully and how can they be overcome?

For more info visit

www.alt.ac.uk/conferences.php

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
Individual non-UK	£65

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