2007 Learning Technologist of the Year Award

This year, the Association for Learning Technology (ALT) organised the inaugural **Learning Technologist of the Year Award**.

The Award was open to individual members of ALT, and to individuals and teams based in ALT member organisations worldwide.

The aim of the Award is to *celebrate and reward excellent practice and outstanding achievement in the learning technology field.*

The Award was presented at the ALT conference at Nottingham University on 5 September 2007 by Dr Peter Norvig, Director of Research at Google.

The judging panel for the 2007 Award was chaired by Gilly Salmon, Professor of e-Learning & Learning Technologies at the University of Leicester. Panel members were: Dr Bob Banks, Senior Consultant with Tribal Group plc; Cathy Ellis, Vice Chair (and now Chair) of ALT, and a Director at Becta; Lawrie Phipps, JISC Programme Manager for Users and Innovation; and George Roberts, Educational Developer (e-Learning) at the Oxford Centre for Staff and Learning Development.

The winning and short-listed entrants

The standard of entries was generally high. The judging panel shortlisted 6 entries: 3 from individuals; and 3 from teams.

The panel interviewed the short-listed entrants and decided to make the award as follows.

Joint winners: Philip Cosson, of the School of Health and Social Care at the University of Teesside; Hannah Whaley, from the Learning Centre at the University of Dundee.

Runner up: the PebblePad Development Team from Pebble Learning Ltd, in Wolverhampton.

The other short-listed entrants were:

- the English Online Team at The Sheffield College;
- the Learning Team at Nottingham University;
- Cristina Isabel Mendes da Costa, University of Salford.

Overview of the winning entries, with comments from the judges

Philip Cosson – for the creation of a tutor-supported computer simulation that allows first year radiography students to simulate the taking of an x-ray in a safe and controlled way without the dangers of radiation. The simulation is now in use in the UK, USA, and Sweden.

Judges' comments

"Philip demonstrated enthusiasm for the work, a deep understanding of the theory and practice both of learning technology and of his particular learning and teaching field, and excellent teamwork with colleagues. The application he developed is being used by others in the field, and Philip has earned the respect of his peers. The application – design of which was driven by the needs of learners, and informed all the way by input from learners and from teachers, with a strong evaluation component – exemplifies how learning technologists can make a real difference to the quality of teaching and learning."

Hannah Whaley – for a range of achievements including the creation of a new online self- and peer-assessment system, and of a groupwork assessment system. The former is due to be made available by a VLE vendor to over 3600 educational institutions worldwide.

Judges' comments

"An outstanding example of good practice in the use of existing tools, with a firm grounding on the underlying pedagogic principles, and on the principles of web interface usability and design. Hannah's excellent work was heavily influenced by input from students and from colleagues, and led to the development of applications that are widely used. Overall, Hannah provides an excellent exemplar of the role of a learning technologist within a large institution, with the addition that she has also taking the lead in feeding specific and valuable innovations out into the wider learning technology community."

The PebblePad Development Team – for their contribution over the last 3 years to the development of the PebblePad ePortfolio system, which has been used by over 120,000 users in over 40 institutions.

Judges' comments

"The PebblePad team was genuinely enthusiastic for their work with palpable pride in it. Team members are drawn from a wide range of backgrounds, including computer science and art and design. Their youth and enthusiasm and their "no-fear approach" to Flash were striking, as was their success in winning through with their vision for the PebblePad interface. The team is particularly committed to ensuring the accessibility of the applications they are developing, and to the overall principle of user-centred design."

Highlights from the judges' comments on the shorlisted entrants

The English Online Team at The Sheffield College – What shone through was their passion for their subject, and their success in supporting the educational achievement of thousands of less advantaged learners.

The Learning Team at Nottingham University – A very comprehensive, institutionally embedded approach to learning technology development that showed excellent senior management support.

Cristina Isabel Mendes da Costa, University of Salford – A strong application that demonstrated good approaches, strong and effective application of theory, as well as impact in the learning technology community.

A note about the 2008 Learning Technologist of the Year Award

Details of the 2008 Learning Technologist of the Year Award which will provide for separate team and individual awards, will be published in March 2008. Organisations interested in sponsoring the 2008 Award should contact Seb Schmoller, Chief Executive of ALT, in the first instance – seb.schmoller_AT_alt.ac.uk