

ASSOCIATION
FOR LEARNING
TECHNOLOGY



ASSOCIATION FOR LEARNING TECHNOLOGY

Annual Report for the year 1 February 2006 to 31 January 2007

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(covering the period September 2006 to August 2007)

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Charity Number 1063519

ASSOCIATION FOR LEARNING TECHNOLOGY

REFERENCE AND ADMINISTRATIVE DETAILS

Registered charity name	Association for Learning Technology
Charity registration number	1063519
Principal address	Oxford Brookes University, Gipsy Lane, Headington, Oxford, OX3 0BP.
Auditor	Shaw Gibbs LLP 264 Banbury Road Oxford, OX2 7DY.
Banker	Co-operative Bank Plc PO Box 250 Skelmersdale, WN8 6WT.

THE TRUSTEES

The trustees who served the charity during the period were as follows:

Jane Seale (President 2006-2007)	Liz Bennett
Linda Creanor (Chair)	Tom Franklin
Cathy Ellis (Vice-Chair)	Dawn Leeder
John Slater (Hon. Treasurer)	Robin Mason
Gayle Calverley (Hon. Secretary)	John Phelps
John Cook (President, 2005-2006)	Fred Pickering
Paul Bacsich	

STRUCTURE, GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Constitution

Association for Learning Technology is a charity, registered number 1063519, governed by its constitution adopted 26 June 1997, subsequently amended 11 September 2000, 9 September 2002 and 7 September 2005.

Organisation

Three trustees per year are elected at the Annual General Meeting to serve for three years. Up to four trustees may be co-opted to fill any remaining roles on the committee. The maximum number of Trustees to serve at any one time is thirteen.

The Trustees oversee four sub-committees which provide guidance in the following areas: Publications, Membership Services, Further Education and Research. Each sub-committee is chaired by a Trustee. Members of the sub-committees are recruited from the membership through annual invitations and all sub-committee members are required to be individual members of the Charity. Each sub-committee is supported by at least one member of the staff.

Delegation of day-to-day management

The Senior Staff responsible for day-to-day management of the Charity during the period were:

- Seb Schmoller, Chief Executive
- Rhonda Riachi, Director
- Marion Samler, Operations Manager
- Bob Green, Operations Manager (Maternity Cover, February to October 2006)

Risk management

The trustees have examined the major strategic and operational risks, which the charity is exposed to

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and confirm that systems have been established to enable regular reports to be produced in order that the necessary steps can be taken to mitigate such risks.

OBJECTIVES AND ACTIVITIES

The objects of the charity are as follows:-

To advance education through increasing, exploring and disseminating knowledge in the field of learning technology for the benefit of the general public.

The charity's major activity is the organisation of an annual conference, ALT-C. This activity continues to be revenue generating and represents the charity's main source of income.

ACHIEVEMENTS AND PERFORMANCE

In general the Association for Learning Technology is becoming a significant charity and thus is steadily introducing the procedures that would be associated with an established organisation in its sector. This involves reflecting more on the nature of the planning process and the activities that the charity undertakes in order to ensure that it complies with the guidelines laid down and to enable it better to meet the wishes of its members.

The year saw an expansion of the charity's office staff. In anticipation of project income staff were hired to deal with the resulting load.

This year also saw the introduction of new common renewal procedure for the charity's organisational and sponsoring members. Hitherto, membership became due on the anniversary of first subscription. This is common practice in a start up organisation but the time was deemed ripe for moving towards a fairer system in which income and expenditure are more closely related within accounting years. This meant that a subscription was paid in year X which related in part to year X and in part to year X+1. No accounting device had been used to handle the carry forward and so the charity had been allowing income received against expenditure for a year to appear as profit in the year before. The charity is now accounting faithfully.

Overall the change in procedure seems to have gone through without significant complaints or loss of members. In addition, a small 'sweetener' regime allowed some discounts that have attracted new, usually smaller, members to join. The charity's penetration of the available market has increased modestly. This is partially offset by a continuing decrease in individual subscriptions. However, a significant number of individual members are taking up the direct debit option with consequent discount. It is too early to say whether this will lead to an increased individual membership as is hoped.

The figures show that it has been another good year. The conference was very successful and sponsorship was high. These are our main sources of revenue. While ALT-C continues to have an excellent attendance and is soundly planned and managed, the finances of the charity will be strong. Again we were able to take a lot of people into ALT-C some at short notice. I am extremely grateful to the central office staff for the hard work they put in both in the lead up and during ALT-C. Without this work the job of the treasurer would be harder.

The membership changes reported above affect the accounts in two ways. Firstly, less membership income was collected. Secondly, the accounting practice was changed and so there is a bottom line discrepancy. Other activities do not contribute much to either income or expenditure. Extra staff expenditure came late in the year or not at all. It will have a more significant effect in the following year but then so will the new project income. CMALT had sufficiently few takers that it did impinge significantly on the budget.

The Association for Learning Technology has an excellent platform on which to base its future. It is

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precisely because the charity has a healthy financial position it is able to hire extra staff to help generate activity that will repay the investment and to move to the new fairer and more transparent accounting processes without major disruption to cashflow or reserve holdings.

RELATIONSHIPS WITH OTHER ORGANISATIONS AND CHARITIES

The Charity entered into a lease contract with Oxford Brookes University for the hosting of the office and related services, including human resources, on 1 January 2005.

In furthering its objectives the Charity has worked with the following educational organisations during the period:

- The Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) – a Government-funded agency; Memorandum of Understanding for five years signed March 2006.
- JISCinfoNet – agency funded by the JISC; collaboration on the CAMEL project (May 2005 to July 2006).
- University of Greenwich – collaboration on the ELIDA CAMEL project (July 2006 to December 2007).
- The Australasian Society for Computers in Learning in Tertiary Education (ASCILITE) – a learned society like ALT (<http://www.ascilite.org.au/>). We signed a Memorandum of Understanding with ASCILITE in May 2002. The main benefit to members is a reciprocal discount on our annual conferences.

FINANCIAL REVIEW

Reserves policy

It is the policy of the charity to maintain unrestricted funds, which are free reserves of the charity, at a level, which equates to approximately six months unrestricted expenditure. This provides for sufficient funding to cover the charity's operational commitments throughout the next financial year.

Reserves policy has been kept under active review. A part of the charity's reserves are kept as a bond with the employer of the charity's staff Oxford Brookes University. This transfers employment risk to an organisation better able to manage it and thus represents a good investment for the charity. Increases in staff increase the bond.

In common with old guidance the charity had a target of having one year's operating costs in its reserves. It never achieved this target but has built up reserves somewhat haphazardly towards figures in the four to nine months area. Amounts fluctuate widely with cashflow. The Trustees now consider that, with the bond with Oxford Brookes University covering the charity's main staff risk a six month target is now more appropriate. Accordingly, the charity will move to that target of six months plus the bond.

PLANS FOR FUTURE PERIODS

As part of its increased size the charity needs to be more reflective on the future and to have in place longer term strategies in a number of areas. Firstly, the charity website has a pleasant look and feel and is used significantly. However, some parts need update and revision and so the Central Executive Committee has set up a group to look at the future of the website and it has employed a consultant to assist with the process of specifying a website that meets the needs of members.

Since the year-end the charity has become involved with a number of projects, some already existing. Currently the charity has involvement in four projects EMERGE, CAMEL, WRHTSFP and WALTER with possibilities of more to come. During 2006/07 the charity invested in new versions of its accounting package and some new hardware.

Whilst the charity's overall strategy and its associated aims are reviewed regularly there is a need for it

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to develop a number of strategies as part of behaving correctly for a charity of its size. Priorities for 2007/08 will be:-

- Staff development for CX, including honorary officers and other committee members, on their roles and responsibilities.
- Risk assessment and amelioration activities to be built into plans from committees and Association for Learning Technology overall.

The charity has recently seen a flurry of activity within the publications area. It is a time when all academic publishing activities are under scrutiny and revision. The charity expects to be up to date in its uses of technology here as elsewhere.

2006/07 was a year in which the Operations Manager, who handles all financial matters within the Association for Learning Technology office, took maternity leave. The charity was very fortunate in having Bob Green as a replacement over a six month period. Bob brought extra Sage expertise to the charity when it needed it to help with a procurement.

The charity was even more fortunate that Marion Samler returned. It is a credit to both of them that the two joins were seamless and that the extra costs were handled effectively. Marion rapidly re-uptook the reins and is responsible for all the supporting paperwork to this report.

RESPONSIBILITIES OF THE TRUSTEES

Law applicable to charities in England and Wales requires the trustees to prepare financial statements for each financial year. Under that law the trustees have elected to prepare the financial statements in accordance with United Kingdom Generally Accepted Accounting Practice (United Kingdom Accounting Standards and applicable law). The financial statements are required by law to give a true and fair view of the state of affairs of the charity and of the surplus or deficit of the charity for that period.

In preparing these financial statements, the trustees are required to:

- select suitable accounting policies and then apply them consistently;
- make judgements and estimates that are reasonable and prudent;
- prepare the financial statements on the going concern basis unless it is inappropriate to presume that the charity will continue to operate.

The trustees are responsible for keeping proper accounting records which disclose with reasonable accuracy at any time the financial position of the charity and which enable them to ensure that the financial statements comply with the Charities Act 1993. The trustees are also responsible for safeguarding the assets of the charity and hence for taking reasonable steps for the prevention and detection of fraud and other irregularities.

AUDITOR

On 8 May 2007 Edmund Gibbs transferred its business to limited liability partnership, Shaw Gibbs LLP. The Trustees consented to extend the audit appointment to Shaw Gibbs LLP from 8 May 2007.

A resolution to re-appoint Shaw Gibbs LLP as auditor for the ensuing year was proposed and agreed at the Annual General Meeting.

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Report to Members, 14th AGM, 5 September 2007

Introduction from the President

Ten years ago I attended my first ALT conference in Telford. Ten years on I've developed a few grey hairs (not all down to my ALT activities, I hasten to add) and ALT has grown in terms of its reach, membership and influence. In this annual report our Committee chairs, Chief Executive and Director will outline ALT's growth and achievements in more detail. For my report I would like to concentrate on our members, because I believe strongly that ALT's continuing success is in large part due its members.

ALT is a membership organisation, and relies a lot on the voluntary contributions of a huge number of members to ensure that its key activities take place. I would therefore like to take this opportunity to welcome all those people who have joined ALT committees and working groups this year. I would also like to congratulate all those who have gained CMALT status this year, and act as a key beacon for all that ALT stands for.

Finally, I would like thank all those who are stepping down to take well earned rests. They include: Susi Peacock (editor, ALT-N); Grainne Conole (editor, ALT-J); and Martin Oliver (editor, ALT-J).

For many, learning technology is a tool for collaboration, community building and social networking. To me, ALT embodies these principles. Ten years ago I was an ALT-C conference delegate, ten years on I am ALT President. So, dear ALT member, to quote an infamous phrase, "it could be you!"

Jane Seale, President, 2006–2007

Chair's Report

My year as Chair of ALT has left me with a tremendous admiration for the dedication and commitment of ALT staff, Trustees, Honorary Officers, and the many willing volunteers, all of whom put in a huge amount of effort to ensure that the Association serves its current members well whilst at the same time extending its reach and influence.

Over the last year our membership has continued to grow within the UK and internationally with a particularly healthy increase in the number of organisational and sponsoring members. The impressive range of events and activities reflect the diverse interests of members and further ALT's goal of linking learning technology practitioners, researchers, and policy makers. Publications too continue to develop and adapt to members' needs, and I wish the new editorial teams of both the ALT Newsletter and the ALT Journal well as they rise to the exciting challenges ahead.

Innovations this year have included: a revised, forward-looking Strategy for 2007-2010 which builds on ideas put forward at last year's Strategy Away Day; an "umbrella" membership agreement with the British Council, under which a substantial number of organisations are joining ALT from less developed countries; the appointment of our first ALT Ambassadors (Wendy Hall, Terry Mayes, and John Taylor) who will champion the Association and help to raise its profile; and the launch of the inaugural Learning Technologist of the Year Award which attracted considerable interest.

In recognition of ALT's widening range of activities, the part-time fraction of the Chief Executive post (formerly Executive Secretary) has been increased and a redesign of the ALT reporting and organisational structure is underway. One particular area of success has been greater collaborative involvement by ALT in funded projects, which has strengthened ALT's relationships with its partners and highlighted its considerable expertise.

It has been a busy, challenging and enjoyable year, and I know that with Cathy Ellis as incoming Chair, and with Steve Ryan as incoming Vice-Chair, ALT will be in excellent hands. Meanwhile I look forward to my year as President, and as she steps down, I'd like to extend my thanks to Jane Seale for being such a highly effective and dedicated President, Chair and Vice-Chair over the last three years.

Linda Creanor, Chair, Central Executive Committee, 2006–2007

Membership Services Committee Report

This has been a busy year for the Membership Services Committee. We have welcomed a number of new committee members to our team, which will broaden the expertise and strengthen the committee.

We have been successful in increasing and expanding our workshop provision, with a range of workshops this year covering mobile devices, social software, games as well as a special workshop from Stephen Ehrmann, provided an exciting and diverse programme of CPD opportunities for our members. Special

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thanks goes to Nick Jeans who has taken responsibility for leading the workshop planning from the Committee, and Hayley Willis and Rhonda Riachi in the ALT Office for their efforts in putting this programme together. The CMALT workshop programme is now successfully up and running and touring the country, extolling the benefits of CMALT, our thanks go to Teresa Prochazka for her work in this area over the past year.

In addition to the workshop programme we have been working within the strategy framework developed last year to review benefits for members in the organisation. We expect to release a members' questionnaire shortly and I do hope you will participate as it will help shape the future of the organisation.

In 2008 we expect to see CMALT growing, the new individual benefits package finalised, and more exciting and innovative events, with a strong focus on members needs, thus providing members with the Association that they deserve.

John Phelps, Chair, Membership Services Committee, 2006–2007

Further Education Committee Report

This has been another constructive year for the Further Education Committee and we continued to be a strong voice for ALT's post-16 sector members. It has seen the appointment of three new members that has widened both our geographical spread and areas of expertise, as has the co-option of a member who works for Becta. We feel that ALT's presence in the sector has also been strengthened by the appointment of an ALT Ambassador from FE.

Subjects which have been considered by FEC during the year included the following:

- How ALT can reach out to a wider range of organizations involved in non-advanced post-16 teaching and learning, such as Adult Learning Providers and private companies involved in training.
- The trend towards mergers in the sector, for example, the changes in Northern Ireland and how ICT and learning technology can be deployed to support the process.
- The increasing number of new build projects and concern that the planned infrastructure allows for the increase in e-learning opportunities, for example, the continued growth in the use of Moodle in the FE sector.
- The Government's 16-19 Agenda and the increasing collaboration between schools and colleges, for example in developing the new Diplomas and the role ICT can play.
- The focus on the Level 2 entitlement for adults and LSC funding for research in to the use of mobile technology and e-portfolios in the workplace.
- Encouraging participation in the second Post-16 practitioner conference planned for 11 October 2007 in Nottingham. The conference "E-learning – making it work" will build on the success of the 2005 conference.

As Chair, I would like to thank the committee members for the time they have devoted to the work of the committee and to Marion Samler for her efficient organisation in keeping us on track.

Fred Pickering, Chair, Further Education Committee, 2006–2007

Publications Committee Report

In 2006-2007 the activities of the publications committee have been focused on:

- the review of ALT-J, the journal of the Association, and putting into action relevant outcomes from the review;
- overseeing the continuing expansion of the online version of ALT-N, our quarterly newsletter;
- overseeing Occasional Publications;
- monitoring and where necessary updating the Editorial Policy.

The review of ALT-J was carried out from November 2006 to February 2007 by the Chair of the Publications Committee but under the auspices of the Research Committee, to which the Chair was co-opted for the duration of the review. Many members of the Publications Committee were consulted and the Committee was kept abreast of developments. Two new co-editors for ALT-J have now been appointed to start settling in from September 2007 – Frances Bell and Rhona Sharpe – and a transition team set up to manage the transition from the current to the new editorial regime, with a date for final handover of March 2008.

The ALT-N online version is now on Issue 9 (July 2007).

Paul Bacsich, Chair, Publications Committee, 2006–2007

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Research Committee Report

We have established a three-meetings-a-year pattern now, with one meeting face-to-face, one meeting at the ALT Conference and the third meeting by telephone. This seems to work well and we have had good attendance at meetings with lively discussion.

Our current preoccupation is the development of eight wiki-based 'what research has to say for practice' guides related to technology-based learning, with financial support from Becta, the HE Academy, and the Eduserv Foundation. The reports will be publicly available online and should act as a showcase of Research Committee expertise in this area.

Revisions to ALT's Learning Technology Research Strategy have provoked considerable discussion at every meeting, but as yet no final outcome. We have taken on a number of other tasks, e.g. judging the Best Paper award for Ascilite, commenting on various documents (e.g. RAE Reform document, and the Review of ALT-J), and are planning a small research-oriented workshop.

Robin Mason, Chair, Research Committee, 2006–2007

Chief Executive's and Director's Report

ALT is a member-led organisation, and this is no better demonstrated than by the fact that the core of this 2006-2007 annual report to members has been written by members, rather than by employees. It falls to us to round off the report, by briefly highlighting a few key developments which are not covered elsewhere. During the year ALT has:

- continued to make informed and focused responses to learning technology related policy consultations (except where circumstances dictate otherwise these are published in the documents area of our web site);
- finalised a formal Memorandum of Understanding with the Higher Education Academy;
- continued our work with Greenwich University, Leeds College of Technology, Loughborough College, Staffordshire University, JISC infoNet and other partners, on the eLIDA Collaborative Approaches to the Management of Lifelong Learning (CAMEL) project;
- completed a third project, CAMEL Tangible Benefits of E-learning, based loosely on the CAMEL model, in partnership with JISC infoNet and the Higher Education Academy, which has collected a series of subject-based case studies on e-learning in higher education;
- begun the process of scoping and then implementing a substantial redevelopment of our web site, with a particular focus on members (individual, organisational and sponsoring) being able to manage their relationship with ALT over the web;
- inaugurated an annual Learning Technologist of the Year Award, the winners of which will be announced at today's conference dinner.

During the year we were successful in winning roles in the JISC-funded EMERGE, wALTer, and eRETURN projects. EMERGE involves a large-scale effort to establish a community of practice in support of JISC's "Users and Innovation Development Model" (which provides a standard user-focused approach to the development of new web services). wALTer will enable us to host an open repository containing pre and post-prints covering the whole of ALT-J from its inception, and into the future, and we are grateful for the support we have in wALTer from Taylor and Francis, the publishers of the ALT Journal. eRETURN, led by the Open University, pilots the use of e-learning to support cross-institutional delivery of lifelong learning, and our role in this project is as a dissemination partner.

Singling out individuals for thanks in a report such as this is inevitably hazardous, but thanks are due. Firstly, ALT would be immeasurably the weaker without the committed work of the whole staff team: Hayley Willis; Marion Samler; Melanie Fox; Sue Garrett; and Teresa Prochazka. Teresa moved to a new job at the start of this month, and we wish her the very best of luck. Secondly, to note the strong support that ALT receives from many of our organisational and sponsoring members. Finally to note our particular thanks to:

- the Honorary Secretary, Gayle Calverley, particularly in relation to the proposal for changes to the ALT Constitution that we will debate next;
- the Honorary Treasurer, John Slater, whose report forms a core part of the Trustees Annual Financial Report on which the AGM will conclude;
- the Chair of Trustees, Linda Creanor, who has calmly coped throughout the year with the complexities and demands of the role;
- Paul Bacsich, who successfully led the review of the ALT Journal;

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- the Co-Chairs of ALT-C 2007, Mike Sharples and Sharon Waller, who have steadily shaped the conference from conception to delivery (!) over the past 14 months.

Seb Schmoller, Chief Executive, and Rhonda Riachi, Director

Members of ALT Committees 2006–2007

Central Executive (Trustees)

Paul Bacsich
Liz Bennett
Gayle Calverley (Hon Secretary)
Linda Creanor (Chair)
Cathy Ellis (Vice-Chair)
Tom Franklin

Dawn Leeder
Robin Mason
Fred Pickering
John Phelps
Jane Seale (President)
John Slater (Hon Treasurer)

Further Education Committee

David Dyet
Cathy Ellis
Rachel Harris
Fred Garnett
Iain Howie
Ellen Lessner
Christine McAllister

Elizabeth Morrison
Fred Pickering (Chair)
Pete Richardson
Malcolm Ryan
David Sugden
Markos Tiris
Karen Ver

Membership Services Committee

Skip Basiel
Lesley Diack
Shirley Evans
Carol Higgison
Caroline Ingram

Nick Jeans
John Phelps (Chair)
Geoff Rebbeck
Steven Warburton

Publications Committee

Paul Bacsich (Chair)
Gayle Calverley
Grainne Conole
Kevin Donovan
Graham McElearney

Morag Munro
Martin Oliver
Susi Peacock
Jane Seale
Peter Sloep
Julie Voce

Research Committee

Bob Banks
Phil Barker
Frances Bell
John Cook (Vice-Chair)
Mike Keppell
Allison Littlejohn
Robin Mason (Chair)
David Nicol

Bill Olivier
Vanessa Pittard
Mike Prosser
Frank Rennie
Gilly Salmon
Mike Sharples
Josie Taylor
Brian Whalley

ALT Staff

Melanie Fox, Assistant Administrator
Sue Garrett, Administrative Officer
Teresa Prochazka, Projects Manager (till 31/8/2007)

Rhonda Riachi, Director
Marion Samler, Operations Manager
Seb Schmoller, Chief Executive
Hayley Willis, Events Administrator

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