



# ALT – NEW MEMBERS’ BRIEFING – ALT CONFERENCE, EDINBURGH 2006

## 1 “Learning technology” and “learning technologist”

ALT understands learning technology as the systematic application of a body of knowledge to the design, implementation, management and evaluation of teaching and learning. The body of knowledge, the fruit of research and practice, is based on principles of learning theory, instructional design and change management, but is grounded in an understanding of the underlying technologies and their capabilities. So:

- *learning technology* is the use of a broad range of communication, information, and related technologies to support learning and teaching;
- *learning technologists* apply learning technology in practice and/or undertake research into learning technology.

A very wide range of people in industry and in private and public sector education have learning technology as a core part of their role: you do not necessarily have to be called or to call yourself a learning technologist to be one.

## 2 What we do

### 2.1 Aims

Formed as a Registered Charity in 1993, ALT is a professional and scholarly association which seeks to bring together all those with an interest in the use of learning technology. We aim to:

- promote good practice in the use of learning technology in education and industry;
- represent the members in areas of policy;
- facilitate collaboration between practitioners, researchers, and policy makers.

### 2.2 Activities

We organise:

- ALT-C, which is the UK's main conference for learning technologists;
- occasional conferences on topics of interest to learning-technology practitioners, for example our 13 October 2005 one-day conference for FE e-learning practitioners in London, or our 2004 joint ALT-SURF Spring Conference and Research Seminar *Living & learning: ePortfolios and digital repositories*;
- visits and exchanges – for example ALT members took part in an exchange visit to colleges and universities in the Netherlands, 7-11 April 2003, with support from SURF (roughly the Dutch equivalent of JISC), and the DfES;
- regular workshops – for example on how to write credible funding bids, accessibility, and learning object design;
- **CMALT** – our “certified membership” scheme, which we launched last year – <http://www.alt.ac.uk/cmalt/>.

We produce:

- regular and influential responses to consultations relating to learning technology and e-learning – most of these we publish on our web site at <http://www.alt.ac.uk/documents.html>;
- a fortnightly members' email digest;
- an international peer-reviewed journal devoted to research and good practice in the use of learning technologies, ALT-J, published by Taylor and Francis;
- a quarterly printed Newsletter, ALT-N, available also in web format at <http://newsletter.alt.ac.uk>;
- publications aimed at practitioners, sometimes produced in conjunction with other organisations.

## 3 Membership summary

- 500+ individuals (now increasing);
- ~100 HEIs (up 14% on September 2002);
- ~70 FEIs and equivalent (up 90%);

~50 corporate/sponsoring members (up by 300%) – examples include DfES, Epic Group plc, HEFCE, Higher Education Academy, LSC, Quality Improvement Agency, Social Care Institute for Excellence, Scottish Funding Councils, Desire2Learn, SCT Sungard, John Wiley and Sons, Urban Learning Space.

#### 4 Staffing and governance

Currently we have 7 staff members, 6 of whom are based in the ALT Office in Oxford:

- **Executive Secretary (0.5)** – Seb Schmoller;
- **Director** – Rhonda Riachi;
- **Operations Manager** – Marion O’Dea (who will return from maternity leave in October, and whose post is currently covered by Bob Green);
- **Projects Manager** – Teresa Prochazka (whose post is responsible for the operation of CMALT)
- **Events Administrator** – Hayley Willis;
- **Administration Officer** – Sue Garrett;
- **Administration Assistant (0.5)** – Mel Fox.

ALT is run by a Central Executive Committee (Chair: Linda Creanor; Vice-chair: Cathy Ellis; President: Jane Seale) to which 4 operational committees report, with committee chairs appointed by the Central Executive. These are:

- **Further Education** – chaired by Cathy Ellis.
- **Membership Services** – chaired by John Phelps;
- **Research** – chaired by Robin Mason;
- **Publications** – chaired by Paul Bacsich.

Committees meet roughly three times per year, in some cases by telephone conference rather than face-to-face. We also have occasional standing committees and working groups. For example we have a CMALT Steering Group, and, with DfES we convened over last summer a group to prepare a learning technology informed response to the RAE2008 consultation on panel draft criteria and working methods.

#### 5 Future developments

- **Enhancements to the ALT web site** – membership self-service, wiki etc.
- **Growth** – seek to grow our individual membership as well as our institutional/organisational memberships.
- **New “tariff” for organisational members** – which aligns the costs to the size of the organisation.
- **Research policy** – led by our newly formed Research Committee.

#### 6 Getting involved

- Put yourself forward for involvement in our operational committees, including the conference programme committee, when vacancies arise. (We have an open process for filling vacancies.)
- Attend and send people to our events.
- Use the ALT website. It is updated regularly.
- Tell us about things which we should be putting in the fortnightly digest.
- Write for the Newsletter and the Journal.
- Put proposals to us for future events and publications.
- Put yourself forward for CMALT.
- Comment on documents when (and when not!) asked.
- Make demands.
- Respond when we ask for feedback.
- Encourage your institution to join if it is not already a member.

#### 7 Contact details

**ALT Administration**, Gypsy Lane, Headington, Oxford OX3 0BP t: +44 (0)1856 484125; f: +44 (0)1865 484165 e: [alt@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:alt@brookes.ac.uk)

**Seb Schmoller**, Executive Secretary, t: +44 (0)114 2586899; e: [sschmoller@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:sschmoller@brookes.ac.uk)

**Rhonda Riachi**, Director, t: +44 (0)1856 484143; e: [rriachi@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:rriachi@brookes.ac.uk)

**Marion O’Dea**, Operations Manager, t: +44 (0)1856 484125; e: [marionodea@brookes.ac.uk](mailto:marionodea@brookes.ac.uk)