



## Continuing Professional Development & Workplace Learning Section

### Notes from the half-day workshop, held at the Saur Library, Humboldt University, Berlin, Thursday 7th August, 8.30 a.m. to 12.30 p.m.

The Workshop theme was *Online CPD courses and training programs*, with a focus on developing, evaluating, and assessing the quality of online continuing professional development courses and training programs. There were approximately 15 people attending the workshop.

The workshop was opened by Ian Smith, who introduced and thanked Dr Jaensch, Director of the LIS Department at the Humboldt University. Dr Jaensch welcomed participants and gave a brief description of the programs in his Department, the only university which has a PhD program in LIS).

There were three presentations.

#### **Presentation 1. Distance learning degree programs at the Humboldt University**

Colin Jargot, Coordinator, Magister/Master Fernstudium and Dr Diann Rusch-Feja, Director, Information Resources Centre, International University, Bremen  
Colin described the 2 degrees offered by distance learning – the Postgraduate Master of Arts, and the 'Magister Artium' (Bachelor/Master of Arts). Video conferencing is used to provide weekly lectures/tutorials and occurs in 3 sites. Synchronous and asynchronous communication are used for different purposes (eg management, group work, tutoring and support) Dr Jaensch later demonstrated the use of the videoconferencing studio by the 'instructor' with the help of a technician assistant (tutor) and showing the different modes of 'production' – personal presentation, physical objects via an overhead projector, computer generation, and use of a board. He noted that 1 of the advantages of online delivery is the production of 'Study Packs' for each course. These have led to 'transparency' of courses, enabling teachers to learn from each other.

Diann provided a detailed description of the 7 'Evaluation Criteria for Video Conferencing':

1. Placement of video conferencing in the course
2. Use of accompanying materials
3. Use of tutors and mentors
4. Presentation skills – audience
5. Fitting execution to content
6. Involvement of participants
7. Time and technical constraints

Conclusions drawn were:

- Structured design of course/units/presentation segments imperative

- Best practice method with video conferencing is to have course materials available well in advance on web site, encourage preparation and interaction,
- Have a tutor at student site who participates and advises encourages feedback within course structure,
- Use VC consultations for emphasizing content and Q&A
- Accompanying materials must be available well in advance
- Presentation must have variety of methods and participant involvement
- Didactics of VC presentation require more structure, strict content arrangement.

During her presentation, Diann also noted the following points of interest:

- There is a slight time delay so instructors need to move slowly
- Student preparation is very important, otherwise interaction is hindered
- Very labour intensive for staff (cf face-to-face)
- Interaction is important
- Zooming in on physical objects is very effective
- Location of 'mentors' is an issue – would be good if they were on site, not always possible
- 2 hours per session is enough
- Skill set is different from face-to-face lecturing – increased need for multi-media presentation style and need to adjust to type of audience
- Need more structure and less repetition (this can be confusing on VC)
- Regarding involvement of students, suggested best not at the beginning of VC; would like to get to the point of having students presenting but communication modes are limited to oral and video at this stage of course development archiving is limited.

### **Presentation 2: The School of Information & Media virtual campus at the Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, Scotland**

Ian M. Johnson, Head of School, School of Information & Media, Robert Gordon University, Aberdeen, Scotland.

The University has a virtual campus, offering 9 masters degree courses. The implications of online learning were outlined under the following broad subject areas:

- Teaching materials
- Learning resources
- Library resources
- Tutorial support
- Quality management and enhancement
- Marketing
- Costs

Benefits for students and the university, including the fact that there are now 2/3rd of students involved in online distance learning, the improvement in on-campus teaching, and the growth in numbers. Future Challenges included technical limitations, staffing (development, recruitment and management), and competition from commercial providers.

Ian noted that tutorial support is more demanding as asynchronous communications give more opportunities for students to raise questions, although the increased interchange also provides greater benefits for the student group as a whole. He also commented on the increased opportunity to change the teaching mode for the on-campus students by using the distance learning material to replace formal lectures and engaging them in more interactive tutorials based on a preparatory study of that material and other background reading.

### **Presentation 3: Evaluating the effectiveness of distance education programs at San Jose State University**

Dr Blanche Woolls, Director, School of Library and Information Science, San Jose State University, San Jose, California, U.S.A.

Blanche compared face-to-face and distance learning modes, noting the following points which have been learned from evaluations:

- Need to look at learning style preferences
- Evaluation questionnaires online work best with 'boxes' to tick
- Follow up participants should be selected early
- Preference for face-to-face for human communication, but online is better for discussions
- 'Blackboard' allows discussions to be archived
- Students will find ways of communicating and online lists continue on past the duration of the courses
- Lists are a 'must'
- Group work is better in online environment than in face-to-face
- Ability to work in a virtual group is very important
- Students can present seamlessly from different locations (this doesn't take any longer than face-to-face)
- Needs analyses show that everyone wants CPD in new technology; in USA training is required for those in rural and small settings, where they may not have other formal training

Conclusion: CE courses must be evaluated and reported as the profession needs to know what works, and this should be disseminated in newsletters, through the CPD online discussion list.

#### **Final Session: Quality Factors in Online Continuing Education**

This discussion was led by Jana Varlejs, Associate Professor, SCILS, Rutgers University, U.S.A.

The following factors specifically pertaining to web-based online delivery were outlined by Jana and discussed by the group in some detail:

- Does course publicity spell out the technical requirements that the learner's computer must meet? Prerequisite technical skills?
- Does the CE provider encourage potential students to take a self-assessment to determine their readiness for online learning?
- Is the online platform for the course likely to be compatible with the typical learner's hardware?
- Is the online courseware compliant with the Americans Disabilities Act (and other equivalents)?
- Is there 24/7 technical support for students and instructors?
- Is access to appropriate learning resources adequate e.g., library materials, software?
- Does the instructor respond to student assignments, comments, questions in a timely manner? Does the instructor/student ratio allow this?
- Does the instructor have the ability to engage students and to accommodate different learning styles in the online environment?
- Does the instructor provide the means for students to interact with each other and to form a learning community?
- Are intellectual property rights respected?

On the whole the discussion reinforced the issues raised in the presentations, with the following points highlighted:

- More work and time with different skills are needed at different times
- Interaction with staff and students, and between students, leads to increased satisfaction
- There will be increased demand for multimedia formats and modes of delivery i.e. not just text
- Learning communities can be developed and 'buddy' groups can be used for small group interactions and to enrich the discussion by more personalised contact

- Be aware of cultural sensitivities, language differences, use of jargon, international standards for web publishing
- Need to make sure copyright and licensing issues are covered
- There is an expectation to be able to do everything online, courses as well as administration
- Although a whole course can be completed online, contact can enhance learning
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In summary, Jana stated that the online environment creates many issues for CPD – progress has been great and quality will continue to improve as people gain more experience and as technology, hardware and software improve; and marketing can facilitate greater access especially in low-tech countries where there has been start-up using CDROM technology, and ideas can be adapted to online delivery mode.

Thanks to all the presenters and participants for their enthusiastic input, to Dr Jaensch and Colin Jargot for such a warm and generous welcoming. And I especially would like to thank and acknowledge Ian Smith, Personnel Librarian, LaTrobe University Library, Victoria, Australia, and Dr Diann Rusch-Feja, Director, Information Resources Centre, International University, Bremen, for organising this workshop so expertly.

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Chair CPD&WL Section  
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<http://www.ifla.org/VII/s43/scpdwl.htm>