

***Education for a Digital World:
Advice, Guidelines and Effective Practice from Around the Globe.***

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Workshop/debate/discussion/display/demonstration details: PowerPoint Presentation

Requirements: 2 Video Projectors, Internet Access, 2 Screens

Ideal Length: 90 minutes

Purpose: Introduce the contents of the collaborative book (launched at the PCF5 conference) and the contributors by demonstrating technologies and techniques for online collaboration (including consideration for countries with limited resources)

Tools and technologies demonstrated:

- * blogs,
- * social media,
- * teleconferencing environments,
- * virtual worlds,

Screen One: Live Second Life Presentation. A group of book contributors will be in our leased land in Second Life discussing via text messaging, Education for a Digital World. These individuals will be participating in Second Life from varying locations around the world.

Screen Two: Live Elluminate Presentation. A group of book contributors from a variety of locations around the world will be using this teleconferencing environment to join the conference presentation. If it meets with your approval, this can be advertised and available to all Commonwealth of Learning members. The link to enter the online presentation and participate virtually is:

<https://sas.illuminate.com/m.jnlp?sid=727&password=M.4202FE73C613EE9B4CDE91FE12B02A>

Acknowledgement: We gratefully acknowledge and thank the Commonwealth of Learning for publishing the book and making it available as a resource to the world at a nominal cost. Income from purchased books allows for the provision of free copies to institutions in the developing world. It is also available at no charge electronically on the Commonwealth of Learning web site.

Detailed Outline:

The onset of digital outreach with emerging technologies in developing countries is akin to the industrial revolution in Europe. In the scenario of education, the revolution led to the emergence of distance learning universities, some of which have since become among the top education providers. Their emergence in the western world was followed by more open universities in Hong Kong, India, Australia, Sri Lanka and other countries. Digital revolution is more than a buzz phrase; it is bringing the previously neglected countries into the sphere of higher education. They are expected to bridge the digital gap by employing better and cheaper means as 'weapons of mass communication' (Tapscott and Williams, 2008), such as e-learning, video conferencing, podcasting and virtual studios, etc.

As the capacity of the Internet evolves and expands, the potential for online teaching and learning also evolves and expands. The increasing number of new technology tools and expanding bandwidth are changing all facets of online activity, including e-learning. As technologies become more sophisticated

and as they begin to converge (for example, cell phones becoming multimedia-capable and Internet-connected), educators will have more options for creating innovative practices in education.

The shift occurring in the Web from a static content environment where end users are the recipients of information—defined as Web 1.0—to one where they are active content creators—defined as **Web 2.0**—can be described as a transition to a more distributed, participatory, and collaborative environment (Wikipedia, 2005). Web 2.0 is considered to be a platform where “knowledge-working is no longer thought of as the gathering and accumulation of facts, but rather, the riding of waves in a dynamic environment” (Downes, 2005, ¶ 14). Web 2.0 is defined not only by technologies such as blogs, wikis, podcasts, vodcasts, RSS feeds, and Google Maps, but also by the social networking that it enables. As these communication-enabling technologies conjoin text, voice, and video using CoIP (communications over Internet protocol), they will provide a seamless integration with cell phones, PDAs, and computers (Yarlagadda, 2005).

This growing field of e-learning (both blended and online) is steadily reorienting virtually all levels of education and bringing people together in new ways. A diverse group of experts have compiled their knowledge and experience into a book called ***Education for a Digital World: Advice, Guidelines and Effective Practice from Around the Globe***.

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This book will be an indispensable guide to policy makers and practitioners in developing and developed countries. A resource. A textbook. A manual. It offers practical, contemporary guidance to support e-learning decision-making, instructional choices, program and course planning and development. The wide array of e-learning topics provide a plethora of insights, ideas, and usable tools, along with tips and evidence-based theory to guide administrators, program and course developers, project teams and teachers through the development of online learning opportunities.

Enlisting the practice-based knowledge of educators to address the aspirations and goals of today's information-savvy students is surely a key to providing enriching experiences using learning technologies.

Faculty, instructors, staff, administrators, policy makers and governance bodies have their own unique perspectives on the role of learning technologies within higher education and each has a sense of what would constitute an enriching experience. That experience might include highly-flexible and engaging course offerings, convivial tools for instructors, more learners for academic departments, increased recognition and reputation for an institution, more mobility for learners between programs and across institutions—items with specific success indicators depending on viewpoint.

But despite the proliferation of information and communication technologies (ICTs) within the higher education sector, ICT use in higher education may not yet have made as significant an impact on the fundamentals of teaching and learning nor revolutionized classroom practice as predicted, according to a report on tertiary education from the Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD, 2005)¹. Instead, the report pointed to administrative services such as admissions, registration, fee payment and purchasing as areas of measurable ICT impact. While ICT use may have changed the nature of the learning experience for many learners, providing convenient access to information resources from libraries and online databases, and relaxed the time, space, and distance constraints of

education, the fundamentals of how higher education institutions teach or the ways that learners learn has remained largely unchanged—until now.

How do we currently approach the enrichment of teaching and learning using ICTs? Are there emergent models of practice arising from educator experiences that may apply broadly to ICT applications for teaching and learning? Are there best practices with learning technologies emerging from particular institutions or jurisdictions that could have wider application across the higher education sector? How has the proliferation of ICTs, and particularly mobile technologies, been incorporated by educators into their practice in diverse communities around the globe?

This book addresses these questions. It was collaboratively developed and edited by experienced practitioners in the higher education sector. It is the output of ongoing discussions among practitioners who participated in an online community of interest that stimulated dialog among and between interest groups that shared a common vision of providing best practice knowledge for the benefit of their peers. This is a book that had its roots in the organic discussions of practitioners and became a larger work through their collective intention to disseminate their knowledge more broadly. The book addresses issues of learning technology use in five sections that deal with:

- The impact of instructional technologies
- Creating online course
- Implementing technology
- E-learning in action
- Engagement and communication

In Section 1, the book provides a view of the many ways in which information technologies can be configured to suit the diverse range of situations in which learning can take place, including descriptions of emergent approaches such as those afforded by social networking technologies and collaboration tools. Section 1 also flags issues of diversity, as well as the challenges and opportunities for ICT use in the developing world.

In Section 2, the book provides insights into key design issues in the creation of online courses including matters of instructional design, assessment and evaluation, diversity, accessibility, quality assurance, and the impacts associated with making technological choices in an instructional context.

In Section 3, the book explores issues of leadership and change management with chapters that discuss copyright and licensing, the implementation of learning management systems, the use of emerging open source tools and open educational resources, and the development and maintenance of standards of practice. It emphasizes the building of communities of practice as a means of sustaining innovation in the context of a dynamically evolving instructional ecosystem.

From the action perspective, in Section 4 the book provides chapters on instructional strategies, selection of media, the use of games, and the evaluation and improvement of instructional practices.

In Section 5, the book deals with the tools for engagement and communication and their use as a means for expression, as well as for giving voice to learner identities and communicating their stories. The authors discuss the power of communities of practice as a tool for sustaining change and maintaining colleague support as we look forward to what may be next on the learning technologies horizon.

In a paper describing the creation of a national e-learning strategy for New Zealand, Higgins (2002) described the “way forward” as a learner-centred approach that encompassed the complete range of interactions between learners and the higher education system. “E-learning can deliver many benefits, but only if learner-centred opportunities are developed that ensure it is an effective educational tool. This means giving learners much greater choice in how their learning is delivered, enabling them to interact easily with teachers and access appropriate levels of administrative, educational, and technical support. It means designing our systems in ways that best fit the circumstances and needs of our learners.”ⁱⁱ

What Higgins is describing, is the need for a technological approach to the issues of access, choice, flexibility, and mobility within the higher education system using ICTs and learning technologies that can enhance the functional aspects of the entire higher education ecosystem. It is from an ecological perspective that the authors of this work present emerging practitioner knowledge for enriching learning and teaching using learning technologies. In this book, the authors describe and evaluate instructional approaches that draw upon technological innovations with the power to change teaching and learning practices in positive and transformative ways

From the perspectives outlined in this book there is a wealth of available practitioner knowledge on the use of learning technologies that requires additional dissemination. This book is one potential creative outlet. And, as the authors have demonstrated through their approach to disseminating their work online, the power of ICTs may only now be emerging in the hands of practitioners who actively dialogue with their peers on relevant issues as a means to elevate the use of learning technologies to a transformative plane in the higher education sector.

ⁱ OECD (2005). *E-learning in tertiary education: where do we stand?* Organisation for Economic Cooperation and Development (OECD). Paris.

ⁱ Downes, S. (2005). E-learning 2.0. eLearn Magazine. Association for Computing Machinery, Inc. Retrieved, November 9, 2005 from <http://elearnmag.org/subpage.cfm?section=articles&article=29-1>

ⁱⁱ Higgins, A. (2002). *Creating a National E-Learning Strategy in the Open Learning Environment: A New Zealand Case Study*. Distance Education Association of New Zealand. Available: http://www.col.org/pcf2/papers%5Chiggins_1.pdf

ⁱⁱ Porter, D (2008). Education for a Digital World: Introduction

ⁱⁱ Tapscott D. and Williams A.D. (2008) Wikinomics retrieved on 2 February, 2008 from <http://www.gurteen.com/gurteen/gurteen.nsf/id/wikinomics>

ⁱⁱ Wikipedia. (2005). *Web 2.0*. Retrieved October 31, 2005, from http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Web_2.0#Overview

ⁱⁱ Yarlagadda, M. (2005). ZDNet Video: The future of VoIP: CoIP. CNET Networks, Inc. Retrieved November 10, 2005, from http://news.zdnet.com/2036-2_22-5933133.html?tag=wbemail