LEWIS PERINBAM TO CHAIR COL’S BOARD OF GOVERNORS

FORMER CIDA VICE PRESIDENT BECOMES SECOND CANADIAN CHAIRMAN

Lewis Perinbam, O.C., a former Vice President of the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), was appointed as Chairman of COL’s Board of Governors on 28 April 2003. The announcement was made on behalf of COL’s Board of Governors by Commonwealth Secretary-General, H.E. Rt. Hon. Donald McKinnon, following a meeting of the Board in Vancouver that week.

Mr. Perinbam is the second Canadian to hold this post. Previously a Senior Adviser to COL’s President, he succeeds Dr. H. Ian Macdonald, O.C., President Emeritus of York University, Toronto, who had chaired the Board since 1994.

“The strong endorsement Lewis received from countries around the Commonwealth is testimony to his knowledge, talent and expertise in the area of education for development,” said Mr. McKinnon. “His impressive track record in education, government relations and successful networking in his professional life will be of enormous benefit to COL and will enable him to provide strong leadership to the organisation.”

During his several years at CIDA, he was well known for his innovative approaches to development including its flagship non-governmental organisation (NGO) partnership programme – the first of its kind in the world – and its industrial co-operation programme that encouraged involvement of the private sector in development. Prior to his time at CIDA, Mr. Perinbam represented the World Bank at the United Nations and at the UN’s specialised agencies in New York and Europe. He was also the founding Secretary General of the Canadian National Commission for UNESCO and served as Executive Director of the World University Service of Canada.

In 2000, Mr. Perinbam was Chair of the 2000 Federal Government Task Force on the Participation of Visible Minorities in the Federal Public Service and, in 2002, Prime Minister Jean Chrétien appointed him a Governor of the Canadian Centre for Management Development. He was also named an Officer of the Order of Canada in 1997.

“Many world problems cannot be solved using traditional and conventional methods,” Mr. Perinbam said. “They require new approaches, techniques and attitudes. COL is at the forefront of change and has earned widespread respect for its leadership in demonstrating effective use of open and distance learning and new communications technologies to initiate and manage change for the benefit of the peoples of the Commonwealth. I count it a privilege to be associated with COL and will support its efforts to serve the Commonwealth in bold and imaginative ways.”

Mr. Perinbam also noted that his priorities include succession planning for the presidency of COL, heightening COL’s profile, strengthening COL’s relationships with Commonwealth Governments and seeking additional resources to enable COL to serve the people of the Commonwealth more effectively.

COL’s President and Chief Executive Officer, Dato’ Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan, offered that “Over the last eight years of knowing him well as a Senior Adviser to my office I have come to appreciate the range of skills and connections that Mr. Perinbam possesses especially in international development. His wisdom, understanding of issues and interest in development will enable COL to reposition itself to respond even more sensitively to the
AFFORDABLE ADVANTAGE: A COMMONWEALTH EXECUTIVE MBA/MPA

Demand is growing for post-graduate human resource training to increase the number of highly trained professionals required to maintain economic momentum and good governance. COL is playing a catalytic role in addressing this need in South Asia, directly benefiting individuals and the organisations in which they work, and thereby indirectly benefiting their societies. Upwardly mobile South Asian executives can now enrol in the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration/Master of Public Administration programme, taking the distance education courses wherever they live or work.

The Commonwealth Executive MBA/MPA has been offered since mid-2002 through four premier South Asian open universities: Bangladesh Open University (BOU), Indira Gandhi National Open University, (IGNOU, India), Open University of Sri Lanka (OUSL), and Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU, Pakistan), although the last, AIOU, long part of the planning process, did not begin offering courses until early 2003. The CEMBA/CEMPA was designed, developed and implemented as a result of collaboration between the four universities and brokered by COL with funding assistance from the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation (CFTC).

The CEMBA/CEMPA prepares its graduates for international-level performance, yet focuses on optimising local productivity. Even better are the affordable fees, flexible study pace and seamless credit transfer between partner institutions offered to potential students. Courses feature relevant local learning materials and case studies, and cover everything from managing information and public systems to development planning and quality assurance. English is the lingua franca.

How long does it take to complete? Almost as long as learners want or have the time for. Designed for part-time study by busy working professionals, the programme can be completed by students at their own pace. As well, they don’t have to take the full degree to benefit from the courses offered. Diploma and graduate diploma options are available. The full graduate degree requires a minimum of two years study up to a maximum of five years (although registration is possible after the expiry of five years). The diploma option can be obtained in as little as one year by completing a suite of compulsory courses in business or public administration – depending on the chosen specialisation. Adding some electives can upgrade the qualification to a graduate diploma. And the more academically inclined may obtain the MBA or MPA (graduate degree) following the completion of an additional final project with an associated research component.

Learners receive certification from the institution they apply to and are accepted into the programme by individual institutions, with admission requirements that are streamlined across the four partner institutions. The programme provides an opportunity to acquire both accreditation and valuable training for candidates who are resident of a participating country, possess any sort of undergraduate degree (or have worked in a related field for at least two years) and can pass a test of professional experience and English fluency.

The programme is administered by a joint governance system of senior administrators and faculty representatives from all partner institutions. Primary CEMBA/CEMPA course writing team members are from the Commonwealth’s established business management schools located in Australia, Canada, India, New Zealand, Pakistan and Sri Lanka. Courses are written exclusively for the programme, as well as adapted from existing courses at CEMBA/CEMPA partner institutions and the well-regarded business programmes of Charles Sturt University in Australia, New Zealand’s Massey University and the Open University of Hong Kong. Secondary course writing teams at partner institutions adapt material to local circumstances and the regional business and governmental environment.

The CEMBA/CEMPA began its first semester in late 2002 with a combined total of 480 students enrolled at IGNOU, BOU and OUSL. Unforeseen circumstances delayed the programme’s launch at AIOU until early 2003. End-of-semester course evaluations are ongoing and an overall programme evaluation will take place in 2004 after the first graduates have completed their studies.

Projections for the CEMBA/CEMPA promise a significant short- and long-term human and economic development pay-off for the South Asian Commonwealth region. As a working example of close regional collaboration, the CEMBA/CEMPA provides a template for the development of similar programmes elsewhere. To that end, COL is now discussing the development and promotion of a CEMBA/CEMPA programme with the National Open University of Nigeria targeting learners in Commonwealth Africa.

www.col.org/cemba
COL IN ACTION

COL'S NEXT THREE-YEAR PLAN

COL's staff and Board of Governors, with input from stakeholders and partners, are currently developing a Three-Year Plan, 2003–2006, for which it will seek the endorsement of Commonwealth Ministers of Education later this year.

The organisation is moving from a project-based to a programme-based approach to fulfil its mandate, implementing a Results Based Management (RBM) framework for its planning and evaluation methodology and further integrating UN Millennium Development Goals and Education for All priorities into its programmes.

COL's programmes will also continue to be influenced by Commonwealth priorities (such as good governance, gender equality and the needs of small states) and in-country and in-region assessments.

For the next three years, COL has identified three priority programmes to support its overriding purpose of Building Capacity in Open and Distance Learning (ODL):

- **ODL Policies**, with the objective of fostering the adoption and implementation of open and distance learning policies within the broader educational and human resource development strategies and policies of member states.
- **ODL Systems Development**, with the objective of assisting in the development of open and distance learning systems that build on existing capacity or assist in creating new capacity appropriate for the contexts of member states.
- **ODL Applications**, with the objective of demonstrating how open and distance learning applications can benefit individual learners, institutions and member states by accelerating human resource development.

The plan is also based upon six areas of operation:

- Research
- Advisory
- Advocacy
- Fostering networks and partnerships
- Capacity-building
- Knowledge management

While the three programmes would seem to be all-encompassing, the activities within each programme will be focused on a limited number of planned outcomes: e.g., working in small states, teacher education, and assisting institutions to move to dual-mode delivery.

COL's work will be more tightly focused, will have longer timeframes and will be scaled up towards larger and more substantial activities. COL will continue to work in partnership with governments, institutions and other international organisations.

Better focussing of COL's efforts will enable the agency to continue to grow and extend its reach and influence.

[www.col.org/programmes/reporting](http://www.col.org/programmes/reporting)
[www.unesco.org/education/efa](http://www.unesco.org/education/efa)
[www.developmentgoals.org](http://www.developmentgoals.org)

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IAN MACDONALD STEPS DOWN

Dr. H. Ian Macdonald, O.C., LL.D., K.L.J., President Emeritus of York University, was COL’s Chairman from 1 January 1994 until 28 April 2003. Upon taking this voluntary office, he led the institution through some tough times when it was facing a financial crunch. He has been an unfailing supporter and advocate for COL and open and distance learning since chairing COL’s Progress Review Committee in 1993, prior to becoming Chairman.

COL’s President and Chief Executive Officer, Dato’ Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan, noted that “Dr. Macdonald’s passion for the Commonwealth and his abiding interest in and long association with education made him an ideal Chairman for COL’s Board of Governors. His tireless energy, administrative knowledge, interest in people and sense of humour gave me great pleasure to work with him. My colleagues and I will miss his presence at our meetings.”

Commonwealth Secretary-General, H.E. Rt. Hon. Donald McKinnon, also expressed his appreciation for Dr. Macdonald’s service. “Ian and COL owe a tremendous debt of gratitude to Ian for the positive leadership he provided COL since 1994. His energy, imagination, commitment and, of course, sense of humour, will be missed. Ian is a real Commonwealth man!”

Dr. Macdonald has had a distinguished career in academia and government, having been a professor of economics and chief government economist early in his career and then serving the Canadian Province of Ontario as Deputy Minister of Treasury, Economics, and Intergovernmental Affairs. In 1974, he was named President of York University, a position he held for more than 10 years, following which he served as Director of York International for another 10 years. He is now President Emeritus and Professor of Economics and Public Policy at York University and Director of the Master of Public Administration Program.

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UN MILLENNIUM DEVELOPMENT GOALS

[www.developmentgoals.org](http://www.developmentgoals.org)

1. Eradicate extreme poverty and hunger
2. Achieve universal primary education
3. Promote gender equality and empower women
4. Reduce child mortality
5. Improve maternal health
6. Combat HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases
7. Ensure environmental sustainability
8. Develop a global partnership for development
A VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOR SMALL STATES

COL has responded to a request by Commonwealth Ministers of Education that it explore the creation of a virtual university to support higher education in small states. After technical collaboration and wide consultation, COL will be presenting a report on the purpose, design and economics of establishing such a virtual university to Commonwealth Ministers of Education when they meet in Edinburgh in October 2003. The initial report, by a Technical Advisory Committee that met last year, was re-shaped in March with advice, agreement and endorsement from a representative group of Commonwealth Education Ministers from small states, meeting in Victoria, Seychelles.

The university, as conceived, would function on the basis of collaboration among a consortium of existing educational providers.

The final report, executive summary, and communiqué from the Seychelles meeting, prepared through facilitation and expertise provided by Dr. Glen Farrell, a senior COL consultant, are available on COL's web site. www.col.org/Consultancies/02virtualu.htm

COL WINS MORE CONTRACT WORK

COL has been awarded several new externally funded contracts. These are often executed in partnership with other organisations. New contracts since January 2003 include:

• Project Preparation Technical Assistance (PPTA) in “Teaching Quality Improvement in Secondary Education Project in Bangladesh” – in partnership with the EDC Consortium, funded by the Asian Development Bank
• A review of learner support for vocational courses at the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL) – in partnership with consultants Barbara Spronk (Canada) and Joshua Mallet (University College of Education of Winneba, Ghana), funded by the British Department for International Development through the British Council
• “Training and capacity building in distance education in Mozambique” – in partnership with the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE), funded by the World Bank
• Adapting and delivering the distance learning course, Writing Effectively for UNHCR, for the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and its global staff - in partnership with consultants Rachel Welch (U.K.) and Kate Hand (Canada)
• Knowledge development/knowledge finding (“data-mining”) for both the Asian Development Bank and the South Pacific Regional Office of the World Health Organization – in partnership with Swaynet Inc.

IGNOU ENROLLS ONE-MILLIONTH STUDENT

On 14 March 2003, enrolment at the world's largest open university, India's Indira Gandhi National Open University, surpassed the one-million mark.

In congratulating IGNOU, COL's President and CEO, Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan, noted that "when IGNOU was established 17 years ago, questions were raised about its utility and viability; however, conscious efforts by IGNOU, and its successes, have brought results and helped to create a firm base for growth of distance education in India."

PEOPLE

COL STAFF

Professor Asha Kanwar joined COL as Education Specialist, Higher Education on 1 March 2003 with the responsibility for working with Commonwealth government and organisations in the areas of tertiary education systems development, continuing professional education and quality assurance within the context of open and distance learning. Prior to joining COL, Professor Kanwar was a consultant in open and distance learning at UNESCO-BRED A in Dakar, Senegal, on secondment from the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), New Delhi, India. One of her primary responsibilities during this assignment was to co-ordinate seven COL-UNESCO projects in sub-Saharan Africa.

Ms. Andrea Hope, who held this position from January 2001 completed her employment with COL in January 2003 and has now returned to Hong Kong.

Mr. Rod Tyrer joined COL in March 2003 as Special Adviser, Strategy, Evaluation and Monitoring with responsibility for assisting in the implementation of a Results-Based Management (RBM) framework for the organisation. He is on a two-year secondment from the British Department for International Development (DFID), London, where he is a Senior Education Adviser. As a strategic planner, Mr. Tyrer worked for 10 years in the UK higher education system and for four years with the Papua New Guinea Department of Police.

www.col.org/akanwar
www.col.org/ahope
www.col.org/tyrer
This book comes at a very opportune time. Cellular telephone companies have helped to increase access to phones by leaps and bounds and have penetrated many markets such as young adults and business people. Cell phones have caught on to such an extent that it’s not uncommon to find people receiving and sending text messages while in meetings and classes. Cell phones have become everyday accessories for many people and yet seem to have hardly received a glance by most educators and administrators.

The Future of Learning gives a glimpse into the integration of cellular phone technologies into open and distance learning. Much of the world’s distance education depends on paper and to a small extent, on the Internet (eLearning). One of the greatest challenges lies in improving communications between distance (mobile) learners and their tutors or lecturers. The focus of this book is to introduce readers (typically educators and administrators) to the uses of cellular phones that are frequently an everyday factor in the lives of learners, but little used or even known about in institutions.

Tapping into the power of cellular technologies will allow institutions to transmit information such as updates to learning materials, assignment questions and marks, and other important, time-sensitive information (e.g., information relating to examination venues, dates and times and assisting with disaster management). Learners who are unable to join discussion groups and cannot afford long distance telephone calls can easily and cost-effectively send text messages to their tutors and receive answers back the same way. The most innovative institutions are likely to assist learners to acquire cell phones that can send and receive basic e-mail and faxes to further enhance their communication capabilities from out-of-the-way places. Lecturers can operate from desktop computers in their offices to send and receive text messages and e-mails, while learners in remote locations can easily use cell phones and cell-enabled PDAs (personal digital assistants, e.g., PalmPilots).

Mobile workers are no longer forced to carry heavy notebook computers and books to enable them to study while travelling. Study material converted into the same format as e-Books, read on PDAs will help lighten the load and enable the most mobile of individuals to keep up-to-date with their studies while travelling. Many rural areas in developing countries are cell phone-enabled, even if it means the learners must travel a short distance (perhaps to the top of a hill) to send and receive text messages or e-mails. These devices remain far more mobile and affordable than notebook computers, and are easier to transport and care for.

This book includes a brief description of the move from distance learning (termed “dLearning” by the author) to “eLearning” (including the use of the Internet) and to “mLearning” (Mobile Learning, including the use of small, pocket-sized, cell-phone enabled mobile devices). It offers descriptions of more than 30 mLearning initiatives.

As stated at the outset of this review, the release of this publication is well timed to advise educators of a wave of innovation that has already started to penetrate campuses, even without the full knowledge of many educators. But with rapid advances in technology, some of the information contained in the book is already out of date. The author would further help readers if the book passed over the desk of an astute editor who could help to improve the clarity of a topic that some might find a little like science fiction – even in 2003, when tens of thousands of these devices are already in daily use in places around the world where GSM (Global System for Mobile communications) cellular networks are in operation.

Paul West
VIRTUAL CONFERENCE ON “COPYRIGHT AND THE WEB”

COL has opened consultations on educational use of the web-posted documents and issues of copyright. In February 2003, COL hosted a very active and hotly debated virtual conference on the topic of “Copyright and the Web”. Over 500 people participated in the three-week, e-mail-based conference and about 600 messages were posted.

The conference was launched with a background paper prepared by the moderators, Mr. Robert A. Schad, Special Adviser to VP Research and International for the Centre for Sustainable Communities (and Senior Policy Strategist in Information Services), University of Regina, Canada and Ms. Wanda Noel, Barrister and Solicitor, Ottawa, Canada.

The paper (printed in Connections and available online), describes a current lobby in Canada that asserts that “copyright law is a barrier to the educational use of the Internet and the World Wide Web” and “that amending the Canadian Copyright Act to remove this barrier is essential if education systems are to produce the highly skilled, computer literate population required in the global information economy.” Many Commonwealth countries have similar copyright legislation and are also embroiled in similar debates.

While many conference participants agreed, many others contended that copyright provisions should be more strictly enforced, regardless of circumstances.

However, much of the discussion focussed on web-posted material that is intended for public consumption and how current legislation can actually be a disservice to publishers/authors as well as users. The unique needs of developing countries were also considered.

While more questions were asked during the conference than were answered – the moderators reported that discussions “clarified some issues, raised others, and provided a wealth of commentary and information” – there was some consensus that current copyright legislation can restrict educational use of freely available (non-password protected) Internet materials, and that something needs to be done about it.

Some participants advocated “open source” software and materials; most considered international and inter-institutional collaboration, especially between developed and developing countries, crucial to establishing equitable Internet copyright standards and legislation.

The closing comments of several participants posed a series of questions that can be used to focus future work on educational use of copyright material on the Internet.

Further information, including background information and the moderators’ summary of the conference discussions and results are available on COL’s web site.

www.col.org/copyright

HELP IN CHOOSING A COURSE MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

WCET, the Western Cooperative for Educational Telecommunications, and C2T2, the Centre for Curriculum, Transfer & Technology (Victoria, British Columbia, Canada), have announced the launch of EduTools, a web-based resource for the higher education community.

EduTools was built to assist higher education administrators and faculty in using a more rational decision-making process to review the many options in course management systems that are on the market.

EduTools is a redevelopment of “Online Educational Delivery Applications: A Web Tool for Comparative Analysis” developed by C2T2 and Bruce Landon, of Douglas College in British Columbia. It was redeveloped by WCET under a project sponsored by the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

EduTools’ researchers review each product using the producer’s web site resources, a product demo, and a set of guiding questions. A variety of analyses are available to users of the site: they can compare specific products for instance, or can ask for a list of products containing specific features.

WCET is also developing three new companion sites that apply the same decision-making models for comparisons of other tools. These new sites, set to debut over the next year, will analyze student services software and service providers, e-learning policies and instructional technologies.

www.edutools.info

CELL PHONES IN THE CLASSROOM

UltraLab, a learning research centre based at Anglia Polytechnic University, U.K., is now involved in three large education and technology projects that are experimenting with mobile phones in teaching and learning. With the E-viva project, students pick up their phones to respond to questions about the ICT skills they have recently acquired.

The project, in 10 schools across the U.K., was launched in September 2002 and involves 50-100 students. In the final phase of the project, the students receive a call to do a voice examination with a computer, as the students felt this would be more comfortable than talking to a teacher. The final stage will involve posting students’ coursework onto a web site...

“Education is often slow to cotton on to the educational potential of new technology,” says Sally Peggetto, an advanced skills teacher at Greycourt Secondary School in Richmond, U.K. This school is currently taking part in another revolutionary project that will… open three futuristic classrooms in its local schools and use mobile phones as part of the project. Tina Herring, head teacher of a participating primary school, Meadowlands, says one potential use could be on field trips and outdoor activities, linking a student in the field with one in the lab. Strathmore, a special school that caters for children with severe learning difficulties, is also participating in the project.

The cost of using mobile phones, however, could be an issue and so could health scares about the safety of mobile handsets, although picture phones are often held away from the body. Richmond’s classrooms of the future are due to open this summer.

The Guardian
ICTS IN AFRICAN SCHOOLS

Two hundred delegates from 28 countries attended a historic pan-African workshop for education practitioners and policy makers, focussing on using information and communications technologies (ICTs) to support school education systems in Africa. Discussion topics included the potential and challenges of ICTs in African education, integrating ICT use into the curriculum, content and capacity-building, appropriate educational technologies in Africa, achieving affordability and sustainability and pan-African initiatives for the future. Seven action items emerged from the workshop.

Workshop discussions also had a strong link to initiatives within the New Partnership for African Development (NEPAD) programme. In a presentation to delegates, Professor Peter Kinyanjui, NEPAD’s Commissioner on e-Schools, identified SchoolNet Africa and its work as an important part of NEPAD’s e-schools initiative.

The Honourable George Kgoroba, Minister of Education, Botswana, opened the event, noting that it was truly “historic”. The Honourable Boyce Sebetela, Minister of Communications, Science and Technology, Botswana, closed the workshop, stressing that for too long Africa has used emotional reasons for investment and development in education. He challenged workshop participants to develop sound educational and economic arguments for the use of ICTs in the education system.

There was a heated debate in a parallel session on appropriate software solutions for African schools regarding “open source” vs. proprietary software (e.g., Microsoft). At the end of this discussion, it was agreed that for Africa, open source, and the associated cost savings, offer a viable option, but that this is not an “either/or” scenario – there needs to be an integrated solution.

The seven action items identified for follow-up cover policy development, building human capacity, information sharing, gender mainstreaming, technology development, advocacy and research. There was also agreement that the workshop and its results are the beginning of a process that should significantly improve co-ordination among the several agencies and organisations working in this area in Africa, including COL.

The conference was organised by the Ministry of Education (Botswana), SchoolNet Africa and the Commonwealth of Learning, in partnership with Canada’s International Development Research Centre, the International Institute for Communication and Development, InfoDev and the World Bank Institute. The workshop was held in Gaborone, Botswana, from 28 April – 2 May 2003.

www.schoolnetAfrica.net/IAS2003

WRITING EFFECTIVELY FOR UNHCR WINS CADE AWARD

Writing Effectively for UNHCR, an effective communication course produced by COL, has won the Canadian Association for Distance Education (CADE) 2003 Award for Excellence in International Collaboration. CADE’s citation notes that, “The course itself displays a practical combination of print and digital technologies to meet the needs of a global network of learners.”

In the spirit of supporting international collaboration and cross-cultural understanding, COL harnessed talent from around the world to build a course development team as international in scope as the target audience of the course itself. The entire process took place virtually, from conception to delivery. By bringing the international team together, COL demonstrated that not only can international partnerships work, they can enrich the process.

In giving voice to the multiple cultures, values and experiences of the parties involved, the international partnership has produced a truly cross-boundary and transcultural product.

The difficulty in the past had been how to provide this type of training to UNHCR’s widely dispersed and mobile staff; “open and distance learning” methods, as advocated by COL, met this challenge.

The course is now serving as a model for other UNHCR training programmes and has been adapted by COL for use by other United Nations agencies and international humanitarian organisations such as the United Nations Joint Programme for HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the World Health Organization (WHO) and the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies.

www.col.org/newsreleases
CALL FOR SUBMISSIONS
EDEA AWARDS

COL has issued a call for submissions for its biennial Excellence in Distance Education Awards (EDEA) programme. Separate awards recognise and honour excellence achieved at the overall institutional level, in the development of learning materials and in student accomplishment. As a part of the EDEA, COL also designates individuals as Honorary Fellows of COL, as a tribute to their lifetime's work as distance educators.

Originated in 1999 in conjunction with COL's 10th anniversary, achievement awards have been received by 10 institutions and 21 individuals at two ceremonies, held in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam and Durban, South Africa. The third presentation will take place at the third Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in Dunedin, New Zealand, in July 2004.

The entry deadline is 30 November 2003. Brochures are being posted to individuals and institutions on COL's mailing list and complete details are available on COL's web site.

www.col.org/edea

THIRD PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING

COL's third (biennial) Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF) will be held in Dunedin, New Zealand, from 4 – 8 July 2004, hosted by the Distance Education Association of New Zealand (DEANZ) in collaboration with the Federation of Commonwealth Open and Distance Learning Associations (FOCODLA).

The conference theme is “Building Learning Communities for our Millennium: Reaching Wider Audiences through Innovative Approaches”. Sub-themes include Education, Health and Local Government.

A call for papers has been issued. Abstracts may be submitted up to 29 August 2003. Upon acceptance of abstracts, papers are required by 22 December 2003.

www.col.org/pcf3 (E-mail: pam.wyse@aut.ac.nz)

www.deanz.org.nz  www.col.org/focodla

STOCKHOLM ISSUES ITS SIXTH CHALLENGE

The sixth annual Stockholm Challenge Award (2003/2004) is open for submission until 1 November 2003. The aim of Stockholm’s international award for innovative use of information technology is to diminish the digital divide and to create an information society for all. The Stockholm Challenge is a platform for creating networks for the exchange of experience and knowledge.

The competition is open to private, public and academic contestants. The Challenge invites projects in the following categories: e-Government, Culture, Health, Education, e-Business and Environment.

www.challenge.stockholm.se

AAOU

The 17th Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) annual conference, will be hosted this year in Thailand by the Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, from 12 – 14 November 2003. The theme is “Networking and Partnership for Strengthening Collaboration in Open and Distance Education.”

www.stmu.ac.th/AAOU/2003/

AUSTRALIAN FORUM

The 16th biennial Forum of the Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia (ODLAA) will be held from 1 – 4 October 2003 in Canberra. The conference theme is “Sustaining Quality Learning Environments”.

www.odlaa.org/forum.html

ICTS AND GENDER

COL, the Global Knowledge Partnership (GKP) the International Telecommunications Union and the Government of Malaysia (Ministry of Energy, Communications and Multimedia, the Ministry of Women and Family Development and the Malaysian Communications and Multimedia Commission) are organising an invitational Forum on Information and Communications Technologies (ICTs) and Gender.

With the theme of “Optimising Opportunities”, Commonwealth experience and recommendations – developed through a series of regional meetings, organised by COL, that identified gender-based barriers to ICTs in education – will be shared with those from other parts of the world.

Anticipated outcomes include a paper to be submitted to the World Summit on the Information Society and a publication/web site featuring best practices, exemplary projects and strategies designed to improve access and help bridge the digital divide.

Organisers hope that these efforts will contribute significantly to enabling women to equitably access ICTs necessary to improve health, establish small businesses and gain equal access to education and training opportunities aimed at improving their own well-being as well as that of their children and the community at large.

The Forum will be held in Kuala Lumpur, 20 – 23, August 2003. Participation at this event is by invitation only. Interested individuals are encouraged to submit their CVs for consideration as a speaker or participant.

www.col.org/wdd
(E-mail: gender@gkpsecreatariat.org.my)

EDUCATION MINISTERS

The 15th triennial Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) will take place in Edinburgh, Scotland from 27 – 30 October 2003. There are three events, around the theme “Closing the Gap: Access, Inclusion and Achievement”: 1) the Education Ministers’ conference, 2) a Parallel Symposium and 3) two Showcases (“Youth” and “Best Practice”). COL is a partner in organising the conference.

www.15cem.com
NOW AVAILABLE

NEW KNOWLEDGE SERIES TITLES

• Establishing Copyright Procedure in Distance Education
  – by Christine Swales, U.K.
• Developing Library and Information Services for Distance Education
  – by Elizabeth F. Watson, University of the West Indies, Barbados
• Open and Distance Learning Policy Development (particular reference to dual-mode institutions)
  – by John Bottomley, Australia, and Jocelyn Calvert, Deakin University, Australia
• Institutional Collaboration in Distance Education Development and Delivery
  – by Chandra B. Sharma and Sohanvir S. Chaudhary, Indira Gandhi National Open University, India

COL has published its third set of Knowledge Series titles. With the addition of the four new titles listed above, the Series now contains 15 quick-study (six-panel), start-up guides on a variety of distance education topics. With a user-friendly, plain language approach, the expert-authored Knowledge Series is designed for education professionals and managers who are relatively new to the field of distance education. However, content is still detailed enough for introductory use by and for educational, vocational or corporate trainers.

The Knowledge Series is freely available in print, online or on CD-ROM and may be duplicated for non-commercial use.

Titles published in 2001/2002:
• Designing Online Learning
• Audio/Audioconferencing in Support of Distance Education
• Video/Videoconferencing in Support of Distance Education
• Using Community Radio for Non-Formal Education
• Using Telecentres in Support of Distance Education

Titles published in 2000:
• Instructional Design for Self-Learning for Distance Education
• Editing Distance Education Materials
• Managing for Electronic Networking
• The Use of Multi Media in Distance Education
• Support Groups in Distance Education

www.col.org/knowledge

EDUCATION FOR ALL WEB PORTAL

OneWorld.net’s global LearningChannel.org has been set up to promote quality education for all by “bringing together organisations and audiences involved in the challenges around education today ... using the Internet to highlight the best initiatives and programmes in education worldwide.”

The portal is also a forum for debate and sharing of experiences. Its searchable database includes everything from grass-roots projects on girls’ education and information on a distance-learning centre, to a human rights awareness programme and suggestions on dealing with the problems of racism and discipline in schools.

LearningChannel.org asserts that education is “the most cost-effective investment governments ever make.”

www.learningchannel.org

UNESCO ODL REVIEW

UNESCO has published Open and Distance Learning: Trends, Policy and Strategy Considerations. The paper reviews open and distance learning in the context of present challenges and opportunities, describes relevant concepts and contributions, outlines some significant current global and regional trends, suggests policy and strategy considerations and identifies UNESCO’s initiatives in this area, including its role in capacity-building and international co-operation.

From UNESCO: “The globalization of distance education provides many opportunities for developing countries for the realisation of their education system-wide goals. Two main factors have led to an explosion of interest in distance learning: the growing need for continual skills upgrading and retraining, and the technological advances that have made it possible to teach more and more subjects at a distance.”

Editors and contributors include Michael Moore (Pennsylvania State University, USA), Alan Tait (The Open University, UK), Paul Resta (University of Texas at Austin, USA), Greville Rumble (The Open University, UK) and Yuri Zaparovanny (UNESCO-IITE, Moscow, Russia).

The paper is available free of charge online or by e-mail.
(E-mail: oai@unesco.org)
The last issue of *Connections* was accompanied by a short reader survey. Thank you to the 330 people who took the time to complete the survey and send it back to us (240 by mail, 70 by fax and 20 electronically). We were pleased to see that satisfaction with *Connections/EdTech News* is high and that recipients find the information useful (94% either often or sometimes).

Over half of the respondents have also taken action or initiated communication with someone as a result of information found in *Connections/EdTech News*. Most found the amount of information about right, although almost half said that they would like to see more in the way of features, stories and case studies. In fact, 90% said that they would like to see a *COL* magazine. Readers will be pleased to know that *COL* is looking into developing a publishing partnership to produce a magazine.

Several readers also took the time to include additional comments and suggestions, which are very much appreciated. Tabulated results are available on *COL*’s web site.

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**COMMONWEALTH DIGITAL OPPORTUNITIES**

The Commonwealth has launched a new web site to assist developing member countries in bridging the “digital divide”, the gap between those with and those without access to information and communication technologies (ICTs). It is intended to serve as a resource for those developing Commonwealth countries that are seeking to bridge the gap, to improve networking and build synergies.

The web site includes information on the recommendations of the Commonwealth Expert Group on Information Technology, the partners in the Action Programme, and some of the developmental opportunities offered by ICTs, including telecentres, knowledge networks, e-governance and e-commerce, and how they can be used to promote sustainable development and contribute to achieving the millennium development goals. COL is a member of the co-ordinating group for the implementation of the Commonwealth Action Programme. [www.commonwealthdigitalopportunities.com](http://www.commonwealthdigitalopportunities.com)

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**COL’S “SHARING OUR SERVICES” PROGRAMME**

*COL*’s new “Sharing our Services” programme provides the means for open learning/distance education professionals to post offers of assistance in their specialist field and for institutions and/or organisations to search for those offering skills and expertise in a given area of open and distance learning. This, then, enables institutions/organisations to directly contact the professionals that may offer the skills they are seeking.

“Sharing our Services” is a self-serve, web-based database that aims to connect experienced educators, retired or otherwise, with distance education organisations/institutions that could benefit from their advice, training or professional input. The programme is designed to match those distance education professionals willing to offer their services at a nominal, or preferably no-fee, basis on short-term assignments with institutions/organisations in developing Commonwealth countries that would be interested in securing their services.

Distance educators and requesting institutions register their information independently on the secure, online database and those that have registered may search the database for matches.

Distance education experience is classified under areas of expertise, e.g. instructional design. [www.col.org/consultants](http://www.col.org/consultants)

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