LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS TRAVELS THE LAST MILE

Lifelong Learning for Farmers is a COL initiative aimed at giving farmers easier access to the information and knowledge that could improve their livelihoods. Officially launched in December 2004 in two rural areas in South India, the programme already has many successes to celebrate.

The need for an initiative like Lifelong Learning for Farmers stems from a simple problem: the wealth of information resulting from agricultural research and development fails to travel the last mile to where it is most needed, the villages of the developing world. In India, there is one agricultural extension worker for every 1,150 farmers. Add in “landless labourers” and each extension worker has the impossible task of serving 2,500 people.

COL has been exploring whether technology can help scale up extension services. Many villages in India are equipped with information and communications technologies (ICT) kiosks as a result of governmental or commercial initiatives. Since each kiosk provides its village with Internet and telephone connections, the possibility exists for these kiosks to provide useful information and bridge that last mile to the individual farmer. However, the impact of the kiosks has been limited by the top-down manner in which they were originally introduced. By simply conveying knowledge on new agricultural technologies from researcher to farmer, this system ignored the experience and innovation that farmers had to offer.

The four partners
Lifelong Learning for Farmers introduced a different model. Farmers were encouraged to form an association and create their own vision of development for their village. This could be acquiring better livestock, growing new crops or improving the way they market their produce. Those ideas often generate simple questions – How do I identify a good cow? How do I keep wild boars off my land when they are a protected species? How can I get my produce to market in good condition?

The next step is to get those with information to work together to answer these questions. In Tamil Nadu, India, COL helped to create a consortium that included:

- Tamil Nadu Agricultural University,
- Tamil Nadu Veterinary and Animal Sciences University,
- Tamil Nadu Open University,
- Anna University (for technology inputs), and
- University of Madras (for social science inputs).

A LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS PARTICIPANT HAS HER BANK LOAN PROCESSED
**NEW TO COL’S STAFF**

Dr. Willie Clarke-Okah, Counsellor and Head of Development Cooperation at the High Commission of Canada in Jamaica, will join COL on 1 September 2006 as Education Specialist, Higher Education and Policy Development. He has been associated with the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA) for over 25 years and comes with an extensive background in international development and education. His most recent assignments include the development of a country-based education strategy for CIDA in Tanzania and the development of a strategic orientation for the Agency to facilitate the launching of a new bilateral programme in Nigeria. Dr. Clarke-Okah was advised to CIDA in its support of the African Virtual University project led by the World Bank in its support of the African Virtual University project led by the World Bank.

**EMPLOYMENT OPPORTUNITIES**

COL is currently seeking qualified professionals for the following vacancies in January 2007:

- **Education Specialist – Basic Education based in Vancouver, Canada and Director, Commonwealth Education Media Centre for Asia based in New Delhi, India.** Please visit our website at www.col.org/opportunities for full details.

**VIRTUAL UNIVERSITY FOCUSES ON OERs**

**LEARNING FOR DEVELOPMENT, COL’S THREE-YEAR PLAN 2006-2009**

This three-year plan for 2006-2009 was presented to the COL Board of Governors for approval in May. This follows an extensive planning process that included environmental scans from all parts of the Commonwealth, extensive consultations with stakeholders and reviews of COL’s Board.

Titled “Learning for Development”, the new Three-Year Plan reflects COL’s essential purpose: to help developing countries increase access to learning by using distance education and other scaleable technologies. It sharpens the focus of COL’s work by breaking the international development agenda into three broad sectors: education, learning for livelihoods and human environment. In each sector, in light of the needs of individual countries, COL will use partnerships to develop policies, systems, and/or models and materials.

**COL’S FUNDING GROWS**

COL’s three-year planning and fiscal period ends on 30 June. During 2003-2006, COL was pleased to report that its financial base had been significantly expanded. For more information, see the PCF4 insert included with this newsletter. To receive a poster promoting PCF4, contact us at info@col.org.

**VIRTUAL CONFERENCES LEAD UP TO PCF4**

COL is hosting four e-mail-based virtual conferences that will be held in July, August, September and October 2006 as a lead-up to the Fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning. The conferences are open to all and there is no cost to participate. The three-week long conferences will be moderated by the leaders for the four sub-themes – Innovation, Learning, Collaboration and Foundations – and will help to jump-start discussions at the Forum itself. The first, “Foundations”, will take place from Monday, 10 July to Friday, 28 July 2006. Further information on how to participate will be available on COL’s website and sent to those on COL’s e-mailing list closer to the time of the conferences.

**LEARNING IN DISTANCE EDUCATION**

The effectiveness of the Guidelines largely depends on strengthening the capacity of national systems to assure the quality of higher education. Leaders of developing countries need to re-examine their commitment to quality. Experience in cross-border higher education today will reap tremendous dividends in the future.

**IMPROSSING THE IMPACT OF CROSS-BORDER EDUCATION**

Cross-border education refers to when students undertake courses produced and maintained in a different country from where they live. While cross-border education raises fears of cultural imperialism and loss of sovereignty among some, it should be seen as a solution to help developing countries attempt to address the huge challenge of expanding higher education.

Age participation rates in higher education are languishing in the single digits for many developing countries. Cross-border higher education could help to increase access and keep in the country some young people who might otherwise migrate abroad to study and stay there.

The reality today is that cross-border education is making a negligible contribution to the provision of higher education that is accessible, available and affordable in most developing countries. While for-profit cross-border providers are active, they tend to offer low quality education at a high-cost. Improving quality is another key to improving the impact of cross-border higher education. Developing countries need quality assurance mechanisms that are equipped to cope with cross-border education. Although there is an emerging concern for quality assurance, it is not matched by adequate human, institutional and financial resources. Governments need to take the lead here, working with principal stakeholders at the national level, notably higher education institutions and national quality assurance agencies.

A valuable resource is Guidelines for Qualification Provision in Cross-Border Higher Education (www.oecd.org/education), developed jointly by UNESCO and the OECD, with input from COL. The Guidelines recognize the importance of national authority and the diversity of higher education systems. They present higher education as a vital means for expressing a country’s linguistic and cultural diversity, maintaining its economic development and strengthening social cohesion.

Many countries have cross-border arrangements. However, the Guidelines recommend that if a country wishes to participate in a cross-border education arrangement, it will need to address the need to develop quality assurance mechanisms. This is a key step in improving the impact of cross-border education.
FARMERS CONTINUED FROM COVER

ICT kiosks are used to link the farmers to this consortium. Farmers are prepared to pay for useful information, such as very local weather forecasts. The commercial kiosk operator and franchisor, usually a local youth, become a stakeholder in the project with an interest in providing information that helps to make the initiative sustainable.

In Tamil Nadu, the ICT kiosks are set up by n-Logic, a company that developed with the Indian Institute of Technology Chennai, a technology called Wireless in Local Loop. Each village kiosk has a Pentium computer with digital camera, uninterruptible power supply (UPS) and printers. n-Logic provides an Internet portal, videoconferencing facilities and some generic content, but the local franchise has to develop local content in response to demand.

The fourth partner in this project is the commercial banks. The banks in India are being encouraged by the government to increase rural lending. Currently there is very little lending from the banks to the rural economy because of high transaction costs and low loan repayment rates. The Lifelong Learning for Farmers model offers ways to overcome these hurdles. Information provided through ICT kiosks improves the knowledge and capability of farmers. This, in turn, improves productivity, return on investment and repayment of loans, which also enlarges the market for bank credit for small farmers and landless labourers.

The State Bank of India links credit to a farmers’ association that decided to improve its marketing system and reduce price spread.

A direct link to the buyers create an efficient system. The bank gave credit to the association in contact with potential buyers it has associations. This, in turn, improves productivity. The bank chose the initiative sustainable.

The fourth partner in this project is the State Bank of India, which agreed to buy a guaranteed quantity of milk and take it to market provided that the farmers met certain quality standards.

Already farmers are reporting benefits from this programme. While the average yield of milk per cow is six to seven litres a day, the cows bought through the Lifelong Learning for Farmers programme are yielding between eight and 10 litres a day. These incremental improvements can have a huge overall impact.

Assessing the impact

Just 18 months after it was launched as a pilot project in four villages, Lifelong Learning for Farmers is working well. The bank has made loans of about SUS 200,000 to 120 villages, with approximately the same amount in the works for 100 more villages. Another 300 people are preparing loan applications. This is in a region where 90 per cent of the villages had previously been blacklisted by the banks because of a poor loan repayment record.

About 60% of the farmers involved are women. In the past, buying a cow was traditionally the men’s responsibility; they would buy it and then hand it over to the women to care for it. Lifelong Learning for Farmers has taught both women and men how to select and purchase a healthy cow, how to insure a cow and how to claim insurance if the cow dies. When a woman recovered the insured amount after her cow died, her fellow villagers were amazed. Insurance was a new concept for them.

Some 500 villagers regularly attend the session in March 2006. This workshop provided a checklist with diagrams.

Women from a nearby village who are familiar with web programming made it into an instructional sequence on the computer in the ICT kiosk.

“The way I do it is to milk a good quality cow from a poor milk cow.” The education specialists developed a checklist with diagrams.

Since 2000, COL has worked with the UN High Commissioner for Refugees, the World Health Organization, the Joint United Nations Programme on HIV/AIDS (UNAIDS), the International Federation of Red Cross and Red Crescent Societies and the International Labour Organization in transforming their face-to-face effective communication courses through customisation into e-learning format to make learning more accessible, affordable, equitable and learner centric. Recent evaluation studies carried out on all existing programmes have revealed a high level of satisfaction expressed by learners of which a third are first-time adult distance learners.

In April 2006, the World Bank, having assessed COL’s design and delivery model for this eLearning programme, decided to engage COL to turn their face-to-face training programme into eLearning format. COL has formed a team of Canadian experts comprising a writer, instructional designer, education technologist, critical review editors and evaluator to develop the World Bank eLearning writing programme for its 10,000 employee based in 109 countries. The materials will be developed and piloted by end of this year and ready for delivery for a three-year period in early 2007.

In addition to the cow-buying module, learning materials have also been developed about topics such as managing a dairy shed, nutrition management in dairy, quality milk production, agricultural techniques and biofertilizer production. Already, 12 CDs, four newsletters and six Internet/intranet presentations have been completed.

Lifelong Learning for Farmers is changing the lives of many people, according to Dr. Patrick Spaven, a U.K.-based professional external evaluator who recently completed a case study about the programme for COL. His report includes these reflections:

“Lessons learned from the project include the following:”

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Self-replication is the ultimate goal

One of the goals of Lifelong Learning for Farmers is that its success spawns replication in other villages and regions. Three neighbouring villages in Tamil Nadu have formed associations for implementing the model, with minimal help from Lifelong Learning for Farmers. A local cooperative-model non-governmental organisation (NGO) with 5,000 women has asked to join the project.

It is important to recognise that this is development without doles. COL has spent less than $US80,000, mostly on local consultancies. All other resources have come from routine local sources, notably the loans from the bank to the farmers.

COL is building on the encouraging experience of Lifelong Learning for Farmers to develop the programme in other regions of the Commonwealth, starting with West Africa.

Lifelong Learning for Farmers demonstrates COL’s ability to mobilise people and organisations and make effective use of ICTs to facilitate learning for development.

COL recently hosted a two-day workshop to train course writers to adapt educational materials for open and distance learning (ODL). Ten writers from the University of Education Winneba and three technical institutes attended the session in March 2006. This workshop is in support of the President’s Special Initiative on Distance Learning (PSI-DL). Initiated by the President of Ghana, His Excellency John A. Kufuor, PSI-DL is developing an open technical school initiative for youth in Ghana. The course-writing workshop focused on adapting existing distance learning materials in vocational skills such as block laying, concrete, catering and hospitality, supplied by UNESCO, COL and the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand, for delivery in Ghana.

This is one of a series of workshops supported by COL to train staff in writing, delivery and management of ODL for technical and vocational education and training aimed at helping Ghana achieve accelerated development. The course materials being developed in Ghana will be available for adaptation by other Commonwealth countries in sub-Saharan Africa.

1. COL IN ACTION

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LEARNING TO HELP VULNERABLE CHILDREN

A GROUP OF LEARNERS IN NIGERIA RECEIVE CERTIFICATES AFTER PLOTTING COL’S NEW COUNSELLING PROGRAMME FOR ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN, THE NEXT STEP IN COUL’S MODULAR PROGRAMME ON COUNSELLING FOR ORPHANS AND VULNERABLE CHILDREN (OCV). WAS DEVELOPED BY A PAN-AFRICAN GROUP OF WRITERS. IT WAS ALSO PILOTED IN KENYA AND ZAMBIA. APPROXIMATELY 100 STAFF AT NON-GOVERNMENTAL ORGANISATIONS (NGOs) WHO WORK WITH OCVS ARE TAKING PART IN THIS DISTANCE EDUCATION INITIATIVE. THE LEARNING UNITS FOCUS ON ETHICAL AND CULTURAL ISSUES IN COUNSELLING AREAS SUCH AS GRIEF, DEALING WITH SUBSTANCE ABUSE AND FOR THOSE AFFECTED BY HIV/AIDS. THE COUNSELLING MODULE IS THE FIRST OF FOUR PROGRAMMES AIMED AT HELPING VULNERABLE CHILDREN IN AFRICA. THE OTHER MODULES WILL COVER NUTRITION, CHILD DEVELOPMENT AND HEALTH AND CARE.
Open and distance learning (ODL) offers tremendous potential to meet Africa’s educational needs, particularly the needs of girls and women. But before embarking ODL as a panacea, we need to do a gender analysis and carefully examine the challenges of infrastructure and poverty.

The obstacles to gender parity

Across Sub-Saharan Africa, the attendance, participation and success of girls in schools is far outnumbered by boys. The region’s grinding poverty is the single biggest obstacle to education for both boys and girls. Although many study after study have demonstrated that providing education for girls is one way of breaking the cycle of poverty, girls remain disadvantaged in education in multiple ways. More than boys, girls are often required to help with chores, care for the sick and care for younger siblings. When there is a shortage of money in the family, preference is often given to boys over girls to remain in school. In rural areas, girls will drop out of school because of the insecurity of walking long distances to school. Attendance is frequently interrupted by temporary suspension for non-payment of fees, arriving late to school or being in tattered clothes. Girls’ performance is also negatively affected by cultural norms, biased curricula and discrimination in teaching methods. All these work together to create a negative environment that gradually pushes the girls out of school.

The promise and challenges of ODL

We know that the formal schooling system is not sufficient to meet Africa’s educational challenges. There are not enough teachers or schools to meet the demands of universal primary education. And even when primary schooling is provided, access to education for girls and women remains a challenge. There are not enough teachers or radio sets to meet the demands of universal primary education. In the context of the last of these, I commented “Building a World of Learning for All”, an article that summarises the current state of play on ODL by Dr. Peter Smith, my successor as Assistant Director-General for Education at UNESCO. ODL’s activity focuses particularly on the capacity-building function listed in the article. Our work in helping institutions and countries to use open and distance learning to scale up teacher training, both pre- and in-service, is a direct contribution to Universal Primary Education (UPE) since shortage of teachers is the major bottleneck hindering its achievement. ODL also tries to address the consequences of approaching UPE. Dr. Smith notes that numbers in primary school are increasing rapidly. This will generate a greatly increased demand for secondary schooling which many countries cannot begin to satisfy by building schools. This is the basis for COL’s work in open schooling (see Connections, Vol. 11, No. 1, February 2006), which hopes countries can create an effective alternative to traditional schooling based on the successful examples that already exist in India and elsewhere.

Sir John Daniel

President and CEO

COL’s President and Chief Executive Officer, Sir John Daniel, is a much sought-after keynote speaker and has delivered presentations as his business travels take him to all parts of the Commonwealth. His speeches, often prepared in collaboration with colleagues on staff at COL and/or other international organisations, are available on COL’s website within hours of delivery. Topical range from open schooling to higher education, from collaboration to cross-border education and from non-formal education to open education resources.

This article originally appeared in Embassy-Canada’s Foreign Policy Weekly on 22 February 2006, www.embassymag.ca.

Imagine if you wanted to build your dream house. You could hire the most famous architect in the world to draw up complex plans. But the house would remain a paper fantasy without the hard work of specialised craftpeople – painters, plumbers, electricians and carpenters. These people – each bringing his or her special expertise – would have to work closely together to make your dream a reality.

Education for All (EFA) should not remain an unrealised architectural fantasy. Nor can we afford to build it as a house of cards. It is an ambitious plan to provide learning opportunities to every man, woman and child throughout the world by the year 2015. But it is a plan that we will turn into reality if we can effectively harness together the necessary political will and efficiently make use of the existing skills that are already present in the international community.

In 2000, five multilateral agencies and over 160 countries came to the World Education Forum in Dakar, Senegal to draw up plans for the most ambitious educational promise ever made. EFA is based on the fundamental premise that education is central to the promotion of human rights, social equality, democracy and economic growth in each and every country. The building blocks of EFA are six goals that are central to the pursuit of sustainable human development: early learning, universal primary education, life skills, literacy, girls’ education and quality education. We have already made significant progress in building a learning world. There is more awareness than ever among governments as to the central role that education plays in development and a much greater willingness to invest in this sector. Sharp increases in school enrollment in sub-Saharan Africa and South Asia – to the tune of 20 million additional students per continent – have occurred in the past five years, and 47 countries worldwide have already achieved universal primary education.

But our edifice is not complete. Many external factors, including civil conflict, natural disasters, HIV/AIDS and high fertility rates impede progress towards EFA. We have already missed the first EFA target – gender parity by 2005 – and many countries remain off-track for reaching the goal by 2015. As the most recent EFA Global Monitoring Report demonstrates, over 100 million children are not in school. Sixty-seven countries are at risk of missing the goal of universal primary education by 2015. And over 771 million adults – two thirds of them women – do not have the basic literacy skills to survive in today’s world.

For the EFA movement to advance, the international community, donors and national governments need to make concerted efforts both to increase funding for education and institutionalise the policy reforms needed for quality education systems to thrive.
In order to be truly of service to the underprivi-
degled and rural poor, the appropriate use of
technology must create conditions and mecha-
nisms that can provide people with genuine
access to information. Such mechanisms will
do the things that the conventional system is unable to respond
directly with disadvantaged groups, allowing
them to partake in the information and com-
munications technologies (ICT) revolution to
address their own issues and also to demon-
strate to local policy makers the possibilities of
effective, low-cost solutions that aim at
employment opportunities and skills develop-
ment for the community and nation.

Addressing health issues

Raising awareness of health informa-
tion is one of the most effective
ways of meeting health challenges in the
developing world. The success of the Gambian initiative encour-
gaged the Canadian International Development
Agency (CIDA) to provide funding to replicate
the peer health education project in Sierra Leone.
That project, initiated in 2004, is using similar peer health training to
reach all districts of the country. It is also using professional
facilitators in an initiative aimed at educating truck
drivers about HIV/AIDS prevention and stigma.

Addressing health issues

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developing world. And the use of visual and oral communi-
cation overcomes the barriers of illiteracy.

The key to success is relevance at the local
level, according to David Walker.

“The communities in people know the
problems and how to address them,” he ex-
plained. “We give them the tools, training and
know-how so they can create radio or TV
programmes or videos with local content, in
their own language that will relate to their
life.”

In the past three years, COL has worked
with the WHO and NGOs in The Gambia,
India, Papua New Guinea, Sierra Leone, the
Solomon Islands, South Africa, Sri Lanka,
Swaziland and Tanzania to develop media
programmes that address health issues. It has
also worked with the WHO-affiliated Pan
American Health Organization (PAHO) in
Barbados and Guyana on health initiatives.

Media empowerment and HIV/AIDS

Much of COL’s media empowerment work cen-
tres on reducing the stigma of HIV/AIDS and
deploving people about how to prevent trans-
mision of the disease. One of COL’s first initiatives was working
with staff of the Nova Scotia Gamba Asso-
ciation (NSGA), an NGO based in Canada
and The Gambia. COL provided technology and
training to enable NSGA to document and
deliver its work in peer health education. The
group had been putting on performances about
HIV/AIDS issues primarily to school groups.
By recording these performances on video, the
NSGA vastly expanded the audience it could
reach. People view Gambian skits and discus-
sions concerning HIV/AIDS in a localised con-
text. It is relevant and powerful.

Through village cinema events, the NSGA
videos have now reached the entire secondary
school sector and over half a million people, over
half of the country’s population. Most impor-
tantly, statistics demonstrate a reduction of HIV
infection rates in The Gambia.

The MDGs underlying COL’s current
Three-Year Plan 2006-2009. With three of the MDGs
focused on health (reduction of infant mortality, improvement
of maternal health and combat-
ing HIV/AIDS, malaria and other diseases), COL recognised the need to apply its expertise in
ODL to address health issues.

COL’s Media Empowerment pro-
gramme works in partnership with the World Health
Organisation (WHO), aligning COL’s efforts to
the WHO’s priorities in developing coun-
tries, specifically communicable diseases with an emphasis on HIV/AIDS. Under the lead-
ership of Mr. David Walker, COL Education
Specialist, Educational Technology, COL liaises
with WHO country offices to identify key play-
ers – mainly in-country non-governmental organ-
isations (NGOs) – who are focused on the
health concerns of disadvantaged groups. COL
provides these NGOs with digital audio and
video production technology and training, em-
powering them to create content that includes
appropriate health information. Since the con-
tent is created locally, it is in the linguistic and
cultural context of the targeted group. From
their vast resources, WHO provides detailed
tools on health issues to NGOs.

The training is deliv-
ered in the form of radio,
television and village cin-
ema events where a gen-
erator powers a projector
that shows DVDs that the
NGO has created con-
cerning health issues in
the form of skits and dra-
mas. These forms of deliv-
ery reach far more people than a live performance
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UKO TO OFFER OERs

The U.K. Open University has announced a US$9.9 million project to make a selec-
tion of its learning materials available free of charge to educators and learners around the
world. Supported by a grant of US$4.5 million from The William and Flora Hewlett
Foundation, UKO is revising course ma-
terials to comply with copyright laws. The
Open Educational Resources will be freely
available on the Internet, reflecting the uni-
versity’s vision of promoting free access for
all. UKO plans to launch the website in
October 2006.

http://oci.open.ac.uk/pressrelease.html

INTERNET DISCUSSION FORUM ON OERs

From 24 October to 2 December 2005, almost 560 individuals from 90 countries
came together virtually to take part in an In-
ternet discussion forum that was hosted by
UNESCO’s International Institute for Edu-
cational Planning, with support from
William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

The forum was intended to support in-
formation exchange and reflection upon
-the potential of open educational resources
(OER – resources, particularly in this case
course content and materials, that are freely
available on the Internet for consumption,
adaptation, and use), and to consider the ex-
perience of a number of providers and users.

The vibrant debate – more than 700
messages were exchanged over the six-week
period – benefited from the expert input of
some of the most innovative and commit-
ted OER practitioners and advocates. The
forum reflected a shifting perception among
academics to begin exploring the notion of
OERs more seriously and in a constructive
way. Also, there were strong calls from de-
veloping societies that they want to be joint
creators of OERs – not merely passive users.

The highlights of that debate have been
-captured in the forum report, which is now
available online on the project website.

www.unesco.org/iiep/virtualuniversity/

WAWSAN OPEN UNIVERSITY COLLEGE OPENS ITS VIRTUAL DOORS IN MALAYSIA

Malaysia’s first charity-backed open
-learning institution is teaming up with COL
-to offer Executive Masters programmes in
-business and public administration by dis-
tance learning.

Wawasan Open University College
and COL have signed an affiliation agreement
that will pave the way for working adults to
earn an internationally recognised qualifi-
cation without having to quit their jobs or
attend evening or weekend classes. Instead,
students enrolled in these courses will be able
to advance at their own pace using Wawasa-
’s flexible open campus approach. The
Commonwealth Executive MBA and
MBA (CEMA/CMEPA) programmes were
developed collaboratively by COL and four
open universities in South Asia. The avail-
ability of these degrees in Malaysia marks
another milestone in the collaborative ap-
proach adopted by the international open
learning community. Specially designed for
part-time study by busy working profession-
als, the programmes are flexible, modular
and affordable. Students can choose either
Business Administration (MBA) or Public
Administration (MPA) as their major. The
Commonwealth Executive masters pro-
grame is internationally recognised and
allows students mobility and credit transfer
across participating institutions.

Wawasan Open is opening its doors to
undergraduate students in October. The
main campus in Penang will be supported by
regional offices and learning centres in Ku-
alam Lumpur, Ipoh and Johor Baru, with the
coverage later expanded to cover all states
in the country. The driving force behind the
development of the not-for-profit Wawasan
Educational Foundation and the new univer-
sity college is its Chief Executive Officer
and Vice Chancellor, Dato’ Professor Emeritus
Gajjar (Raj) Dhanarajan, who was Presi-

www.col.gov.my/menara

BRIDGING THE DIGITAL DIVIDE

The Commonwealth Action Programme for
the Digital Divide (CAPDD) Steering Com-
nitee held its inaugural meeting in London,
U.K. in March 2006. CAPDD is intended to
accelerate the social and economic develop-
ment of Least Developed Countries and small
island developing states of the Commonwealth
through the use of information and commu-
nications technologies (ICTs) to enable them
to enter the information age fully equipped to
compete effectively in the global marketplace.

The CAPDD Steering Committee is re-
sponsible for establishing the strategy and
methods to ensure that the CAPDD meets
its targets on the creation of ICT strategy
and processes in developing countries. The Com-
mittee is made up of representatives from
India, Malta, Montserrat and Trinidad &
Tobago, non-governmental organisations and
five Commonwealth agencies including COL.

www.commonwealthdigitalopportunities.com

WAVES: IN BANGLADESH

The commonwealth Digital Access for
Women (WAVES) project which focuses on
the creation of a community radio station in
Bangladesh was launched in January
2006. The project was selected by
CAPDD and is a collaborative initia-
tive between Commonwealth Educational
Media Centre Asia (CEMCA), the
Commonwealth Commission for
Development Education (BOCODOL)
and the Commonwealth of Learning (BO-
COM). The project is based in an organ-
isation (MOJO) in Bangladesh to provide
a workshop on developing community radio
skills among disadvantaged rural women. The
five-day workshop was held in Mysore, India
in December 2005 using resources
drawn from various organisations
luckily employed community radio for
development.

What made this workshop differ-
et was the profile of the participants:
most were illiterate. The workshop
methodology was improvised and
was not merely a mix of talks and activity,
but text-based resource materials were not
accessible to the women. Instead, the
workshop made simple but potent use
of radio and visual technology. The
women explored various facets of community
radio through discussions, activities, films, visits
to studios and hands-on experience with produc-
tion. As part of their group work, the women
planned their programmes, recorded them
and sat through the editing process to come
up with almost complete radio programmes
in a variety of formats including songs, talks,
interviews and drama. Looking at this as a
first step towards setting up a community
radio, CEMCA hopes to support capacity
building of a core programme team within
the women’s group.

www.cemca.org


ODL IN PAPUA NEW GUINEA

The Government of Papua New Guinea sup-
ports the development of distance education
and flexible learning modes of education, and
with this undertaking, Minister for Educa-
tion the Honourable Michael Laino set the
pace for the symposium on open and dis-
tance learning at the University of Papua New
Guinea (UPNG) in April 2006. Later, the
Minister for Higher Education, Research,
Science and Technology, the Honourable Don
Polye, challenged open and distance learning
(ODL) providers to be innovative in their ap-
proaches.

More than 150 scholars, administrators,
professionals and practitioners attended the
symposium, where over 20 papers were pre-
sented on the theme Providing Learning Op-
portunities through Open and Distance Learning
in the new Millennium.

Symposium participants elaborated on the
programmes of teaching by open and distance
in the hope of shaping the future directions
for re-positioning the system. Participants
also discussed the power of information com-
munication technology and its adoption and
direction in the country.

Sir John Daniel, President and CEO of
COL, delivered a keynote address. He dis-
ussed how distance education has a huge
role in progressing the development agenda
and that there are many models of open and
distance learning to enhance this. This kind of
distance education, he said, is in development that in-
creases human freedom in many dimensions.

The symposium ended with provincial
administration affirming their support for
distance education and the Minister for Com-
munity Development, the Honourable Dame
Carol Kuda, voicing her ministry’s support for
education at all levels and to the masses.

ODL professionals and practitioners also
met in April to revitalise the Papua New
Guinea Association for Distance Education
(PNGADE). Convenor of the Symposium
and Executive Director of the UPNG Open
College, Mr. Abdul Manan was elected
President of the PNGADE.

After the election, Mr. Manan said there
is still a lot to be done in the progress of
ODL in the country. Together with his executive
he has set the course for a vigorous drive on this
pathway.

PARTNERs IN THE COMMUNITY
RADIO SKILLS WORKSHOP IN MYSUR, INDIA

RADIO SKILLS FOR RURAL WOMEN

As part of its ongoing initiatives to support
engagement of rural women in the use of com-
munity radio for development, COL’s region-
al agency, the Commonwealth Educational
Media Centre Asia (CEMCA), partnered with IT for Change, a non-governmental or-
novation (NGO) in Bangalore to provide
a workshop on developing community radio
skills among disadvantaged rural women. The
five-day workshop was held in Mysore, India

DE CENTRE JOINS SADC NETWORK

The Southern Africa Regional Distance
Education Centre has been renamed the
Southern African Development
Community – Centre for Distance Education
(SADC-CDE) after becoming part of
the SADC network. Located at the
Botswana College of Open and
Distance Learning (BOCODOL), SADC-CDE
is a regional centre of expertise in dis-
tance and open learning supported by
the Botswana Ministry of Education,
BOCODOL and COL. It organises,
provides and supports distance educa-
tion and the use of technologies for edu-
cation and training in the region. SADC-CDE
is a group of 34 states that aims to pro-
mote Southern African regional coop-
eration in economic development.

LINKING THROUGH TECHNOLOGY IN INDIA

Principals of 921 institutions accredited with
India’s National Assessment and Accreditation Council
(NAAC) took part in a workshop using the Indian
Space Organisation’s Edusat facility. Organised by
Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University
(YCMOU) in collaboration with NASI, this mega-event
was a great success, according to Dr.
Rajan M. Weliar, Vice-Chancellor of YCMOU.
“The workshop reaffirms our conviction that
technology is the real answer to the problem of car-
y ing education to the masses,” said Dr. Weliar.
“The success of this collaborative venture rein-
forces my firm belief that if all of us who are entrusted
with the responsibility of higher education can
come together and work in unison, sharing each
other’s expertise and resources, the nation’s overall
objective with respect to education can be achieved
easily and quickly.”
**The conference focused on specific aspects of vocational education and training including access for marginalized groups, quality issues and possibilities offered by open learning systems. Conference participants adopted 20 recommendations that outline proposed roles for government, educational institutions, private enterprises and international agencies in promoting vocational education and training through open schools.**

**AFRICA

UKOU WORKSHOP FOR AFRICAN ODL MANAGERS**

The U.K. Open University (UKOU) is a university that goes to its students—normally, that is. But in March 2006 the UKOU ran a two-week Senior Management Workshop in open and distance learning (ODL) at its headquarters in Milton Keynes. The workshop was a capacity building experience for senior managers from four African countries. It was designed and directed by Ms. Helen Lintel from COl and Professor Ann Floyd from the UKOU.

The 12 invited delegates came from ACIPOL, the police training college in Mozambique, the National University of Nigeria (NOUN), the University of Swaziland and the University of Zambia. Senior UKOU staff, led by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Brenda Gourley, set up an interactive dialogue to develop strategic options for participating managers’ own institutions and initial plans for taking these forward. The objective was to reach an overall understanding of the principles underlying key aspects of ODL management systems and their relevance to participating institutions. Discussions aimed to build an enhanced view of major ODL issues for the 21st century, with particular reference to Africa.

The outcome was an enriching experience for the OU, COL and the participating universities and, most importantly, a shared framework for further mutual support.

COL sponsored travel and visa arrangements; the UKOU provided accommodation and subsistence. The workshop was conceptualized as the UKOU’s newly-launched International Fellowships programme, funded by the OU Foundation.

www.open.ac.uk/international-fellowships

**AFRICA

BUILDING ODL CAPACITY**

COL partnered with the International Extension College (IEC) and Kyambogo University (Kyu) in Kampala, Uganda to host a meeting in March 2006 of staff from ODL institutions in six African countries (Ghana, Kenya, Malawi, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Tanzania) to examine the IEC-developed programme for training staff working in ODL institutions. KYU is offering the programme to their staff for the third time and is offering its course materials and expertise to institutions in Africa that would like to offer the programme locally.

**ASIA

TVET THROUGH OPEN SCHOOLLING**

Nearly 100 people representing educational institutions, trade, industry, ministries, vocational education and open learning took part in the three-day International Conference on Vocational Education and Training through Open Schooling in Kovalam, Kerala, India in February 2006. The event, held by COL and the National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) in India, the conference drew presenters and participants from Bangladesh, Canada, India, New Zealand, Nigeria, Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

The conference focused on specific aspects of vocational education and training including access for marginalized groups, quality issues and possibilities offered by open learning systems. Conference participants adopted 20 recommendations that outline proposed roles for government, educational institutions, private enterprises and international agencies in promoting vocational education and training through open schooling.


**PACIFIC

LITERACY AND LIVELIHOODS CONSULTATION**

Functional literacy training was the focus of a three-day consultation meeting held by COL and the Pacific Association of Technical Vocational Education and Training (PATVET) in March 2006. Seventeen delegates representing educational institutions, development initiatives and government from the 21st century, with particular reference to Africa.

The outcome was an enriching experience for the OU, COL and the participating universities and, most importantly, a shared framework for further mutual support.

COL sponsored travel and visa arrangements; the UKOU provided accommodation and subsistence. The workshop was conceptualized as the UKOU’s newly-launched International Fellowships programme, funded by the OU Foundation.

www.open.ac.uk/international-fellowships

**ASIA

REVISING PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT OF ODL**

Despite the exponential growth of open and distance learning (ODL) in the Asian region, when a new institution is started, it seems to face similar problems and to commit mistakes as its predecessors as a result of uninformmed decision making. Current literature in the field reflects largely on policy dimensions and generalities. Only rarely do articles talk about practicalities such as the basis for structuring a budget in ODL or the fact that there is no longer a need to build or develop huge production facilities for content generation.

The prioritization of goals, objectives, targets, fund allocation and timelines within a new ODL establishment is tricky. Experience shows that there are any number of dual-mode institutions that have set up distance education units without taking into account the different divisions and human resources that are needed for effective functioning. Today’s new realities require new goals, modes and methods of organisation and delivery of learning. To do this, one has to look at past experience while addressing future challenges and issues. It is with this objective of capturing the voices of Asian experience of three decades that the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMAC), a regional agency of COL and Warawan Open University College brought together some of the best minds of ODL experience to brainstorm and debate every aspect of planning and managing a new ODL institution. The five-day forum in Penang, Malaysia in February 2006 covered all the core aspects of ODL planning including organisational structure, managing human resources, academic aspects and quality assurance. Each session had a lead paper followed by extensive group discussion. As a result of the round table, CEMCA plans to create a source book that will draw upon the rich expertise of ODL pioneers to guide the establishment of new institutions in the region.

www.cemca.org

**UPCOMING EVENTS**

**MANAGING CHANGE IN A GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE ECONOMY**

24 AUGUST 2006

UNIVERSITY OF ABERTAY DUNDEE, SCOTLAND

DELEGATE AT £1000 (CHANCE: REGISTRATION DEADLINE 24 JULY 2006)

**FIND HOMEWORK FOR OPEN LEARNING**

16-22 OCTOBER 2006

**ASIA

QUALITY IN DE**

Varshadnan Mahaver University Open, based in Rajasthan, India, organized a National Seminar on “Quality Distance Education and Establishment of a Learning Society with special reference to Rajasthan” in collaboration with COL and India Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in March 2006 at HCM Rajasthan State Institute of Public Administration, Jaipur. The two-day national seminar covered a wide spectrum of issues related to quality in distance education and establishment of a learning society.

The event, which was organised by Professor M.K. Gadhokhaya, Director of V.M. Open University’s Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education, brought together vice-chancellors of open universities in India, officials, college principals, teachers, administrators, politicians and Board representation from people involved in open and distance learning. Seminar participants agreed on six recommendations for educational institutions and governments to enhance quality assurance in distance education.

For an interesting discussion on quality assurance in open and distance learning (ODL) institutions, 2006: Open Hands in Open Minds Asia, the newsletter of the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (www.cemca.org). In the Guest Columns, Professor Sadir K. Ntu offers insights into quality assurance issues, approaches, international practices, quality assurance mechanisms and measuring quality in ODL. An Honorary Fellow of COL and a globally acknowledged ODL expert, Professor Kind provides a helpful examination of this important issue.

**ASIA

THEME: ACCESS TO QUALITY EDUCATION FOR THE GOOD OF ALL**

2-6 DECEMBER 2006

CAPE TOWN, SOUTH AFRICA

www.cemca.org/programmes/conferences/other.htm

**BEST PRACTICES IN TEACHER EDUCATION**

COL and the National Assessment and Accreditation Council (NAAC) hosted a three-day workshop “MATERIAL DEVELOPMENT FOR QUALITY ADVANCEMENT IN HIGHER EDUCATION” in Bangalore, India in February 2006. Participants from 15 countries, mainly from South Asia and Africa, shared best practices in teacher education.
Developing capacity in "VET" COLME’s activities are part of a Pacific regional technical vocational initiative in institutional capacity development undertaken by COL and sanctioned by the Ministers of Education in the region with in-country polytechnics and technical institutions. The activities have added value to the course development work at the polytechnics and have enabled the institutions to advocate technical vocational training as a career choice among young people or those wishing to upgrade skill sets.

COLME’s technical vocational work has been undertaken in Fiji, Kiribati, Samoa and Vanuatu.

Radio for community development COLME’s community development activities demonstrate the effectiveness of transmitting information on a low-cost suitcase FM radio at the rural community level. The main thrust of the radio-based activities is to target rural disadvantaged groups addressing issues related to health, basic education and gender. The activities are also a vehicle to serve the role for advocacy of rural community radio as an effective means of addressing the Education for All target.

Besides the technical aspects of operating and maintaining the technology, business skills are also taught that would aid in long-term sustainability of the rural FM stations. The FM stations are a means for government and funders to consider finansihing the effectiveness of community radio in a low-cost sustainable model. It is also an opportunity for policy makers within the government to observe within the cultural, linguistic and infrastructural issues of the rural areas of their countries, the opportunities that community radio could present for a nation.

COL has been active in developing and promoting community radio in Cameroon, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, South Africa, Sri Lanka and Uganda.

The benefits of building capacity COL’s Media Empowerment programme has had a profound impact on people in developing countries in a number of ways. On a large scale, millions of people have had access to relevant, effective communication about health issues that could literally save their life. At the NGO level, COL’s involvement helps organisations to do their work more effectively, which in turn attracts outside funders (such as the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation in the case of the NSGA).

At the individual level, COL is improving empowerment, self-esteem and employment. People gain skills and sustainable employment. railway have additional entrepreneurial opportunities due to their exposure to rural technological opportunities. By developing local media experts, COL is helping to bridge the digital divide.

and alignment in the approaches of multilateral and bilateral organisations towards EFA.

Five key themes serve as the mortar for our project:

- Mobilising additional financial resources,
- Ensuring the effective use of development aid for EFA,
- Developing capacity at the country level,
- Communicating the critical role of education in sustainable development, and
- Strengthening mutual accountability through monitoring and transparency.

The key arena for EFA action is, of course, at the country level. If EFA is the overall blueprint, then each country must develop its own framework according to its contextual needs including methods, approaches, timing, cost and allocation of resources. To develop these educational policies and plans, each country needs regular, focused and high quality support from the international community.

Since its inception in the aftermath of the Second World War, UNESCO has stood proud in its commitment to education and advocated for effective national educational strategies and plans. As the financial, economic and social aspects of sustainable development and educational strategies become increasingly intertwined, UNESCO must continue to act as an intellectual leader, an honest broker, and clearinghouse for ideas, propelling both countries and the international community in the right direction.

We are standing on a threshold, where our current actions will shape the world for centuries to come. In creating a sustainable future, countries cannot forget that the primary building block for change is learning. Frank Lloyd Wright once said, “Noble life de- 
dands a moral architecture for noble uses of noble men.” With Education for All, we can construct the most ambitious and noblest work of architecture that humanity has ever seen. We cannot allow this opportunity to slip from our fingers.

Dr. Peter Smith is the Assistant Director-General for Education at the United Nations Education, Scientific and Culture Organisation (UNESCO). He is funding president of California State University-Monterey Bay and a former member of the United States Congress.

FACTORS FOR SUCCESS IN DUAL-MODE INSTITUTIONS

By Andrea Hope, 2006

As education providers in both face-to-face and distance modes embrace the use of Internet-based technologies to facilitate student learning, the boundaries between distance and face-to-face education and the institutions that offer them are becoming increasingly blurred. This study examines conventional face-to-face and dedicated distance learning institutions that have "gone dual-mode" as a survival strategy as well as successful dual-mode operators who have introduced flexible learning for all their students.

Dual-mode learning is not synonymous with online learning, the study finds. In many jurisdictions, the technology involved in the distance-mode delivery of programmes may still to a large extent be print-based. Nevertheless it is the flexibility offered by online learning technologies that is making technology based learning an increasingly attractive option for the senior management of campus-based universities around the world. Its ad-hoc adoption by enthusiastic faculty members is giving a much-needed kick-start to dual-mode initiatives that in some cases have languished for many years in the face of indifference or even hostility from the faculty towards the perceived "fringe benefits".

This study will be useful to single-mode institutions that are contemplating a move into dual-mode delivery. It may also inform the decisions of government ministers and policy makers contemplating policy initiatives in dual-mode education. And the study’s Best Practice Framework will help dual-mode providers to improve the quality of their offerings.

www.col.org/Consultancies/06_DoubleModeInstitutions.htm

PERSPECTIVES ON DISTANCE EDUCATION: TOWARDS A CULTURE OF QUALITY

By Badri H. Koil and Asha Kawaneri, Editors

2006, 187 pages

The third position paper on the theme of quality in the COL Perspectives on Distance Educa- tion series widens the discussion beyond external quality assurance processes to a more generic focus on "a culture of quality." This volume brings together a rich collection of ex- perience from a diverse range of institutions, at basic, secondary and post-secondary levels, and takes us beyond the level of the common quality assurance protocols and their applica- tions to a more mature quality framework, namely the culture of quality, which tran- scends control mechanisms and managerial dictates. The book includes 12 case studies from Commonwealth countries—from the South Pacific to the Caribbean and from the North to the South. Each case opens with its context-specific moorings, details its concerns, practices, challenges and achievements and does with its considered view regarding the culture of quality.

The book should prove valuable not only for ODL policy makers, managers, academics, researchers and field workers, but also for those interested and involved in the promotion of quality and development.

The book is available on line through COL’s website. Hard copies are also available through COL’s distribution agents. Government agencies and institutions in developing Commonwealth countries may receive copies at no charge. Nominal charges apply to orders from developed, newly developed and non-Caribbean countries—usually CDN$12.00 plus shipping. These orders must be accompanied by pre-payment or charged to VISA or MasterCard accounts.

QPPublications@gems.gov.bc.ca or order online at www.publications.gov.bc.ca.

www.col.org/PQQuality

NEW RESOURCES

BUILDING A WORLD OF LEARNING FOR ALL CONTINUED FROM PAGE 7

“... the key arena for EFA action is, of course, at the country level.”

Connections

Published by the Commonwealth of Learning, COL is an international organisation created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning/distance education knowledge, resources and technologies.

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SOCIAL JUSTICE

widening access to education as social justice

Edited by Professor, Alpesh Chandaria and Harbans Bhola

The UNESCO Institute for Education (UIE), Hamburg published this collection of essays in honour of Nigeria’s Ambassador and Permanent Delegate to UNESCO, Professor Michael Omodewo, who is a member of COL’s Board of Governors. The book was launched at the biennial meeting of the Association for the Development of Education in Africa (ADEA) in Gabon in March 2006.

STRATEGIC ISSUES IN SINGLE- AND DUAL-MODE DE

Strategic Issues in Single- and Dual-mode Distance Education: The Organisational Blending of Two Canadian Distance Universities

By Dominique A.M. X. Abrioiux

In 2005, two of Canada’s single-mode open and distance learning (ODL) universities became part of dual-mode universities, leaving Atha- basca University as the only single-mode ODL university in the country. This report reviews the literature that compares single- and dual-mode ODL universities and briefly traces the histo-

ry of both British Columbia Open University (BCOU) and Télé-université de l’Université du Québec (TELUQ) before seeking to elucidate – primarily from the Canadian angle – the drivers that led to their demise as single-mode ODL universities.

The report concludes with a thoughtul discussion of major lessons learned.

www.col.org/Consultancies/06_SingleDualDE_Canada.htm

COMMUNITY MULTIMEDIA CENTRES AROUND THE WORLD

A Global Directory Published by UNESCO, November 2005

Community Multimedia Centres (CMCs) are “last mile” development service providers that can help development partners to implement their projects and activities at the community level. UNESCO has produced this directory to give partners an indication of where CMGs are operating their main focus of activities, the media they use and the communities they serve.

www.unesco.org/webworld/cmc
EXPLORING LAPTOP OPTIONS

While technological advances have produced powerful and highly useful laptop computers, this technology isn’t appropriate for everyone. Notebooks with 12-inch screens are lightweight and great for travel, but they are harder on the eyes and function more slowly than bigger computers – and the keyboards can be difficult to use for long periods of time.

Yes, you can plug larger monitors and standard keyboards into them, but these accessories, even with docking stations, are cumbersome. The only mid-range option has been the 14-inch notebook. This weighs about one kilogram more than a 12-inch laptop but usually operates somewhat faster and is marginally easier to read due to the larger screen.

Now, a new addition to the laptop market, dubbed the “luggable PC”, truly fills the middle ground. Also called replacement desktops, these computers deliver much improved power, expandability and speed. At up to nine kilograms, luggables are easily twice the size and weight of compact laptops. They have 15- to 20-inch screens, which may be larger than many people have on their desktops, but still fold up into a briefcase-sized pack.

Luggables have large disk drives and built-in peripherals (such as DVD drives) are installed instead of being external as they are on many smaller computers. Battery life is usually much shorter in these computers, but they can be plugged into power sources. These devices are often the choice of gamers, those who like high quality videos on their PC and who like or need ample PC power, but they also have a niche as an “in-between” PC that can easily be moved from room to room, but not so easily moved from city to city.

NEW STANDARDS FOR OFFICE DOCUMENTS

To make it easier to extract information from office documents, software developers have created new “open standard” document formats for word processing files, spreadsheets and presentations. The Organization for the Advancement of Structured Information Standards (OASIS) has developed OpenDocument, which is included in office suites offered by IBM and Sun Microsystems. Microsoft’s Office Open XML format will be included in the next version of Microsoft Office, expected in the second half of 2006.

The OpenDocument formats were developed collaboratively by an international alliance and are maintained by OASIS, a neutral consortium, rather than being controlled by any one party. While OpenDocument supports the Office Open XML format, Microsoft does yet not plan to support OpenDocument.

Another useful development is Portable OpenOffice.org, a full-featured office suite that’s compatible with Microsoft Office, Word Perfect, Lotus and other office applications. It performs nearly all of the functions you’d expect in an office suite, but at no cost. This new version does not need to be installed on a PC – it can run from a USB memory stick. A more complete version of the software is also available for installation on a PC, also free of charge.

Detailed discussion on OpenDocument: www.baselinemag.com/article2/0,1397,1933675,00.asp
Portable Open Office: http://portableapps.com/apps/office/suites/ portable_openoffice
OpenOffice for Installation: www.openoffice.org

DUAL-CORE CPUs

Another new technology to watch is the dual-core CPU (central processing unit – the brains of your computer). Future PCs will have dual cores, which will make them much faster at performing background tasks while users carry on working. This will allow users to reliably run full virus/spyware scans or burn CDs or DVDs while continuing to use the computer for other work. This is a huge step forward, because many of these CPU-intensive tasks can slow the traditional PC down to a snail’s pace or, worse, result in data errors.

NEW ON THE MARKET: U3 USB MEMORY CARD

If you travel or work at more than one location, you may have discovered the convenience of a memory stick – a device small enough to attach to your keychain that stores data that can be retrieved by plugging the stick into the USB port of a computer. A notable development in memory sticks is the U3 smart drive, a small device that carries software applications and personal settings. This allows you to bring your programs with you without running into copyright difficulties or IT departments that don’t want programs loaded onto corporate PCs. You can access your personal workspace wherever you go, and when you unplug the U3 USB stick, you take your personal information with you and the computer remains unaltered.

U3 is available from several memory stick manufacturers at prices as low as US$80. As long as you know there’s a PC where you’re going, either a memory stick that just stores data or a U3 smart drive stick may be a simple and cheap solution. And keep in mind that many smaller programs can run on standard memory sticks, so it may not be necessary to change from the one you might be carrying right now.

www.u3.com