Access to Education Means Access to a Better Future

The Commonwealth of Learning was created by Commonwealth Heads of Government to encourage the development and sharing of open learning/distance education resources and technologies. COL is helping developing nations improve access to quality education and training.
GLOBAL KNOWLEDGE, NOT JUST GLOBALISATION

A MESSAGE FROM THE CHAIRMAN OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING

As Chairman of The Commonwealth of Learning, my message is not from someone paid to sing this song, but from a volunteer who believes that COL is an acknowledged contributor to one of the world's great revolutions – the revolution of knowledge.

The whole Commonwealth has experienced the continuing historic shift from natural resource exploitation, to manufacturing, to financial and capital flows, and now to human resource development and the empowerment of people. Although we will not readily reverse the undesirable consequences of so-called globalisation, at least we can strive to serve the best interests of the developing world and the self-determination of its peoples. Happily, the means of doing so is available to us through global knowledge – and the available techniques of distance education can now deliver quality products at lower costs, while reaching many more people much more quickly.

Shifting Focus
COL’s early years created the quite accurate impression that COL was pre-occupied with tertiary, or post-secondary, education, but, over the past three years, we have shifted our focus in recognition of a chilling fact of life. Whereas international decision-makers shared the hope that every child would have access to basic education by the year 2000, we still fall short of that goal by 140 million children who are denied access to primary education, largely among young girls.

Increasingly, then, we are working on programmes related to school education, as well as non-formal education, technical education for the work world and youth programmes.

Toward Funding Stability
Our brief ten-year history has been characterised by two contradictory pressures: first, the enlarging demands upon us for services in support of distance education and open learning, particularly with an information technology base; and second, the struggle to acquire financial resources adequate to meet those demands.

We in COL have now climbed out of a valley in which we found ourselves four years ago, when our survival was by no means certain. The recommendation of the Ministers of Education meeting in Botswana, in 1997, which was subsequently adopted by Commonwealth Heads of Government, now provides for triennial funding pledges. COL has gratefully received such pledges from many countries.

Guidance and Services
Finally, let me express my appreciation for the guidance provided by COL’s Board of Governors and for the services provided by Dato’ Professor Gajaraj Dhanaraj as President and Chief Executive Officer of COL and his multi-talented staff. COL is well-placed to provide increasingly valuable contributions to human resource development during the next millennium.

Dr. H. Ian Macdonald, O.C.
Chairman of the Board of Governors
The Commonwealth of Learning
President Emeritus, York University (Canada)
ADDING VALUE TO COMMONWEALTH THINKING

A MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING

Commonwealth leaders when they met in Vancouver in late 1987 demonstrated amazing foresight in agreeing to create an agency for the promotion and development of distance education. The Commonwealth of Learning came into existence in January 1989, when its headquarters were established in British Columbia, and since then has grown to be a valuable asset of not only the Commonwealth but also the wider world.

Celebrating Ten Years of Achievement
Working with associates all over the Commonwealth the agency has been at the forefront of developing knowledge and capacity in open and distance learning around the world. By doing so it has helped change the perceptions of government leaders, policy makers, educational managers and the lay public as to the value and importance of applying innovative techniques and technologies to take education and training to users wherever they may be.

Today, almost all 54 countries of the Commonwealth use distance education methods for one purpose or another. The Commonwealth of Learning can take pride in the role it has played in shifting distance education from being a side-stream to a mainstream provision in many of these countries. It did this by making use of the plentiful talent of the Commonwealth for the needs of the Commonwealth.

New and Newer Technologies
The last ten years has also seen remarkable developments taking place in the way the world has invented and applied communication and information technologies for purposes of information dissemination, entertainment, commerce and more recently education and training. The ability of digits to move across national borders and other barriers at almost the speed of light also enables knowledge to do likewise. It is in this context that the Commonwealth of Learning will find a continuing role for itself in its second decade of life.

Opportunities, Threats and Fears
While the new technologies will create enormous opportunities for teaching and learning, there will also be threats and fears. Opportunities need to be exploited for the benefit of the people of the Commonwealth, but capacities need also to be developed to cope with the threats and fears.

On the basis of the confidence it has built among Commonwealth governments and people in the past, COL is best placed to add value to Commonwealth thinking in maximising the enormous opportunities and minimising the limited threats – and perhaps unfounded fears.

Appreciation to the Commonwealth
I would also like to express sincere gratitude to the many Commonwealth governments that have supported COL over the past ten years, both in terms of financial contributions and in helping others by sharing their experience, expertise and products.

Dato’ Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan
President and Chief Executive Officer
The Commonwealth of Learning
Professor Emeritus, The Open University of Hong Kong
CONGRATULATIONS!

Commonwealth Secretariat
"In its tenth year of operation, COL can be proud of the substantial contribution it is making throughout the Commonwealth to [the] revolution in education....COL is now perfectly positioned to play a large role in meeting the demand for ever-widening access to educational opportunities at all stages of peoples lives."

His Excellency Chief Emeka Anyaoku
Commonwealth Secretary-General

The Government of Canada
As Prime Minister of Canada I am very pleased to be part of this celebration of ten years of The Commonwealth of Learning. Harnessing the potential of the information highway is a key goal of our government. We see the Internet not only as a rapidly expanding market for business, but, above all, as a means for people – people everywhere – to achieve their individual dreams and potential through education and learning. That is what The Commonwealth of Learning is all about and I am proud that Canada has played a role in its growth and development.

The Honourable Jean Chretien
Prime Minister

Ministry of Education, Tonga
"We have been very fortunate to be assisted by The Commonwealth of Learning. They have donated funds which help us with the development of course materials, training of staff, and provisions of course materials."

Mrs. Piula Fukofuka
Curriculum and Planning Officer

Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia
"COL came to us at the right time and place when we most needed the right assistance and advice in establishing the first distance learning programme in Medicine in Malaysia..."

Dr. Sharifa Shahabudin
Professor & Head
Department of Medical Education

TAFE South Australia
"Congratulations to the Commonwealth of Learning for reaching its tenth birthday. It is an achievement in which the organisation must take some pride. We have watched COL grow from an idea in the minds of people into an organisation that reaches around the world, into all Commonwealth countries helping people get access to education and training....I hope that in ten years time, we can look back at the Commonwealth of Learning with some pride because it continued to make a difference."

Ms. Madeleine Woolley
Director

The Open University, Britain
"It’s a great pleasure to bring greetings to The Commonwealth of Learning on its tenth anniversary, from both a personal point of view and as vice-chancellor of The Open University. From a personal point of view because I was the Chairman of the planning committee...in 1987 that led up to the foundation of COL by the signing of the Memorandum of Understanding. Those were exciting times, and I’m proud of what has since developed....Perhaps, some of its most important work has been to put developing countries in touch with each other....Happy Birthday COL."

Sir John Daniel
Vice-Chancellor

National Open School, India
"In the last ten years, COL has contributed significantly in the development of distance education and open learning systems all over the Commonwealth. India has been very closely involved with the activities of COL right from its inception. India has also been taking advantage of the expertise and other supports coming from COL for developing its own open learning institutions."

Professor Mohan B. Menon
Chairman

University of the West Indies
"COL is very important to people like ourselves. And in its decade or so of existence it has definitely demonstrated its pivotal importance to far-flung island territories like our own in the Caribbean....It was one of the finer initiatives taken by the Commonwealth, and one that promises to do a great deal to link the millions of people across the Commonwealth."

Professor Rex Nettleford,
Vice-Chancellor

Contact North/Contact Nord, Canada
"The Commonwealth of Learning has been an inspiration to Contact North and a source of encouragement to share its expertise and experience with other countries in the Commonwealth..."

Mr. Maxim Jean-Louis
President and C.E.O.

University of South Africa
"The Commonwealth of Learning's advocacy...has done much to highlight the work being done by open universities and given a boost to UNISA and similar institutions....UNISA's current approach to the design and development of its courses and the wider use of information and communication technologies in delivering programmes owes much to the influence which The Commonwealth of Learning's present and former staff brought to bear."

Professor Antony Melck
Acting Principal and Vice-Chancellor
The Government of the United Kingdom
The Commonwealth of Learning shows how the interaction of education and technology works to the benefit of non-traditional students — those who cannot, or choose not to, attend face-to-face or residential courses. The Commonwealth of Learning helps countries of the Commonwealth to bring education to their students at a distance. It has become a strong, professional organisation dedicated to fostering distance education, and worthy of the continued support of Commonwealth members.

The Baroness Blackstone
Minister of State for Education and Employment

The Government of India
We have consistently supported The Commonwealth of Learning with both capital and human resources from the beginning. Till the end of the 1996-1997 financial year, we have given a total of C$2.98 million to COL. This is a large amount for a developing country like India. Our firm conviction that distance education is a major solution to many of the educational demands is part of our reason for our support and enthusiasm for COL.

The Honourable Shri Muhi Ram Saikia
Minister of State for Education Ministry of Human Resource Development (1997)

Athabasca University, Canada
“The future for international co-operation in distance education is extraordinarily bright, and I look forward to close involvement in the major initiatives ahead. Athabasca University is delighted to have started, this September, its first significant collaborative initiative with The Commonwealth of Learning and we are convinced that the CCDESP project in Jamaica will prove to be a model for the future. Congratulations, Commonwealth of Learning!”

Dr. Dominique A.M.X. Abrioux
President

Technikon South Africa
“Congratulations on your tenth anniversary. In a world of change where endeavours come and go, this is indeed a special milestone in your history. I know that all of us as members of The Commonwealth of Learning have benefited richly from the work of the organisation. We welcome informed windows to global best practice and the opportunity to share and exchange ideas and research outcomes in open and distance learning. May your efforts continue to bear fruit well into the new age of the millennium.”

Professor Attie J.H. Buitendach
Vice-Chancellor and Principal
CHRONOLOGY of ACHIEVEMENTS and EVENTS

Following agreement by Heads of Government in 1987 to create such an agency, a Memorandum of Understanding signed in 1988 and the appointment of the Rt. Hon. Lord Briggs of Lewes as Chairman of the founding Board of Governors:

1989
The Commonwealth of Learning becomes operational from headquarters established in Vancouver, with assistance from the Governments of Canada and British Columbia (1 January)
Professor James A. Maraj becomes COL's first President and Chief Executive Officer
Professor G. Ram Reddy joins COL as its first Vice President
Kuala Lumpur – COL's first appearance and its Board of Governors' first report to a Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM)
Study Fellowship programme is implemented in co-operation with the Government of British Columbia
The Government of UK establishes the International Centre for Distance Learning at The Open University in Milton Keynes to provide an information database to complement COL's work

1990
COL commissions several national consultancy studies and starts projects in all regions of the Commonwealth

1991
Harare – Commonwealth Heads of Government comment on the "remarkable progress" made by The Commonwealth of Learning since it last met in Kuala Lumpur in October 1989 (October)

1992
COL registers "col.org" Internet domain
COL develops its Student Record Management System (SRMS) for use by small to medium-sized distance education institutions throughout the Commonwealth
Under the aegis of COL, chairs of University Grants Commissions of Bangladesh, India, Pakistan and Sri Lanka agree to intensify co-operation and call for closer integration of conventional and distance learning institutions
COL and the Brunei Darussalam Ministry of Education open the COL/Brunei Centre for Professional and Continuing Education
COL partners with the International Council for Open and Distance Education (ICDE) on research and awards programmes

1993
COL launches its World Wide Web site on the Internet – one of the first organisations in the world to do so
Dr. H. Ian Macdonald, O.C. chairs the Progress Review of Commonwealth of Learning and reports that "COL has succeeded in establishing itself as a recognised specialised agency, and in delivering services which are making a valuable contribution to distance education and human resource development in Commonwealth countries"

1994
Dr. H. Ian Macdonald, O.C. becomes the second Chairman of COL’s Board of Governors (January)
COL joins as a founding partner in WETV – Global Access Television
COL establishes The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia at the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in India
Also in conjunction with IGNOU, COL launches the Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme (RGFS)
COL provides an Internet hub for use by educational institutions in the Commonwealth Caribbean

Britain announces major funding commitment to COL, delinked from British goods and services

COL, India and the world mourn the passing of COL's first Vice President, Professor G. Ram Reddy

1995
Dato' Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan becomes COL's second President and Chief Executive Officer (September)

Following a Governance Review, Commonwealth Governments amend their Memorandum of Understanding on COL to provide for more focus for the organisation and a downsized Board of Governors

1996
COL begins to market its fee-for-service consulting services and wins an Asian Development Bank contract to undertake a regional technical assistance project – capacity building in distance education for primary teacher training

Extensive staff and management reorganisation implemented to provide a more responsive and flexible approach to programme delivery through a flatter and less-hierarchical organisational structure.

COL and the Asian Mass Communications Research and Information Centre jointly sponsor Educational Technology 2000: A Global Vision for Open and Distance Learning in Singapore (August)

1997
COL joins the World Bank's Global Knowledge partnership

COL appoints eight Regional Advisers to the President of COL

Gaborone – Commonwealth Education Ministers support three-year funding commitments for COL

Canada announces the distribution of CDN$1.75 million over five years for COL to run a pilot programme offering Canadian scholarships to students from the Caribbean (Canada Caribbean Distance Education Scholarship Programme)

1998
Governments of eight Southern African Commonwealth countries begin to work together with COL facilitating their collaboration in training teachers of lower/junior secondary science, mathematics and technology subjects using distance education

COL, the Commonwealth Secretariat and COMNET-IT jointly launch the Commonwealth Electronic Network for Schools and Education (CENSE) to facilitate contact between national learning grids, schools and institutions throughout the Commonwealth

COL hosts a series of four "virtual conferences" as a lead up to the Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning

COL's Information Resource Centre becomes fully accessible online

The Commonwealth Distance Training Programme in Legislative Drafting (COL/Commonwealth Secretariat) awards its first completion certificates

1999
COL celebrates its tenth anniversary in Brunei Darussalam with a Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, a new video, CD-ROM, anniversary publication, Excellence in Distance Education Awards and the launch of the first volume in the new World Review of Distance Education series, “Higher Education through Open and Distance Learning” (with Routledge publishers)
“This unique institution is at the cutting edge in terms of its capability to help developing countries improve access to quality education through the use of distance education and appropriate information technologies. This capacity to match technology to needs has become the unique value that COL brings to the development process within the Commonwealth.” **The Honourable J. Chester Gillan**


“Seychelles looks forward to COL’s assistance in the very near future, specifically in the setting up of a distance education programme for primary teachers. We need COL’s assistance in negotiating for approval for the use of training modules developed in institutions elsewhere in the Commonwealth, in the adaptation of these modules and also in building national capacity in managing distance education programmes.” **Mr. Bernard Shamlaye** Special Adviser, Ministry of Education and Culture, *Seychelles*

“I wish to record on behalf of the Association of Caribbean Chief Education Officers our profound gratitude to The Commonwealth of Learning for mounting a well planned and executed workshop on distance education in Barbados recently. All the participants benefited enormously from the intervention and as a result and importantly, committed to advance and promote the distance and open learning modality as a relevant, potent and appropriate strategy to increase access and promote equity in educational quality at the different levels of the education systems in small and large countries alike.” **Mr. Wesley Barrett** Chief Education Officer, *Jamaica*; Chairman of the Association of Caribbean Chief Education Officers (1997)

“We are thankful to you for participating in our 20th Year Celebrations by organising a COL-sponsored workshop on Open Schooling for Girls in Pakistan….To be the host of the event of Open Schooling for Girls in Pakistan, will provide us with an excellent opportunity to share experiences of other South Asian countries.” **Ms. Lubna Saif** Director, Faculty of Mass Education, Alama Iqbal Open University, *Pakistan*
INTRODUCTION

When Commonwealth Heads of Government created The Commonwealth of Learning, they led the world in recognising the enormous potential of distance education and new technologies in speeding the development of nations. As COL completes its first decade, its achievements manifest the wisdom and vision of its founders. It has become a major international organisation committed to widening access to education and enhancing its quality through distance learning by the effective use of information and communications technologies. It is a leader in knowledge-driven efforts to build self-reliance and develop the skills of the people of the Commonwealth.

Commonwealth countries have rallied to the call of Heads of Government to ensure COL's financial viability. Despite pressures on domestic budgets, several countries have become new contributors to COL and others have increased their funding. Major donors have either maintained or increased support, and many other smaller donors have renewed their annual contributions.

COL has also been successful in attracting additional resources through project initiatives with other agencies. The Asian Development Bank awarded COL a technical assistance project, and WorldSpace Foundation invited COL to organise a conference on technology and distance learning. COL will continue to seek non-governmental sources of project funding, while ensuring that its core activities are sustained.

As COL enters its second decade, it has been strengthened and renewed in its mandate to assist developing countries to refashion their education and training systems in an age when communications technologies are revolutionising education.
ACHIEVEMENTS

PROGRAMMES

Objectives
New and renewed financial resources have enabled COL to maintain the momentum in its service to the Commonwealth. With priorities identified through consultations throughout the Commonwealth, COL has focussed its activities on six central objectives:

- facilitating access to affordable, high-quality learning materials and resources in support of formal and non-formal education
- promoting the use of appropriate communications and information technologies for the purpose of open and distance learning
- providing academic and professional services (including credit assessment and accumulation; quality assurance; research, evaluation and review; and access to training)
- supplying information and advice on distance learning systems, programmes and technologies, both to practitioners and developers alike
- advocating the use of distance education and open learning as an effective means of improving access to education at all levels

Sectors
In working to achieve these objectives, COL is also putting greater emphasis on other sectors in addition to tertiary education:

- open schooling, especially to improve access to education for girls and women
- technical/vocational education and training
- non-formal education and training
- continuing and professional education
- teacher education

Gender and Development
COL is continuing its efforts to ensure gender-balanced programmes and to work towards improving access to education and training for girls and women, especially where imbalances have been identified. This approach complements the efforts of other Commonwealth agencies, governments and non-governmental organisations in implementing the Commonwealth Plan of Action on Gender and Development.

Learning Materials and Resources
COL has supported activities to provide information about, and facilitate access to, affordable, high-quality open and distance learning materials and resources.

Some of the initiatives include:
- developing a manual to provide guidance on transfer of learning materials (contracts, copyright, adaptation and quality assurance). An international expert group meeting on materials transfer convened by COL in February 1997 identified the need for such a manual
- acquiring the rights to distribute materials in subjects such as distance education practise, computer software, study skills, laboratory techniques and teaching of science
- supporting the distribution of selected materials with workshops such as those organised by COL and the Commonwealth Secretariat with the Commonwealth Association of Polytechnics in Africa and the University of the South Pacific to review and adapt the laboratory techniques materials for local institutions. In October 1998, The Open University of Sri Lanka launched the first offering based on the materials, a new Advanced Certificate programme for laboratory technicians in Sri Lanka’s university system
- establishing a “regional delivery agency,” based at the Law Faculty of the University of the South Pacific, to deliver the joint COL/Commonwealth Secretariat Distance Training Programme for Legislative Drafters. The programme also issued its first completion certificates in 1998 to legislative drafters in Cyprus, Falkland Islands, India, Malaysia and Singapore. A report on the pilot delivery will be prepared for the Law Ministers meeting in March 1999, where further pan-Commonwealth distance delivery will be considered
- developing and promoting a technical/vocational teacher training core curriculum that has been pilot tested in the Caribbean and is now ready for transfer to other Commonwealth regions
- organising the delivery of a Commonwealth Executive Masters of Business Administration/Masters of Public Administration programme. This programme will be developed and pilot tested in South Asia before being offered on a pan-Commonwealth basis. Some funding assistance has come from the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation
- publishing in collaboration with partners in the North and the South, a core learning module on the theoretical justification for examining the specific roles and contributions of women to development initiatives
- surveying teacher education materials and programmes in the Commonwealth Caribbean on behalf of the region’s Chief Education Officers (in partnership with the University of the West Indies Distance Education Centre and UNESCO)

Communications and Information Technologies
The Commonwealth Education Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), established by COL at Indira Gandhi National Open University in India, continues to provide a very valuable service to the Asia region. Over 10,000 educational radio and television programmes are now included in the CEMCA database — contributed from 150 organisations, covering 65 subjects, in 10 languages, and across six countries. The Centre has already had a significant impact in media training in the region. Building on this success, COL is establishing a Commonwealth Education Media Centre for Southern Africa, which will be located in Harare.
Other examples of COL’s impact on increasing the diffusion and the use of appropriate media and technology in the Commonwealth include:

- providing advice and conducting regional workshops on the application of appropriate technologies in distance education, non-formal education and development communications
- participating in InfoDev, a World Bank programme to demonstrate the potential of technologies for the delivery of open and distance learning programmes in developing countries, with emphasis on the selection and use of appropriate technology
- installing and providing training on digital video production systems and portable “briefcase” community broadcasting stations in several locations, most recently in Southern Africa
- assisting with the application of audio-conferencing in medical education in Malaysia and providing technical assistance to the Educational Technology Centre at the University of Brunei Darussalam
- undertaking a multi-phase research project on increased use of technology in developing countries, with funding provided by the UK Department for International Development
- supporting a life-long learning series for WETV (the global access television service), of which COL is a founding partner. As part of this commitment, in 1997, CEMCA produced a one-hour documentary programme on Indian agriculture and the important contributions of rural women

COL is also the lead agency, working with the Commonwealth Secretariat and COMNET-IT, for the Commonwealth Electronic Network for Schools and Education (CENSE), an initiative to design a framework to knit together Commonwealth school networks. COL hosted the foundation meeting for CENSE in March 1998 in Vancouver.

**Academic and Professional Services**

A study commissioned by COL in 1995 revealed a critical need for training in instructional design and media applications. Consequently, COL has now conducted more than 20 training workshops covering these skills in all regions of the Commonwealth. Canadian distance educators, under the auspices of the COL/BC Fellowship Programme, carried out eight of these workshops.

Also to help facilitate the training of distance educators, 100 Rajiv Gandhi Fellowships were awarded in 1996 to enable students from 19 Commonwealth developing countries to follow a Masters of Distance Education programme offered through Indira Gandhi National Open University in India. Sixty of the original 100 enrolments graduated in 1998. An external evaluation recommended...
that the programme continue. COL is also supporting a revision and update of the course materials.

Other examples of COL's impact on training personnel in distance education are:

- establishing a new internship programme, designed and launched by COL in 1998, to enhance the professional growth of distance educators from developing Commonwealth countries through exchanges, attachments and sharing of experiences. Opportunities are available for both early and mid-career practitioners, while retired professionals can volunteer their expertise and technical advice
- collaborating with the Commonwealth Youth Programme in enhancing its Diploma Programme in Youth Development Studies and making it available "at a distance"
- developing "tool-kits" in six topic areas, designed to provide comprehensive manuals for training distance educators. The kits were produced in collaboration with the International Extension College (UK) and are the direct result of successful completion in early 1998 of a contract with the Asian Development Bank (Training for Capacity Building in Distance Education for Primary Teacher Training)
- updating and disseminating a directory of courses and materials for training in distance education, currently in its fifth edition

COL has developed, with funding from the UK Department for International Development (DFID), a proposal for a Commonwealth academic credit bank. Following a recommendation from COL's Board of Governors, the concept will be pilot tested in the South Pacific region to further assess its feasibility and value.

Other initiatives related to academic credit include:

- establishing guidelines for remote delivery of courses — both for students and for institutions
- establishing quality assurance policies and practices in distance teaching universities

The UK DFID has also provided funding for COL to conduct a study on current trends in "virtual" delivery of higher education. COL has formed an international expert group to undertake studies on the "state of practice" and to recommend future directions for COL.

Information and Advice

COL's aim is to provide information concerning open and distance education through special collections, Internet applications and by the distribution of publications. COL's World Wide Web site (www.col.org) is rapidly expanding and now includes several hundred documents and links to related organisations. It has also facilitated several "virtual conferences" and is helping to improve networking among people involved in technical/vocational education and training. COL's Information Resource Centre became fully on-line in 1998 (accessed through the World Wide Web) and continues to respond to an increasing number of requests for information and documents. COL's quarterly newsletter, Connections, is distributed to over 7,000 government officials and education leaders. An educational technology supplement to Connections, EdTech News, was initiated during 1998. Feedback on the use of all of these resources has been very positive and encouraging.

In response to requests from the governments of two of the Commonwealth's newest members, Cameroon and Mozambique, COL commissioned studies in 1998 of national education systems and the potential for increased use of distance and open learning systems. Both reports contain several recommendations for action, many of which involve central roles for COL. A proposal to provide the Ministry of Education in Mozambique with expert advice in formulating and instituting a National Policy on Distance Education was strongly and positively endorsed by the Minister of Education. COL responded by organising a national forum, held in September 1998, to start the process. A similar study, focussing on teacher training, was also undertaken for the Government of Seychelles in 1998. In addition, Ministry of Education staff were provided with training on delivering distance education for purposes of Early Childhood Education.

COL continues to advocate and support the development of open and distance learning professional associations across the Commonwealth and has helped to create national and regional forums to promote distance education. For instance, national forums were held in Tanzania (July 1997) and Malawi (August 1997) to review the development of distance education and draw up plans for the establishment of national policies on distance education. An advisory group was also formed in 1997 to facilitate regular contact among associations and provide input for COL programmes.

Advocacy

COL is active in advocating and educating various audiences about the potential of distance education and open learning, as well as technology in education. Through presentations to diverse groups and consultations with educators, development organisations and governments, COL helps to bring distance education to the fore of
the education and training agenda. Many of the presentations and speeches by staff and board members are available through COL’s web site.

COL has participated in consortia such as the World Bank’s Global Knowledge initiative and its Global Knowledge ’97 conference, for which it was an associate sponsor and panel organiser. In March 1999, in co-operation with Government of Brunei Darussalam, COL is holding its first Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning. Leading up to the Forum, COL is also hosting a series of four “virtual conferences” through the Internet.

In marking its tenth anniversary, COL is initiating a Commonwealth wide Excellence in Distance Education awards programme.

**Focussing on Marginalised Groups**

COL’s Board of Governors is committed to supporting basic education through appropriate distance education, especially addressing marginalised groups. Programmes to improve conditions for women and children have received priority. Efforts in this area have focussed on open schooling, non-formal education and teacher education.

COL is encouraging the development of open schooling systems. During 1996–1998, in collaboration with UNICEF and local institutions, COL convened two regional workshops, in Africa and the Caribbean, a national workshop in India and an international symposium on the potential of open schooling for increasing access to basic education for girls an men.

In 1996, COL and the International Extension College (UK) jointly published *The Use of Distance Learning in Non-Formal Education*. COL then convened an interagency meeting to consider this report and, as a result, COL is leading a consortium of development agencies to promote open and distance learning approaches in non-formal education.

Teacher education is an integral component of the focus on basic education. Responding to a crucial need, COL is facilitating the efforts of eight Southern African countries in collaborating to train teachers of lower/junior secondary science, mathematics and technology subjects using distance education.

**COL is also:**

- working with the Bangladesh Open University to develop a pilot programme that will increase the business skills of rural women and encourage them to become self-employed
- collaborating with international and national agricultural research institutions, extension partners and non-governmental organisations and has launched an initial project that will develop a training programme for rural youth in agriculture in India, focussing on good practices in the production of vegetables and fruit seedlings
- carrying out an environmental scan on the literature and information available on the barriers encountered by women in accessing the new communications and information technologies, and identifying problematic issues on a regional basis. Once the reports are completed, regional meetings will be convened to develop strategies to assist women in overcoming the obstacles
- helping the Women’s International Network publish a book on women using technologies for open and distance learning. The book, with a long and impressive list of international authors, is expected to make a significant contribution to the literature
- co-ordinating a materials development, exchange and training initiative with eight Southern African countries to provide a suite of high-quality learning materials comprising the core curriculum at the secondary level

In addition to core funding, Britain has also provided UK£500,000 for a pilot project involving the application of information and communication technologies in literacy development programmes in selected Commonwealth countries – initially, Bangladesh, India and Zambia. The goal of the COL Literacy Project is to demonstrate and evaluate the effectiveness of technology-based community learning centres through which literacy workers can provide training programmes in reading, numeracy and in the use and operation of information and communication tools.

**TEACHING NETWORKS**

COL’s efforts towards its central objectives are brought together in several regional teaching networks in a variety of educational sectors. A major initiative in this direction was established in 1998.

Under a grant agreement with the Canadian Department of Foreign Affairs and International Trade, COL is carrying out an innovative five-year pilot programme which provides undergraduate scholarships for Caribbean students to study “at a distance” through Canadian post-secondary institutions. The new Canada Caribbean Distance Education Scholarship Programme (CCDESP) continues the important academic strengths and ideals of the long-standing Commonwealth Scholarship and Fellowship Programme (CSFP), but also provides an exciting new dimension by launching scholarships onto the “information highway.”
Caribbean advisers and partners have indicated a desire to apply the available scholarships to those vocational areas that will provide immediate benefit by responding to identified skill shortages.

The University of the West Indies is working with three Canadian universities in delivering programmes in three countries: Alberta’s Athabasca University is providing information technology programmes in Jamaica, Memorial University of Newfoundland is developing teacher education in Dominica and Mount Saint Vincent University in Nova Scotia is offering tourism management in St. Vincent & the Grenadines.

The first group of students commenced studies in September 1998.

CONSULTING AND PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

The Commonwealth of Learning provides fee-for-service consultation to external agencies and institutions. As the only intergovernmental organisation concerned exclusively with the promotion and development of open and distance learning, COL offers clients the benefits of contacts, resources, and knowledge generated through the direct management of hundreds of varied programmes world-wide. COL’s range of services includes the creation and management of open learning and distance education programmes, the application of appropriate technologies to such programmes, materials development, and the training of administrative and course development staff.

GOVERNANCE AND MANAGEMENT

Dr. H. Ian Macdonald completed his first term of Chairman of the Board of Governors at the end of 1996 and was re-appointed for a second three-year term. The Board also re-appointed COL’s President, Dato’ Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan, to a second three-year term from 1998.

An extensive staff and management reorganisation was approved by COL’s Board and became effective on 1 July 1996 to provide a more responsive and flexible approach to programme delivery. The organisation’s overheads have also been reduced by relocating the headquarters to a smaller and less costly location in Vancouver.

Although the number of professional staff employed by COL in a full-time capacity will continue to be kept to a minimum, the organisation has an established network of professional associates throughout the Commonwealth and can assemble expert teams on an international basis.

Gender equity goals, both in staffing and consultancy assignments, are observed in accordance with a standing Policy on Equal Opportunities that has been developed by COL’s Board of Governors.

STRENGTHENING COL’S REGIONAL STRUCTURE

In partnership with institutions in the regions, distinguished staff members or associates have taken on roles as Regional Advisers to the President of COL. In addition to collecting information from their respective regions, they may also be asked to monitor a project, provide briefings or representations for COL or assist with arrangements for a workshop, government consultation or other event. A COL staff member is assigned responsibility for each region and works with the Adviser to ensure information flows and co-ordination.
Support from Governments

At the 13th triennial Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM), held in July 1997 in Gaborone, many delegations recorded their appreciation for the assistance COL had given them: 33 of the 42 countries represented at the meeting spoke in support of COL. COL's efforts to demonstrate the ways in which new technologies create opportunities to enhance the quality and accessibility of education were particularly acknowledged. Ministers of Education not only commended COL on its achievements over the previous three years, but also endorsed its programme of action for the next, as captured in its Three-Year Plan, 1997–2000.

A few months later, in Edinburgh, Commonwealth Heads of Government reviewed reports from COL's Board of Governors and from the preceding Education Ministers Conference. The meeting's Committee of the Whole reported that it "received with satisfaction" the report from COL's Board of Governors and noted COL's "impressive decade of service to the Commonwealth." The Committee also noted the endorsement of COL's Three-Year Plan by education ministers and their concurrent agreement that governments collectively would provide about CDN$5.65 million per annum to COL's core budget, over three years, through a three-tier funding arrangement.

In their Edinburgh Commonwealth Economic Declaration ("Promoting Shared Prosperity"), Heads of Government also agreed to "sustain and where possible increase bilateral assistance among our members; and to ensure the flow of resources to the Secretariat and its various funds, especially the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC); and to the Commonwealth Foundation, The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and the Commonwealth Partnership for Technology Management (CPTM)."

Funding

The Commonwealth of Learning's Board of Governors has been encouraged by the response to its request to member Governments for triennial pledges made at the July 1997 Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers. During the 1997–98 financial year, 25 member Governments contributed CDN$6.3 million to COL.

Some highlights of the total contributions included:

- An increase in contributing countries (25, compared with 19, in 1996–97)
- Seven first-time contributions (from Cameroon, Mozambique, Papua New Guinea, Seychelles, South Africa, Tanzania and Uganda)
- In addition to contributions from the Government of Canada, New Brunswick joined long-time supporter British Columbia as a provincial donor
- Foreign Affairs Minister, the Honourable Lloyd Axworthy announced Canada's five-year, CDN$1.75 million support of the innovative Canada Caribbean Distance Education Scholarship Programme.
- The United Kingdom, following Prime Minister Tony Blair's announcement at the 1997 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting, contributed UK£500,000 towards a literacy project, in addition to its ongoing support.

COL is also obtaining project and contract funding, working with partners in industry, donor agencies, development banks and foundations.
FUTURE DIRECTIONS

THREE-YEAR PLAN, 1997–2000

COL's Three-Year Plan sets out the way for COL into the next millennium. The Plan addresses COL's objectives and Commonwealth member priorities with 180 projects of varying sizes covering all functional areas. It divides the Commonwealth into nine regions, each defined in a manner consistent with the current state of open and distance learning in each region. Programmes for girls and women, good governance and teacher training figure prominently.

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

As Commonwealth countries advance towards a new millennium, they face daunting challenges. Bourgeoning populations, growing expectations from their peoples and menacing unemployment will require an educated citizenry that possesses the skills to cope with rapidly changing economies and social conditions in a competitive environment. An increasingly mobile workforce will need a central and easily accessed system of credit that recognises not only formal qualifications but also work experience and life skills.

Conventional education does not possess the resources to educate vast numbers of people and to develop the skills to prepare them for the range of tasks they will face. Distance learning and new communications technologies, however, can equip populations in ways that traditional education is unable to do. COL's experience and expertise can be of strategic value in assisting Commonwealth governments to reform and refashion their educational systems to meet this challenge.

COL's relevance can best be measured in terms of its usefulness to Commonwealth governments to bring about changes to their education systems and to improve the lives of their citizens in tangible ways. Its record to date demonstrates what it can achieve, even with modest funding. Commonwealth governments regard their contribution to COL as an investment in their own futures and as a means of transforming their societies to meet future challenges and opportunities. With continued support from member governments and other agencies, COL will fulfill this role as a dynamic instrument of Commonwealth co-operation.
BOARD OF GOVERNORS

As at 31 December 1998

CHAIRMAN

Dr. H. Ian Macdonald, O.C.*
President Emeritus, York University (Canada)

MEMBERS

Commonwealth Secretary-General:
His Excellency Chief Emeka Anyaoku*

Appointments by Major Donors:
Government of Australia
Professor C.D. Blake, AM
Vice-Chancellor, Charles Sturt University

Government of British Columbia
Ms. Robin Ciceri*
Assistant Deputy Minister, Post Secondary Education Division,
Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology

Government of Canada
Dr. Glenn Crombie
Retired President, Cambrian College of Applied Arts and
Technology, Ontario

Government of India
Mr. P.R. Dasgupta*
Education Secretary, Department of Education, Ministry of Human
Resource Development

Government of New Zealand
Ms. Shona Butterfield
Chief Executive, The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand

Government of United Kingdom
Ms. Myra Harrison*
Chief Education Adviser, Department for International Development

Regional Appointments on the Advice of Commonwealth Ministers
of Education:

Africa
Dr. Ithon L. Rensburg
Deputy Director-General, General and Further Education and
Training, Department of Education, South Africa

Asia
Hj. Mohd. Denis bin Hj. Roslee
Director General,
Ministry of Education, Brunei Darussalam

Caribbean
Dr. Marlene Hamilton*
Pro-Vice-Chancellor, Administration & Special Initiatives,
University of the West Indies, Jamaica

Pacific
The Honourable Flumé Naomi Mata'afa
Minister of Education, Samoa

Appointment by the Commonwealth Secretary General:
Mrs. Esi Sutherland-Addy
Institute of African Studies, University of Ghana, Ghana

President (Ex-Officio):
Dato' Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan*
President and C.E.O., The Commonwealth of Learning

*denotes member of Executive Committee

ADVISERS

Ms. Fay Chung
Director, International Institute for Peace and Capacity Building
in Africa (UNESCO)
Addis Ababa, Ethiopia

Y.B. Tan Sri Datuk Dr. Johari bin Mat
Secretary General,
Ministry of Education, Malaysia

Mr. John Samuel
Program Director, African Programs,
W.K. Kellogg Foundation,
Harare, Zimbabwe

The following also served on the COL Board during the period
covered by this report: Ms. Shahnaz Wazir Ali (Asia Region, Pakistan),
The Honourable Iona Campagnola (Government of Canada), Dato' Paduka Haji Ali Hashim Haji Daud (Government of Brunei Darussalam),
Mr. Shell Harvey (Government of British Columbia), The Honourable
Dr. S. Langi Kavalku (Pacific Region, Tonga) and Mr. John Samuel
(Africa Region, South Africa)
**Senior Staff**

As at 31 December 1998

*Data* Professor Gojara Dhanaraj, President and Chief Executive Officer  
*Mr. Brian G. Long*, Director (from 1998)  
*Mr. John Bartram*, Education Specialist, Technical and Vocational Education and Training (from 1998)  
*Mr. Patrick Gulton*, Education Specialist, Higher Education (from 1998)  
*Mr. Patrick Y. Julien*, Chief Operating Officer, International Development (from 1998)  
*Ms. Angela Kwan*, Project Officer, President’s Office (from 1997)  
*Mr. Raymond Lee*, Accountant  
*Ms. Doris B. McEachern*, Manager, Finance and Administration  
*Ms. Patricia E. McWilliams*, Senior Training Specialist  
*Ms. Keomoto Molotsi*, Education Specialist, Teacher Education (from 1998)  
*Ms. Sue Parker*, Co-ordinator, Information Resource Centre  
*Mr. Lewis Pearson*, O.C. Senior Adviser, External Relations  
*Ms. Susan E. Phillips*, Education Specialist, Materials and Open Schooling  
*Mr. David H. Walker*, Education Specialist, Educational Technology  
*Mr. David R. Wilson*, Communications Manager  
*Mr. Gregory Zador*, Governance and Programme Officer (from 1997)

**Regional Advisers to the President of COL**  
*Data’ Dr. Sharmal Ahmad*, Southeast Asia (President, Kolej Distad, Malaysia)  
*Professor N. Ranjith Arthenayake*, South Asia (Vice-Chancellor, The Open University of Sri Lanka)  
*Dr. Dennis Irvine*, Caribbean  
*Professor Geoffrey Mmari*, Eastern Africa (Vice-Chancellor, The Open University of Tanzania)  
*Professor Esieke Solofa*, Pacific (Vice-Chancellor, The University of the South Pacific)  
*Mr. Jakes Swartland*, Southern Africa (Co-ordinator, Revised National Policy on Education, Botswana)  
*Ms. Madeleine Woolley*, Australia, New Zealand and Papua New Guinea (Director, Adelaide Institute of TAFE, Australia)

**Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (New Delhi)**  
*Dr. Usha V. Reddi*, Director  
*Mr. K. Narayanan*, Head, Administration and Finance  
*Dr. Hara Prasad Padhi*, Programme Officer (Broadcast Media)  
*Ms. Subramanian Rama*, Programme Officer (Multimedia)

The following were also members of COL’s staff during the period covered by this report: *Ms. Mavis Bird*, Dr. *Abdul Khan*, Professor *Peter Kinyanjui*, *Mr. Peter McMechan*, Dr. *Ian Mugridge*, Professor *R.V.R. Chandrasekara Rao*, *Mr. John Steward*, Mr. *Al Trask* and *Ms. Sheila West*. Former CEMCA senior staff: *Mr. Gopal Saksena*, Dr. *Ravi Kanth* and *Dr. Purnima Vyas*. Former Regional Advisers to the President: *Professor N.K. Pecku*, Professor *Ram G. Takwale* and *Mr. Peter R.C. Williams*  

**Publications**

**Communications Documents**

**Newsletters**

**Detailed Reporting**
- *Summary Report 1994–1996*  

**Reports to Governments**
- *Report to the 13th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers* (July 1997)  
- *Report to the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting* (October 1997)  
- *Three-Year Plan, 1997–2000*

**Electronic**
- World Wide Web information service on the Internet at:  
  - *www.col.org*  
- *CD-ROM: Ten Years of The Commonwealth of Learning – A celebration of achievement*

**Research Documents**

- *Library Services to Distance Learners in the Commonwealth* (1997)  
- *Perspectives on Distance Education: Quality assurance in higher education – selected case studies* (1997)  
“On behalf of our sub-region and indeed, on behalf of Zambia, I express our gratitude to The Commonwealth of Learning not only for sponsoring this and other training workshops in other parts of Commonwealth Africa, but for the immeasurable contribution it has made to the development of open and distance learning in the entire Commonwealth since it was established by the Commonwealth Governments...I do not think that there is any country represented here that has not benefited from the efforts of The Commonwealth of Learning to meet the educational needs of our people.”  

**The Hon. Brigadier General Godfrey Miyanda**  
Minister of Education, Zambia

“OUSL took [the offer of laboratory technician training material and adaptation programmes] to the logical conclusion by offering the opportunity, in the first instance, to about 70 university technical officers... A long-standing need and lacuna in the tertiary education system in Sri Lanka has thus been met as a result of the welcome facilitating role of COL to enable the sharing of study material.”  

**Professor Ranjith Arthenayake**  
Vice-Chancellor, Open University of Sri Lanka
“Our long-term aim is that any learner, anywhere in the Commonwealth, shall be able to study any distance-teaching programme available from any bona fide college or university in the Commonwealth.”

from “Towards A Commonwealth of Learning, 1987”
Report of the Expert Group on Commonwealth Co-operation in Distance Education and Open Learning
## Summary Financial Information

### Member Governments Cumulative Funding Received for the First Ten Years

(Canadian $ in Thousands)

For the Years Ended June 30

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<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>2</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>4</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Zimbabwe</td>
<td>88</td>
<td>153</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>157</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>398</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Total: $5,460,000
SUMMARY FINANCIAL INFORMATION

SUMMARY OF REVENUES AND EXPENDITURES OVER TEN YEARS

(Canadian $ in Millions)

COL’s revenue base from 88/89 supported expenditures into 91/92. With declining revenues, expenditures began to decline also. Within the current operating plan 1997-2000, revenues are stabilising with expenditures maintained in direct proportion. Revenues have also been received to undertake special projects in this period.

BALANCE SHEET

(Canadian $ Thousands)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Assets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current</td>
<td>$4,904</td>
<td>$2,584</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Fixed</td>
<td>206</td>
<td>198</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$5,110</td>
<td>$2,782</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liabilities</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Current</td>
<td>$844</td>
<td>$787</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Net Assets</td>
<td>4,266</td>
<td>1,995</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$5,110</td>
<td>$2,782</td>
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</tbody>
</table>
# Summary Financial Information

(Canadian $ Thousands)

## Statement of Changes in Net Assets

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Net Assets</th>
<th>Invested in Capital Assets</th>
<th>Restricted for Special Projects</th>
<th>Unrestricted</th>
<th>Total</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Balance, beginning of year</td>
<td>$198</td>
<td>$132</td>
<td>$1,664</td>
<td>$1,994</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Excess (deficiency) of revenues</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>over expenditures</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Investment in capital assets</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Balance, end of year</td>
<td>$206</td>
<td>$1,902</td>
<td>$2,158</td>
<td>$4,266</td>
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</table>

## Statement of Revenues and Expenditures

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Revenues</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Member Governments</td>
<td>$5,793</td>
<td>$4,266</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>External Project Funding</td>
<td>576</td>
<td>528</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>179</td>
<td>100</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>6,548</td>
<td>4,894</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Programme and Administrative Expenditures</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>4,277</td>
<td>4,284</td>
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<tr>
<td><strong>Revenues in Excess of Expenditures</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>$2,271</td>
<td>$610</td>
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</table>

## External Project Funding

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>1998</th>
<th>1997</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Asian Development Bank</td>
<td>$247</td>
<td>$181</td>
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<tr>
<td>Associates for International Distance Education</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>25</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Association of Canadian Community Colleges</td>
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<td>-</td>
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<tr>
<td>Australian Agency for International Development</td>
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<td>13</td>
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<tr>
<td>Commonwealth Secretariat</td>
<td>10</td>
<td>119</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Department for International Development – United Kingdom</td>
<td>-</td>
<td>177</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Telecommunications Regulatory Commission of Sri Lanka</td>
<td>101</td>
<td>-</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Worldspace Management Corporation</td>
<td>198</td>
<td>13</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Total</strong></td>
<td>$576</td>
<td>$528</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
CORPORATE INFORMATION

HEADQUARTERS
The Commonwealth of Learning
1285 West Broadway, Suite 600
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Canada

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Facsimile: 604.775.8210
E-mail: info@col.org
Website: www.col.org

Bankers
The Royal Bank of Canada (Vancouver)
Barclays Bank (London)

Auditors
PricewaterhouseCoopers, Chartered Accountants
(Vancouver)

Chairman of the Board of Governors
Dr. H. Ian Macdonald, O.C.
President Emeritus, York University (Canada)

President and Chief Executive Officer
Dato' Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan
Professor Emeritus, The Open University of Hong Kong

PHOTOGRAPHY and DESIGN

Photo Page 13
Canadian Foreign Affairs Minister, the Hon. Lloyd Axworthy, presents cheque to
COL President providing funds to administer the Canadian Caribbean Distance
Education Scholarship Programme.

Photo Page 14
Participants in the COL regional workshop, "Use and integration
of media in distance education," held in Gaborone, Botswana
(23 March – 3 April 1998). Department of Non-formal
Education, Botswana.

Photo Page 17
September 1998 Board meeting, Vancouver, Canada

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www.eciad.bc.ca/welcome.html

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Courtesy of the Commonwealth Secretariat/
Maps in Minutes

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Matt Watson

Further information, multimedia, publications and examples of best
practice in the Commonwealth are available from COL on CD-ROM
or through COL's website at www.col.org