Educators from 13 Commonwealth small states met in Mauritius from 7 to 25 August 2006 under the auspices of the new Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). Participants in the workshop, organised by COL, developed online skills to enable them to continue to work together after the workshop through the use of information and communication technology. The educators posted, collaborated and developed learning content on a COL-hosted website, www.wikieducator.org (see What is WikiEducator? on page 15). A “wiki” is a simple medium for online collaboration that requires minimal technical knowledge. The popular wikipedia.org is the best-known “wiki” environment.

“It is becoming essential for people in small states to work, learn and collaborate online,” said Mr. Paul West, COL’s Director for Knowledge Management and Information Technology. “With travel becoming increasingly expensive and worries of global warming caused by travel, this group has set an example for others.”

Content development at the Mauritius meeting focused on entrepreneurship and tourism skills, both areas of important economic growth for small developing nations. The content will be relevant for users because it is being developed by educators from small states. The curriculum was planned online prior to the meeting. Development of materials, which started in Mauritius, will now continue as part of each person’s regular work. The two courses are expected to be completed in 2007 and will then be offered by institutions in the member countries. Because the learning materials are being copyrighted as “Creative Commons BY-SA-2.5”, anyone is legally allowed to download the materials and use them.

There is no restriction on who may use the materials. COL and the member countries are encouraging other countries to follow their example of creating and sharing learning content as free and open educational resources.

Online collaboration is the wave of the future, according to Mr. West. “Educators will be able to collaborate in finding and adapting course materials and resources, creating new content and sharing ideas between classrooms and among countries,” he stated.

The VUSSC is helping 25 of the smallest countries in the world to build development capacity and strengthen

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2
COMMONWEALTH
COMPUTER NAVIGATORS
CERTIFICATE

COL has launched a new programme to widen access to information and communications technologies (ICTs) skills training using free software. Sir John Daniel, President of COL, announced the initiation of the Commonwealth Computer Navigator’s Certificate (CCNC) on 16 September to coincide with Software Freedom Day 2006.

The CCNC will allow learners to acquire ICTs skills in the tools of their choice. COL will add value to the existing materials of the Open International Computer Drivers License created by the Go Open Source campaign in South Africa and distribute the training as free content for anyone to use, modify and distribute. By using free content, the CCNC will create more opportunities to acquire the prerequisite ICTs skills, throwing a wide bridge across the digital divide. The Certificate will be awarded by participating institutions across the Commonwealth. For more information, contact COL Education Specialist Mr. Wayne Mackintosh at wmackintosh@col.org.

More than 400 people from almost 60 countries and several international organisations will attend COL’s fourth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, taking place in Ocho Rios, Jamaica from 30 October to 3 November 2006.

The theme of the conference is “Achieving Development Goals” and the presentations, panels, discussions and workshops are organised under the four sub-themes: Innovation, Learning, Collaboration and Foundations.

COL is also hosting four e-mail-based virtual conferences, held between July and October 2006, as a lead-up to PCF4. The discussions are open to all (whether attending the Forum or not) and there is no cost to participate. The three-week long conferences are being 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 discussions have been lively and informative with participants contributing a wide variety of experience and opinions. Background papers for all four conferences are available at http://pcf4.dec.uwi.edu/overview.php. The moderators’ reports will be available soon.

The Forum’s keynote speakers include several leaders in the field of open and distance learning (ODL):
- **Mr. Winston Cox**. A member of the Inter-American Development Bank Board of Executive Directors, Mr. Cox previously served as Deputy Secretary-General of the Commonwealth. (Asa Briggs Lecture)
- **Sir John Daniel**. Sir John is the President and CEO of COL and a world-renowned authority in ODL.

A US$3 million project to date, the VUSSC is facilitated by COL with seed funding from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation and the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation. The Government of Singapore has also supported two organisational meetings. The VUSSC continues to actively look for funds to support course development and another content development workshop for educators from other small states of the Commonwealth. Development agencies and others that are interested in pursuing this social investment opportunity are encouraged to contact Mr. West at pwest@col.org.

**PCF4 FOCUS ON ACHIEVING DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

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**PCF4 FOCUS ON ACHIEVING DEVELOPMENT GOALS**

Dr. Sugata Mitra, Dr. Mitra, Senior Vice President for Research and Development at NIT Limited, India, is a visionary who is perhaps best known for his hole-in-the-wall experiment where slum dwellers, especially children, successfully learned computer applications through unsupervised access to technology.

**Professor Penina Mlama.** A passionate voice for the education of girls, Professor Mlama is Executive Director of the Forum for African Women Educationalists (FAWE), an organisation dedicated to improving access, retention and participation of girls in education in Africa.

COL’s Excellence in Distance Education Awards (DEEA) will be presented at PCF4. The Awards recognise remarkable achievements and endeavours to benefit those who seek to emulate examples of good practice in the field. Award recipients will be announced in four categories, acknowledging excellence occurring at the overall institutional level, in the development of learning materials, of a lifetime’s work as an educator and in student accomplishment.

PCF4 is being organised and hosted jointly by COL and the University of West Indies’ Distance Education Centre (UWIDEC), in co-operation with the Caribbean Association for Distance and Open Learning; the Jamaican Association for Distance and Open Learning; the Trinidad & Tobago Distance Learning Association; and the Office of Continuing Education and Distance Learning at the University of Technology, Jamaica.

The Prime Minister of Jamaica, the Right Honourable Portia Simpson Miller, will officially open the Forum on Tuesday morning, 31 October.

http://www.col.org/virtualconferences
COL’s Poverty Reduction Outcomes through Education, Innovations and Networks (COL-PROTEIN) initiative provides funding to open and distance learning (ODL) programmes designed to reduce rural poverty. COL-PROTEIN provides resources, consultancy, expert advice and financial support up to CDN$20,000 to not-for-profit groups and institutions in Commonwealth countries. Five projects funded in 2005 recently reported outcomes from their activities.

Solar cooking training in Nigeria

Fantsuam Foundation is an NGO in Nigeria that has been working to facilitate solar cooking, which has benefits in terms of convenience, expense and health effects over other methods of cooking. Solar cooking is used in most countries of the world, particularly in India and China. Fantsuam’s project promoted solar cooking in rural Nigeria by providing training workshops and creating workshop videos for further training. Participants learned how to cook using solar energy and how to construct solar stoves. They have also conducted solar cooking demonstrations, set up exhibits at trade fairs and established a solar stove production and training facility. To ensure sustainability of the project beyond funding from COL-PROTEIN, the team is exploring fundraising activities.

Learning for Fishing Communities in India

CONSIDER is a non-profit organisation committed to improving the quality of life of weak, vulnerable and marginalised people in society. Based in Andhra Pradesh, India, CONSIDER works to reduce the impact of disasters on the living conditions of the vulnerable. The December 2004 tsunami had a devastating effect on the fishing community of Andhra Pradesh, causing death and destroying the livelihoods of those involved in fishing. Faced with this destruction and the challenges of lack of proper fishing equipment, insufficient knowledge and depletion of marine resources, traditional fisher folk increasingly find themselves highly indebted to money lenders and unable to repay their huge loans. Funded by COL-PROTEIN, CONSIDER is using information and communications technologies (ICTs) and ODL to improve awareness of improved fishing techniques, develop self-supporting cooperatives for women and provide sustained community services.

By providing the fisher folk and their families with computer literacy training, information such as post-harvest processing and links to government departments, this project is giving people access to information and skills that will help lift them out of poverty.

Kitchen gardens and nutrition initiative in Kenya

Women in the Fishing Industry Project (WIFIP) Education and Development Trust works to enhance and sustain the livelihoods of women in the fishing industry by training them on different topical and development issues. WIFIP wanted to provide training in food and nutrition to enhance livelihoods and promote food security. With COL-PROTEIN’s support, WIFIP developed a two-day workshop that covered topics such as a balanced diet, malnutrition, infant feeding, nutrition and HIV/AIDS, and food hygiene and safety. WIFIP conducted training to more than 140 women at seven fish landing beaches in the Lake Victoria area of Western Kenya. WIFIP also developed radio programmes that were transmitted on a local radio station and a workshop about kitchen gardening that was delivered to 180 women at seven beaches. Workshop participants were enthusiastic about the workshops and gained valuable knowledge about healthy eating that will benefit their families and their communities. Many women reported that they are in a better position to start a kitchen garden and make good use of their locally available goods.

Small business training for rural women in the Upper Nkam Division in Cameroon

Protégé QV is a Cameroon-based NGO that works to promote initiatives to induce rural development, protect the environment and improve the well being of the community. The goal of this project was to use radio-based learning and cell phones to give skills to rural women, helping them make the transition from survivalist activities to professional micro-enterprises.

The project involved:
- identifying the needs of rural business women,
- hiring local experts to create training content in various aspects of small business management,
- providing training in radio production and

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4
MAXIMISING THE POTENTIAL OF OERs

There is increasing interest in the open learning field about the sharing of educational resources and tools. Open Educational Resources (OERs) are digitised learning materials that are offered freely and openly for educators, students and self-learners to use, adapt and re-use for teaching, learning and research.

Computers, bandwidth, tools and implementation resources are critical to this development because they allow open content to be accessed and used. For example, teachers have to be able to search for potentially useful resources, and these resources need to be in formats that enable them to be adapted and reused. The Creative Commons license makes resources legally available for adaptation and reuse.

OERs are typically stored in databases, or repositories. Each institution that creates OERs usually also stores their materials in their own database, sometimes called a “learning object repository” (LOR). Making OERs accessible to indexing engines like the COL Knowledge Finder is critical to enabling educators to quickly find and download resources.

There are many benefits arising from creating, using and adapting OERs. For example, there is increased collegiality and online co-operation among educators who share in the development of learning resources and increased quality as learning materials move out of the private classroom into the public domain. More importantly from COL’s point of view is the potential of OERs to provide knowledge and learning resources that would otherwise remain inaccessible.

OERs also offer developing countries a level playing field for collaborating in the creation of learning material. Educators in industrialised countries have few advantages over those in developing countries when they collaborate online. Materials can be infinitely customised, providing that the appropriate free content license is used. The OER movement thus enables developing countries to lead developments and contribute to the global knowledge community as active partners and not passive consumers of others’ “knowledge”. In other words, this development has the potential to empower educators in the smallest countries and democratise the creation of knowledge itself.

However creating OERs and LORs is not enough. There are enormous issues of connectivity that currently severely restrict Internet access in the developing world. But in addition to this there are other issues:

- The producers of materials need to consider their likely users - the learners and learning facilitators. The contributors must provide adaptable materials that are of good quality. The recipients must be able to legally use these materials (requiring the correct copyright licenses) and adapt them (requiring editable formats and the underlying digital assets – graphics, etc.). It requires that educators have access to computers and the Internet.
- Educators must receive training and support, and institutions must have the required computer equipment and cost-effective bandwidth.
- There are huge implications for the ongoing management and quality assurance of the materials. Without this, the potential of OERs will not be realised. One of the problems that killed off the idea of teachers’ centres 30 years ago in the UK (a concept not at all different from the learning repositories for OERs) was that the expense of managing the systems, even on a volunteer basis, could not be sustained once the contents got large and the initial enthusiasm waned. Fortunately, people are working on solutions to this problem, but it remains a significant risk factor.
- While OERs clearly can add significantly to the provision of open and distance learning (ODL), they cannot take the place of institutional provision. This is because OERs are addressing course needs and not the other critical components of successful ODL provision, such as the administrative systems that underpin ODL and learner support that contributes to successful learning.
- OERs are making a massive - some might say a revolutionary - contribution to ODL provision. But in order for OERs to remain an important component of the overall ODL system, institutions need to integrate OERs into existing systems so that they add capacity and improve the teaching and learning experience.

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 3

Computer skills coaching in the Solomon Islands

The Rural Development Volunteer Association (RDVA) in Honiara, Solomon Islands wanted to expand the Youthfirst Computer Centre, an ICT resource and learning centre for young people. This project focused on coaching rural trainers so they are able to provide computer skills training to people in their community. The RDVA created training manuals for both students and instructors, and provided extensive training to 18 people, who in turn have already trained several dozen people in their communities. The RDVA reports that as the trainers return and spread awareness about the training in schools and the general public, there is an overwhelming interest in the rural communities. Community members ranging from farmers to storeowners to students have taken part in training. This project has built capacity both with the Youthfirst Computer Centre and with community members in many rural areas.

www.col/protein
STOCKHOLM CHALLENGE HONOURS COL PROGRAMMES

The Stockholm Challenge, held in May 2006 in Stockholm, is an international competition for projects using information communication technologies (ICTs) in innovative ways for development and change. The judges chose 150 finalists out of over 1,100 nominations. Two COL programmes were among those finalists.

- **GRASSUP-Now**: COL supported four non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in Western Kenya involved in agriculture and environment, health education with a focus on HIV/AIDS, micro-financing and small business skills and use of technology to implement the "Grassroots Socio-economic Underpinnings: Poverty Reduction, Food Security & Nutrition, Open & Distance Learning (ODL) for Women (GRASSUP Now)" project. The project uses ODL to empower women in three poor rural communities in the Lake Victoria basin, strengthening their capacity to participate fully in society. The education and training was facilitated by audiocassette recording, video, computer-based training materials in print and CD-ROMs.

- **Answering Farmers’ Needs in Nigeria**: COL supported the International Institute of Tropical Agriculture (IITA), Nigeria, which implemented this project in Ago-Are in south-western Nigeria. It is a public-private partnership run by the community for lifelong learning and linkages leading to improved food and livelihood security. The project helps rural farmers to access relevant and timely information for food production, processing, marketing and enterprise development, and raising their income. Equipped with basic ICT infrastructure, the Ago-Are resource centre provides training, links to a community help desk and other sources of information on the Internet, and access to farming equipment for rental.

www.stockholmchallenge.se

RECOMMENDED READING

COL President Sir John Daniel shares his thoughts about The White Man’s Burden: Why the West’s efforts to aid the rest have done so much ill and so little good, by William Easterly.

According to Easterly, development today must address two tragedies. The first is simply that there are still so many poor people in the world. This tragedy has motivated heads of state and others to make many grand declarations. These include the Millennium Declaration with its Development Goals; the Dakar Goals, the UK’s Commission on Africa and so on. COL works within the agenda set by these declarations.

The second tragedy, which gets less attention, is that 50 years of effort by aid agencies and the spending of trillions of dollars have done so little to cure the first tragedy. Some countries are actually poorer than they were 50 years ago, but even where there has been progress, it has been much less than expected. The goals and target dates that international bodies have set for eliminating hunger or achieving universal education have to be pushed into the future with dull regularity as deadlines come around and targets are missed – often by a wide margin.

Easterly’s diagnosis of the reasons for the failure of development would be an essay in itself. Basically he ascribes it to the weakness that rich governments and their development agencies have for grand plans. For him, the key to progress is to abandon grand plans and to search for local solutions. True development needs more searchers and fewer planners.

He also argues that one reason development efforts have failed for so long is that development agencies are not accountable to those they are trying to help. Rich country taxpayers respond well to grand plans and announcements of large sums of money for development, especially if popular figures like Bono are brought in to promote the package. Much less attention is paid to what actually happens on the ground as a result of all this money and hype.

A former World Bank economist, William Easterly looks at the world as it really is. I commend his book, The White Man’s Burden, for anyone interested in a thoughtful discussion about the reality of development.
COL’s Young Professionals Attachment Programme sends young professionals overseas every year to participate in their first paid career-related international placement. The Foreign Affairs and International Trade Canada’s Young Professionals International initiative is a component of the Government of Canada’s YOUTH Employment Strategy (YES) Career Focus Program. The programme prepares and positions young Canadians for future employment by bridging the gap between formal education and a career. Placements are between six and 12 months with one of COL’s partner institutions in a Commonwealth country. COL has placed young professionals in 14 Commonwealth countries since 2000 and currently has 10 young professionals in the field.

Kerri Jackes, one of the participants in the 2005/2006 Young Professionals Attachment Programme, shares her experience working in Nairobi.

Nairobi? That’s in Africa, right?

I was at crossroads - not exactly sure where to direct my career: choose a graduate studies path or try my hand at a new profession. I had a couple of years of work experience under my belt, mostly in corporate instructional design. It was a job that kept me busy but wasn’t related to my university studies or inspired passion. When I arrived with concepts in distance education, but its some experience in eLearning and I was familiar with electricity and Internet access in rural villages. I was fortunate to see things, positive attitudes. I was fortunate to see things,

UNCERTAIN Ottawa landscapes soon returned and the purple jacaranda trees of Nairobi seemed very familiar. My mother instantly found me amidst airport crowds looking for their luggage and told me never do that to her again! I had spent a year living, working and travelling in Africa. To my mother’s dismay, there’s nothing I want more than to do it again... and again.

The placement allowed me to discover new trends in education and learning. I arrived with some experience in eLearning and I was familiar with concepts in distance education, but its potential impact on development eluded me until I began to research and make presentations on the subject. The World Agroforestry Centre (ICFRAF), my host organisation, is committed to making its learning objects open and reusable for quality agriculture and natural resource management education. I quickly believed in the merit of the project and worked to support their innovative approach. Debates are still ongoing with my employer in Canada about using similar repositories and adopting this new technology.

I developed personally and professionally while in Nairobi. I became more adaptable to unpredictability and had to practice flexibility in project planning. I also fine-tuned my research skills and developed an interest in distance education. The placement provided me with opportunities to attend conferences and workshops to meet leading professionals in the field. I began to understand issues in open and distance learning that affect Africa and elsewhere. The work, people and research in repositories and open learning influenced my decision to pursue a graduate degree in education once I returned to Canada.

Living away from family and friends for any extended period of time tests even the most positive attitudes. I was fortunate to see things, befriended people and gain a first-hand feel for a lifestyle that can be both incredibly challenging and effortless. When I left Nairobi, I also left behind an extended family that in their everyday lives displayed strength of character and taught me to do the same. Obvious clichés aside, this truly was a once-in-a-lifetime experience that sparked a passion and fostered relationships that transcended borders.

A year went by as quick as a flash. The familiar Ottawa landscapes soon returned and the purple jacaranda trees of Nairobi seemed very far away. My mother instantly found me amidst airport crowds looking for their luggage and loved ones. In one sweep she hugged me and told me never do that to her again! I had spent a year living, working and travelling in Africa. To my mother’s dismay, there’s nothing I want more than to do it again... and again.
By Greg Star

Since late 2000, COL has been offering a series of “Writing Effectively” distance learning courses for the staff of several UN agencies and international NGOs. I have been a tutor for these courses since April 2001, and this experience has been both enjoyable and enlightening for me. Unlike teaching in a conventional classroom or tutoring someone in their home, these courses present a set of unique challenges for learners and tutors alike. As a tutor, my main challenge is to build a rapport with learners whom I never see face-to-face. I have always found that this rapport helps to bridge the physical distance between us and increase the learners’ level of comfort with the mode of course delivery, especially if this is their first time taking a distance learning course. In turn, they are more confident in their ability to navigate through this new learning environment.

Tutoring these courses also requires a great deal of flexibility with time, as the learners’ hectic schedules and heavy workloads make it difficult for them to focus on the course. Furthermore, depending on their position, they are frequently away on mission, and this can lead to a loss of momentum. Despite these trying circumstances, I must help them to stay on track and not become discouraged in their effort to complete the course. I must also be very accommodating with respect to deadlines for assignment submission.

Perhaps the most challenging aspect of my job is the learners’ wide range of English competency and writing skills. This, of course, requires me to adapt my tutoring approach to fit each individual learner. For example, in some cases, the learners need a lot of support as they make their way through the course. These people generally ask a lot of questions about the concepts covered and the instructions for doing the activities and assignments. In contrast, other learners need very little guidance or clarification, and are able to fulfill the course requirements with only minimal support from me. In either scenario, I must be responsive to the particular needs of the learner to help them get the greatest possible benefit from the course.

I am always delighted when I see learners make progress in improving their writing skills, whether that means writing more clearly, concisely or with a more reader-focused approach. I must admit, however, that I feel especially gratified when they tell me that my comments and suggestions have helped them to write more effectively in their daily working lives. For me, this is the ultimate satisfaction!

In addition to my role as tutor, I have enjoyed the opportunity to correspond with people from all corners of the globe, many of whom are on the forefront of events that we only read about in the daily news. For example, I have had learners working on the ground in areas of conflict and natural disasters such as Afghanistan, Pakistan, Iraq, Sri Lanka, Indonesia, Nepal, Colombia and many parts of Africa, notably Darfur. Their first-hand accounts of these events have been fascinating to read, and have given me a whole new perspective on world affairs.

Reflecting back on the past five years, I must say that tutoring these “Writing Effectively” courses has been a truly unique experience. Compared to my other teaching and tutoring jobs, the skills needed to be a successful distance learning tutor are more subtle, and the results are more rewarding.

Greg Star has been a tutor with COL’s “Writing Effectively” courses for the World Health Organization and the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees. He lives in Port Moody, British Columbia, Canada.

NEW COMMONWEALTH DEPUTY SECRETARY- GENERAL

Mr. Ransford Smith is the new Deputy Secretary-General of the Commonwealth Secretariat. His role involves overseeing economic and social development affairs.

The new Deputy Secretary-General is a career diplomat of nearly 30 years' standing in the Jamaican Public and Foreign Service. He previously served as Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Commerce and Technology, and also Permanent Secretary to the Ministry of Industry and Investment.

His diplomatic career has included postings at the Jamaican Embassy in Washington D.C. as well as the Jamaican Mission to the United Nations in New York.

Mr. Smith is the first Jamaican to serve as a Commonwealth Deputy-Secretary General. He was formerly the Permanent Representative of Jamaica to the Office of the United Nations and its specialised agencies in Geneva, Rome and Vienna. Mr. Smith was also Ambassador of Jamaica to the World Trade Organization (WTO), and served as Ambassador to a number of European countries.

Mr. Smith, who succeeded Mr. Winston Cox of Barbados as Deputy Secretary-General, stated he intends to continue to extend and deepen the scope of the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) which is managed by the Secretariat under his leadership. He said the CFTC has been making a valuable contribution to the development needs of member states in international trade, enterprise development; investment, including the development of natural resources; debt management; public sector reform; health and education; as well as gender equality.

FREE LEARNING RESOURCES ON THE INTERNET

COL’s Knowledge Finder provides free and open educational resources for educators and learners. This full knowledge base of about one million documents includes a specialised open courseware library. There’s also online training on the site to help users search effectively.

www.col.org/kf   www.colfinder.org/ocw
COL's Plan to Achieve Learning for Development

The secret of COL’s success is to empower governments, institutions and individuals to take control of their own development, so that they themselves without always relying on donors. This plan extends that policy framework for learning for development.

COL has recently completed a new Three-year Plan for 2006-2009, which outlines how we will fulfil our mission and mandate. We have aligned ourselves with the international development agenda and have a solid plan for building on our experience and expertise in open, distance and technology-enhanced learning (ODL) to expand the scope and scale of learning for development.

Seeking External Inputs

COL conducted the most comprehensive planning exercise in our history in developing our new Three-year Plan for 2006-2009. This included 14 regional consultations involving more than 350 people, environmental scans from all parts of the Commonwealth and reviews by COL’s Board of Governors.

These inputs indicated that COL should:
• continue to focus on the global development agenda and “south-south” cooperation, taking a long-term view,
• pursue fewer activities but for longer periods and improve the monitoring and evaluation of its work,
• intensify its links with governments and strengthen partnerships with multilateral bodies,
• maintain a balance between policy advice and implementation,
• foster the responsible autonomy of staff but strengthen teamwork, and
• maintain intellectual and technical leadership and sharpen its brand image.

Next, we undertook a review of COL’s activities and impact since its creation almost 20 years ago at the Commonwealth Heads of Government meeting in 1987. COL’s initial mandate was to foster the application of technology to learning, helping countries to apply educational technology to their own needs.

Looking at four specific areas – higher education, teacher training, schooling and non-formal learning – we concluded that COL has indeed made a contribution to the effective use of distance learning and information and communications technologies (ICTs) at all levels in many Commonwealth countries. Whereas advocacy and policy development for ODL was a demanding task in the early days, more governments now realise the importance of distance education. COL’s role has evolved to helping governments to implement and maintain ODL systems.

Moving Forward: Focus on Development

Learning for development is the theme of COL’s 2006-2009 Plan. It addresses an agenda that includes the UN’s Millennium Development Goals, the goals of Education for All (Dakar) and the Commonwealth’s objectives of peace, democracy, equality and good governance. The Plan is based on the belief that increasing and improving human learning is the key to fulfilling most aspects of the global development agenda.

The 2006-2009 Plan groups COL’s work into three sectors of activity:
• Education
• Learning for Livelihoods
• Human Environment

The Plan outlines initiatives, outputs and expected impacts, together with performance indicators, for each sector, showing where COL can best help governments, institutions and potential partners to achieve their own objectives. COL is using this as the basis for discussions with each Commonwealth government to match national priorities to particular COL initiatives, in order to create country action proposals. The complete set of country action proposals will form the basis of action for COL.

COL will present its plans at the 16th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers to be held in Cape Town, South Africa, in December 2006 and will request pledges of financial support from each government in order to carry out this work over the next three years.

Education Sector

COL helps countries increase access to education of quality at all levels by focusing on quality assurance, teacher development, alternative forms of schooling, new approaches to higher education and the creation of expertise in eLearning.

Initiatives
1) Quality Assurance
2) Teacher Development
3) Open/Alternative Schooling
4) Higher Education
5) eLearning for Education Sector Development

Impact: Universal access to primary education and increased and equitable participation in secondary and higher education with a concern for quality.

Case Study:
Developing capacity in higher education

In August 2006, COL supported a management workshop for vice-chancellors and other senior university administrators from Commonwealth countries in Dundee, Scotland. “Managing Change in a Global Knowledge Economy” was a pan-Commonwealth event with a focus on science. Designed to help delegates develop an understanding of the changing requirements of university leadership in a global knowledge economy, the conference attracted university leaders from Cameroon, Ghana, Guyana, India,
individuals to develop learning systems of empowerment.

Namibia, Nigeria, Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Zimbabwe. Through presentations from a variety of experts, the meeting explored management tools and strategies that will help universities to manage change in the most effective way.

COL has organised this senior university management workshop for a number of years; in the past it focused on renewal of African universities. This initiative is an example of how COL builds capacity in higher education. In addition to supporting the development of open universities and dual-mode institutions that combine distance teaching with campus instruction, COL also facilitates training in specific areas such as instructional design, training staff working in ODL, quality assurance and research methodology in distance education.

Learning for Livelihoods Sector
COL helps countries to identify where livelihoods can be improved and to create matching learning opportunities. Successful approaches to improving rural and peri-urban economies draw on COL’s close relationship with international agricultural bodies. The Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth is a collaborative network for creating open educational resources for work-related learning.

Case Study: ODL for Agricultural Education in India
Distance education in agricultural and veterinary sciences is very necessary to meet the training and capacity building needs of a large number of farmers and extension workers in India. COL is working with the International Crops Research Institute for the Semi-arid Tropics (ICRISAT) in partnership with leading state agriculture/veterinary universities in India to promote technology-mediated open and distance learning processes.

COL has supported several workshops and roundtable meetings that have brought together agriculture/veterinary universities, technology resource institutions and distance education experts to explore how to best use technology resources to support agricultural education. The participants have formed a consortium that is creating an online grid of agricultural extension and education materials known as AGRID, as well as working groups focused on education, extension and grid technology. This initiative promises to make a significant impact by facilitating learning that will improve rural livelihoods.

Human Environment Sector
Sustainable development occurs when people can live peacefully and equitably under democratic government in healthy environments. COL helps countries use learning technologies to make a difference in the areas of gender, health, environment and governance, and can advise on the educational use of media and ICTs.

Impact: Sustainable socio-economic advancement and improved livelihoods, particularly among disadvantaged communities.
Africa Renewal is an information programme provided by the Africa Section of the United Nations Department of Public Information. It produces up-to-date information and analysis of the major economic and development challenges facing Africa today. A recent update from Africa Renewal about the development of a high-speed telecommunications cable that will span the continent explains how this development could go a long way to bridging the "digital divide". Here is a summary of that report.

HARNESSING THE INTERNET FOR DEVELOPMENT

African countries seek to widen access, produce content

By Gumisai Mutume

While Africa’s post-independence leaders dreamed of linking their countries through road and railway networks, today’s leaders are on the cusp of making their own dream come true - connecting African countries with each other and the rest of the world through a high-speed telecommunications cable. Originating in Durban, South Africa, a broadband telecommunications cable will stretch underwater for 9,900 kilometres through the Indian Ocean to its final destination, Port Sudan. The East Africa Submarine Cable System (EASSy) will, among other functions, support broadband Internet connections that transmit information at up to 40 times the speed of dial-up telephone links. Such high-speed connections allow users to download large files such as video clips or listen to online radio.

EASSy is one of the ICT projects of the continental development plan, the New Partnership for Africa’s Development (NEPAD). In June, African telecommunications and technology ministers endorsed the immediate start of the project, which is expected to cost $300 million and is due for completion in 2007. The project will significantly cut telecommunications costs within Africa and with countries overseas, thereby helping the continent to bridge the “digital divide” - the gulf between people and countries with access to knowledge and information and those without.

The EASSy project is part of an African plan to ensure that all countries are connected to each other through a broadband system. These countries will in turn be linked to the rest of the world through other submarine cables. Currently, the lack of adequate broadband connections has been a major hindrance to Africa’s promotion of greater ICTs use. There are few direct high-capacity Internet links between African countries. High-capacity transmission lines are mainly concentrated in North America, Europe and Asia.

As a result, about 75 per cent of Internet traffic in Africa first goes through Europe or the U.S. and is then routed back, a very costly process. For example, while Benin and Burkina Faso are neighbors, Internet traffic between them passes through France or Canada. Canada’s International Development Research Centre (IDRC) estimates that Africa spends $400 million each year on the use of international bandwidth for national or regional data. In fact, in many cases, e-mails sent between two Internet service providers in the same country are sent abroad and then rerouted back because domestic “Internet exchange points” are lacking.

The slow pace of Internet development on the continent is reflected in low levels of use. Only 2.6 per cent of Africans have access to the Internet, compared with 10 per cent of Asians, 36 per cent of Europeans and 69 per cent of North Americans. When broken down by country, the level of Internet use in most of Africa is even lower, since two countries, Egypt and South Africa, account for nearly half of all users.

Low-speed transmission lines also mean that Internet users in Africa find it much faster and cheaper to download material rather than to post their own onto the Internet. This leaves Africans primarily as consumers instead of producers of Web content. To redress this imbalance, and in line with pledges to develop a more inclusive Internet that they made at last year’s World Summit on the Information Society (WSIS) in Tunis, African countries have initiated a series of ICTs projects. In addition to EASSy, these include a venture by South Africa to involve the public in the development of its Internet domain “.za”, attempts to translate software and other Web tools into African languages to allow more Africans to produce their own Web content, and numerous efforts to broaden the use of the Internet for distance learning.

Language diversity

Another area of growing concern is the absence of African languages on the Internet. The dominance of European languages has limited the spread of Internet use by excluding those not fully literate in those languages. African information ministers meeting in Dakar, Senegal, last year urged new programmes to promote African and other languages on the Internet. This, they argued, would help “fight against the linguistic digital divide and ensure the participation of all in the emerging new society.”

The original design of the Internet’s domain name system had a strong technical bias towards English. Even languages such as French, Spanish and German are at a disadvantage when it comes to naming Internet hosts, because they use accented characters that the system does not support. In addition, existing tools to create Web pages, such as HTML (Hyper Text Mark-up Language), are based on English or other Western languages, requiring programmers to be functionally literate in those languages to generate content.

“Limiting people to the use of ICTs in a foreign language tends to exacerbate the digital divide, makes ICTs adoption long, difficult and expensive, and impoverishes local cultures,” notes a study by the Pan African Localisation Project. Funded by the IDRC and implemented by non-governmental African ICTs and language development organisations Kabissa and Bisharat, the project seeks to “localise” software and Internet content by using Arabic and African languages.

The three-year project, launched in 2005, will survey the current state of localisation in Africa, hold a training workshop for experts and develop a Web-based database of resources. “This is a timely and exciting project that has the potential..."
COMMONWEALTH CONNECTS LAUNCHED

A new Commonwealth initiative to bridge the deepening digital divide across its member countries was unveiled by Commonwealth Secretary-General Don McKinnon at the Commonwealth Secretariat in London, UK, on 3 August 2006.

Commonwealth Connects is a programme that promotes development in information and communications technology (ICTs) among member countries, particularly least developed countries and their communities. The aim is to facilitate local, regional and international linkages through the World Wide Web that will enhance access to information, networking opportunities and electronic commerce.

Addressing a gathering of Commonwealth partner agencies, high commissioners and members of the media at the launch of Commonwealth Connects and its website, the Secretary-General said the occasion was “a very important landmark”.

“Today sees the birth of a global website for sharing best practice and best policy in ICT programmes and initiatives from right across the Commonwealth,” stated Mr. McKinnon. “The site will be a critical element of building a Commonwealth IT community. Imagine the power of technology to bridge the digital divide to transform individual lives, communities and entire communities.”

Commonwealth Connects focuses on five specialised areas: building policy and regulatory capacity; modernising education and skills development; entrepreneurship for poverty reduction; promoting local access and connectivity; and regional networking, local content and knowledge.

Commonwealth Heads of Government endorsed Commonwealth Connects as an outgrowth of its previous “Commonwealth Action Programme for the Digital Divide” and identified key implementation partners that could assist with the execution of the programme, namely the Commonwealth Secretariat, the Commonwealth Network of Information Technology for Development (COMNET-IT), the Commonwealth Business Council, the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association, the Commonwealth Telecommunication Organisation, the Commonwealth of Learning, the Commonwealth Foundation, the Government of Malta, the Government of India, the Government of Mozambique and the Government of Trinidad & Tobago.

The first project launched under the Commonwealth Connects programme – “Rebuilding After the Tsunami: Using ICTs for Change” – was also unveiled at the event. This project aims to offer quality web development, e-communication services and training to organisations working on tsunami rehabilitation and reconstruction efforts in Sri Lanka and India.

Other Commonwealth Connects projects will involve the provision of radio-based business training for women in Cameroon to help them in micro-enterprise; and the distribution of refurbished computers donated by Caribbean governments and citizens to local schools for computer training.

www.commonwealthconnects.net

SCHOOLNET AFRICA MOVES SECRETARIAT TO SENEGAL

SchoolNet Africa is moving its Secretariat from South Africa to Senegal. It will operate under the auspices of the Groupe pour l’Etude et l’Enseignement de la Population (GEEP), an African non-governmental organisation (NGO) hosted by the School of Education at Cheikh Anta Diop University. The new Secretariat is being led by Ms. Nabissatou Mbow from Senegal as Executive Director and Mr. Amr Hady from Egypt as Deputy Executive Director. SchoolNet Africa is an NGO that works to improve education access, quality and efficiency through the use of ICTs in African schools. The organisation works with learners, teachers, policymakers and practitioners through country-based SchoolNet organisations across Africa.
EVENTS

AFRICA FORUM FOR NOMADIC EDUCATION

Improving access to education for nomads was the focus of a forum held in northern Kenya in June 2006. The four-day “Forum on Flexible Education: Reaching Nomadic Populations in Africa” was held in Garissa, a community in a district populated by nomadic groups. It was organised by COL, the Commonwealth Secretariat’s Social Transformation Programmes Division and Kenya’s Ministry of Education, in collaboration with UNICEF Kenya.

Increasing educational opportunities for nomadic communities is a challenging as well as urgent issue. Nomads in Africa constitute about six percent of the continent’s total population and are found in at least 20 countries. National education statistics show that education provision has failed to penetrate nomadic communities. For instance, in the essentially nomadic region of Kenya’s North Eastern province (where the Forum took place), the Gross Enrolment Ratio is just 26%. If the Millennium Development Goals (MDGs) and the Education for All (EFA) initiative are to be achieved, education for nomadic communities must be expanded and improved.

The Forum provided an opportunity for experts and practitioners in the field to take stock of the situation, share best practices and make informed suggestions for the way forward in improving access, participation and completion of schooling. It focused on five themes:

- Ensuring basic Education for All
- Girls and women
- Teacher/facilitator training
- Skills training
- Government policy

More than 60 participants attended from Botswana, Ethiopia, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Somalia, Tanzania and Uganda.

BUILDING ID EXPERTISE IN WEST AFRICA

THIRTEEN EDUCATORS FROM CAMEROON, GHANA, NIGERIA, SIERRA LEONE AND THE GAMBIA TOOK PART IN A FOUR-DAY TRAIN THE TRAINER WORKSHOP ON INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN IN JUNE 2006 AT THE REGIONAL TRAINING AND RESEARCH INSTITUTE FOR OPEN AND DISTANCE LEARNING (RETRIDAL) AT THE NATIONAL OPEN UNIVERSITY OF NIGERIA (NOUN). THE PARTICIPANTS WILL CONTINUE TO BUILD INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN EXPERTISE BY HOSTING WORKSHOPS FOR FELLOW ACADEMICS IN THEIR RESIDENT INSTITUTIONS’ COUNTRIES.

- Teacher/facilitator training
- Skills training
- Government policy

Commonwealth African countries with significant nomadic populations are Botswana, Kenya, Namibia, Nigeria, Tanzania and Uganda.

Nomads are categorised into three major groups based on their mobile lifestyle: pastoralists, migrant fishermen and hunter-food gatherers. Because of specific characteristics, each of these groups presents different challenges to educators working to increase access to education and training opportunities.

Nomadic groups are at the low end of national statistics in enrolment, participants, classroom performance, gender balance, achievement, progression to the next level of education and training.
Distance education is increasingly seen as a viable option to provide educational access to students who cannot pursue conventional, full-time education. When well implemented, it has the potential to tackle many of the educational challenges faced in regions such as Southern Africa. Several countries in the region have made significant progress with the establishment of new institutions or divisions within existing institutions to provide secondary education through distance learning. These institutions focus on preparing learners to secure sustainable livelihoods by improving their academic qualifications, and by providing training to create and maintain income-generating opportunities.

To share the emerging base of experience in open schooling, COL supported the establishment of an open schools consortium to focus on developing academic and vocational education programmes and materials. In July 2006, representatives from institutions and ministries offering education through distance learning in seven African countries met in Gaborone, Botswana to form the Southern African Development Community (SADC) Open Schooling Consortium. Hosted by the SADC Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE), the meeting was organised and supported by COL and Mindset Livelihoods, a non-profit South African organisation. The participants agreed to form the consortium, which will be housed by SADC-CDE. Mindset Livelihoods will coordinate fundraising and project implementation activities in collaboration with the other members.

The vision of the SADC Open Schooling Consortium is to provide a vehicle to initiate, design and implement collaborative projects to develop high quality distance education programmes (and accompanying materials) at the secondary level. The programmes will be designed to secure sustainable livelihoods. The Consortium will facilitate peer-to-peer networking amongst practitioners working to deliver school-level education through open and distance learning (ODL). It will also develop proposals, source funding, and organise and manage joint programme and materials development at two key levels:

- Junior Secondary level – The focus will be on increasing access to quality programmes offered via distance education in order to provide educational opportunities to those large numbers of learners in the region leaving primary education and unable to secure places in the mainstream secondary schooling system.
- Senior Secondary level (learners from age 16-25) – The focus will be on designing high quality programmes that have a strong vocational orientation in order to prepare learners to secure sustainable livelihoods for themselves and their families.

Events

**COMMONWEALTH EDUCATION MINISTERS (CCEM)**

11-14 DECEMBER 2006

16TH CONFERENCE OF COMMONWEALTH LEADERS MEETING

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

In addition to the meeting of Commonwealth Education Ministers, this year’s conference will include separate forums for stakeholders, teachers and youth. It will also feature the first Education Good Practice Awards, a programme that recognises good and promising practices in education in the Commonwealth’s 53 member countries.

Mrs. Graça Machel will be a keynote speaker at the CCEM. Known as a tireless advocate for children and women, and a major force on behalf of worldwide literacy, she is also considered to be a foremost authority on the impact of conflict on children. Mrs. Machel was Mozambique’s first post-independence Minister of Education and is currently Chair of the Foundation for Community Development and a member of the Board of Directors for the United Nations Foundation.

www.cec-ugc.org

**CEC LEADERSHIP CONVENTION**

10-12 OCTOBER 2006

16TH CONFERENCE OF COMMONWEALTH EDUCATION MINISTERS (CEM)

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

In October 2006, delegates from Southern Africa attended the conference, which focused on “Exploring the role of ICTs in addressing educational needs: identifying the myths and the miracles”. The keynote speakers included COL President Sir John Daniel and Professor Nyameko Barney Pityana, Chairperson of the African Council of Distance Education and Vice Chancellor of UNISA.

**SUPPORTING E-LEARNING IN INDIA**

COL and the Consortium for Educational Communication (CEC) recently hosted a five-day training workshop on adaptive learning for 25 academics from different institutions across India. The workshop was led by Dr. Nishikant Sonwalkar, an expert in technology-assisted learning formerly from the Educational Media Creation Center at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT). Dr. Sonwalkar introduced his adaptive learning system, which caters to five different learning styles. In addition to building capacity in e-learning, this workshop promoted the Indian priority of national integration among the remote located and post-conflict states.

CEC held its second National Convention at the University of Pune on 5 June 2006. Also supported by COL, the convention focused on “Development and Distribution of eLearning Resources”. COL Vice President Professor Asha Kanwar gave a keynote address at the convention.
COl's Three-year Plan continued from Page 9

Impact: Sustainable development occurring through people living peaceably and equitably under democratic government in healthy environments.

Case Study: Gender Mainstreaming Toolkit

COl partnered with the Commonwealth Secretariat to develop a Gender Management System (GMS) Toolkit designed to assist Commonwealth governments in ensuring that an awareness of gender issues informs their decision-making in all areas and at all levels. The GMS Toolkit uses ODL principles to enhance access to and use of the Secretariat’s GMS manuals. These manuals focus on gender mainstreaming in key areas such as finance, development planning and the public service, as well as cross-cutting development issues such as HIV/AIDS, poverty eradication and the Millennium Development Goals.

The Toolkit transforms the GMS manuals into a user-friendly, learner-centered, trainer-oriented package. It includes a study guide for individuals, a trainer’s manual, a change management briefing and a CD-ROM that contains the contents of the Toolkit and all the original GMS manuals.

Since the GMS Toolkit was released in early 2004, many institutions and governments in the Commonwealth have used it. The Toolkit is an important initiative for COL because it expands the use of ODL in areas beyond education and it helps address gender inequality, which is essential to advancing the development agenda.

THE DIGITAL LEARNING CHALLENGE
Obstacles to Educational Uses of Copyrighted Material in the Digital Age

By William McGeveran and William W. Fisher, Berman Center Research

This foundational white paper reports on a year-long study by the Berkman Center for Internet and Society, funded by a grant from the Andrew W. Mellon Foundation, examining the relationship between copyright law and education. In particular, the authors wanted to explore whether innovative educational uses of digital technology were hampered by the restrictions of copyright. The study found that provisions of copyright law concerning the educational use of copyrighted material, as well as the business and institutional structures shaped by that law, are among the most important obstacles to realising the potential of digital technology in education.

Drawing on research, interviews, two participatory workshops with experts in the field and the lessons drawn from four detailed case studies, the white paper identifies four obstacles as particularly serious:

- Unclear or inadequate copyright law relating to crucial provisions such as fair use and educational use,
- Extensive adoption of digital rights management technology to lock up content,
- Practical difficulties obtaining rights to use content when licenses are necessary, and
- Undue caution by gatekeepers such as publishers or educational administrators.

The white paper concludes with some discussion of paths toward reform that might improve the situation, including certain types of legal reform, technological improvements in the rights clearance process, educator agreement on best practices and increased use of open access distribution.


COl Develops ID Template

COl has developed a template for instructional design that helps content developers to convert their subject matter expertise into learning materials. The template is in response to the continuing need for high quality open and distance learning (ODL) materials. It helps authors incorporate ODL instructional design techniques into their learning texts. Created in just over a year and tested in many countries and institutions with feedback from many instructional designers, this template is truly a collaborative effort. COl hopes that anyone who may feel discouraged from developing ODL learning materials will now feel empowered to begin to do so.

The instructional design template, part of COL’s Training Handbooks series, will be demonstrated and trialled at the Pan Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in Ocho Rios, Jamaica, 30 October to 3 November 2006 (www.col.org/pcf4) and will be freely available online. www.col.org/trainingresources

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NOw RESOURCEs

HIGHER EDUCATION CROSSING BORDERS: A Guide to the Implications of the General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS) for Cross-border Education

A report prepared for the Commonwealth of Learning and UNESCO by Dr. Jane Knight

The General Agreement on Trade in Services (GATS), adopted by the World Trade Organization in 1995, clearly identifies education as a service to be liberalised and regulated by trade rules. While some see GATS as an opportunity, others view it more as a threat. For many, it has raised questions that need to be answered.

The Guide simplifies the complexities of cross-border higher education and GATS. It examines the different dimensions of cross-border education within the context of GATS: the present landscape, opportunities and challenges, and the implications for policy and practice in higher education. It is meant for a range of stakeholders: policy-makers, senior academic leaders, faculty members, students and researchers. The aim is to heighten awareness and knowledge about this elusive and evolving phenomenon so that both policy-makers and practitioners can make informed decisions in the light of their own priorities and goals.

Initial reviews from countries as diverse as Sierra Leone, Trinidad & Tobago and India suggest that this Guide will be of particular benefit to colleagues in the developing world.

www.col.org/GATS

COl’s Three-year Plan for 2006-2009, Learning for Development, is available online at www.col.org/3yp0609
WikiEducator is a website (www.WikiEducator.org) that provides free eLearning content that anyone can edit and use. WikiEducator was launched by COL earlier this year and piloted by the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) course developers meeting in Mauritius in August 2006. It is now being used extensively for the development of educational resources.

What is the role of WikiEducator?
WikiEducator is an evolving community focused on collaboration in:
- planning of education projects linked with the development of free content,
- development of free content on WikiEducator for eLearning,
- building of open education resources (OERs) on how to create OERs, and
- networking on funding proposals developed as free content.

Who can use WikiEducator?
Anyone can edit content and make contributions. Use of WikiEducator is free, and users don't need a high level of technical skills.

How does one use WikiEducator?
Users must create an account, which allows you to log in to WikiEducator. You are free to read content, re-distribute it and make improvements or adaptations. WikiEducator tracks changes, so you can see how materials have been edited and by whom.

Is WikiEducator linked to Wikipedia?
WikiEducator uses Mediawiki, the same open source software platform as does Wikipedia - the free online encyclopedia that is among the top 20 most visited websites in the world.

WikiEducator is hosted by COL but shares the “wiki” philosophy of openness, inclusion and sharing of knowledge. WikiEducator is based on several beliefs, including:
- social inclusion and the participation of all people in our networked society
- the freedom of all educators to teach with the technologies and contents of their choice (seen in WikiEducator’s commitment to Free/Libre and Open Source Software, or FLOSS, technology tools and free content)
- educational content is unique. By working together contributors can improve the technologies that they use as well as the reusability of digital learning resources
- with a forward-looking disposition contributors can work together to find appropriate and sustainable solutions for eLearning futures.

Who’s behind WikiEducator?
The hosting of WikiEducator is funded by COL. While some community nodes like the VUSSC have a strong Commonwealth focus, WikiEducator is open to anyone who shares the vision of open content. COL’s Education Specialist, eLearning and ICT Policy, Mr. Wayne Mackintosh, who was founding project leader of the eXe project (http://exelearning.org), initiated WikiEducator in response to the need to find innovative yet practical solutions to evolving eLearning practice.

Why is WikiEducator important?
Social software is changing how we record, access, share and use knowledge. COL believes that WikiEducator will radically expand free

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16
THE PRINCIPLES OF FREE CONTENT

Education needs to be in “the commons” – it’s about the good of society. We all benefit when essential learning materials are used freely. WikiEducator is committed to the principles of the free content and expression definition (http://freedomdefined.org), which is:

- the freedom to study the work and to apply knowledge acquired from it,
- the freedom to redistribute copies, in whole or in part, of the information or expression, and
- the freedom to make improvements or other changes, and to release modified copies.

WikiEducator continued

learning content and vastly improve access to education in countries of the Commonwealth. The advantages of WikiEducator lie in its accessibility and simplicity. Users can collaborate without consideration for travel, communicating across different time zones or dealing with differences in technology.

How is WikiEducator being used now?
WikiEducator is currently being used mainly for two projects:
1) Developing learning content for the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC). A “bootcamp” in Mauritius in August 2006 introduced educators from 13 small states of the Commonwealth to WikiEducator. Participants began collaborating on learning materials for courses in tourism and entrepreneurship at the meeting and have continued to collaborate through WikiEducator upon their return home. These courses are suitable for use in small states; users can adapt them to make them relevant for their environment.

2) Resources to support the professional development of educators. WikiEducator provides users with free access to eLearning resources. COL is releasing materials such as its comprehensive eLearning Guide under a free content license. This means people can not only use the guide but can also add to it.

But WikiEducator certainly isn’t limited to these two uses. Anyone who wants to create, edit or use learning content is welcome to become part of WikiEducator. Use of WikiEducator is already growing exponentially as evidenced by the current growth rate of page visits to the site.
www.WikiEducator.org

ONLINE RESOURCES FOR DIGITAL PHOTOS

In this issue of EdTech News, we’ve got the spotlight on digital photos - how to share them, store them and access them online.

Stock images online
While commercial photo-banks have been available on the Internet for years, non-commercial banks are now emerging that make stock photography much more affordable and accessible – and even free.

Websites such as iStockphoto.com offer images that members contribute. There are no royalties or subscription fees, just fees for the images you choose. iStockphoto currently offers more than a million stock images.

Wikimedia Commons is a repository for freely licensed photos, diagrams, animations, music, spoken text, video clips and media of all sorts. It is created and maintained by volunteers. Wikimedia Commons uses the same Wiki technology as Wikipedia and WikiEducator so you can edit it easily and without advanced technical skills directly in the web browser. Unlike traditional media repositories, Wikimedia Commons is free.

Everyone is allowed to copy, use and modify any files here freely as long the source and the authors are credited and as long you release your copies/improvements under the same freedom to others.

www.iStockphoto.com
http://commons.wikimedia.org

Sharing digital photos
One of the benefits of digital photography is the ability to store and share photos online. Sending photos by email can become cumbersome, and saving all those images can use up a lot of computer disk space, so at times, it makes sense to use online resources.

There are numerous websites, such as Sony ImageStation, Kodak EasyShare Gallery, Flickr and H P PhotoSmart Share that offer free photo sharing, storage and editing tools. Most also allow you to order prints and photo gifts.

While these services give you the opportunity to share your photos with the world, privacy can be an issue with photo sharing. Most online photo sharing services let you create password protected photo albums, so only family and friends can access the photos. You can also show off your favourite photos or sell them online. This is where you need to be careful. Be aware of the implications of people having free access to your photos. They can manipulate them and reproduce them in ways you might not approve of. You'll want to be particularly careful safeguarding photos of children. Just like any online activity, be aware of the consequences of opening yourself up to the world.

www.kodakgallery.com
www.flickr.com
www.snapfish.com

Connections

October 2006 | Volume 11, Number 3

Connections is 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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