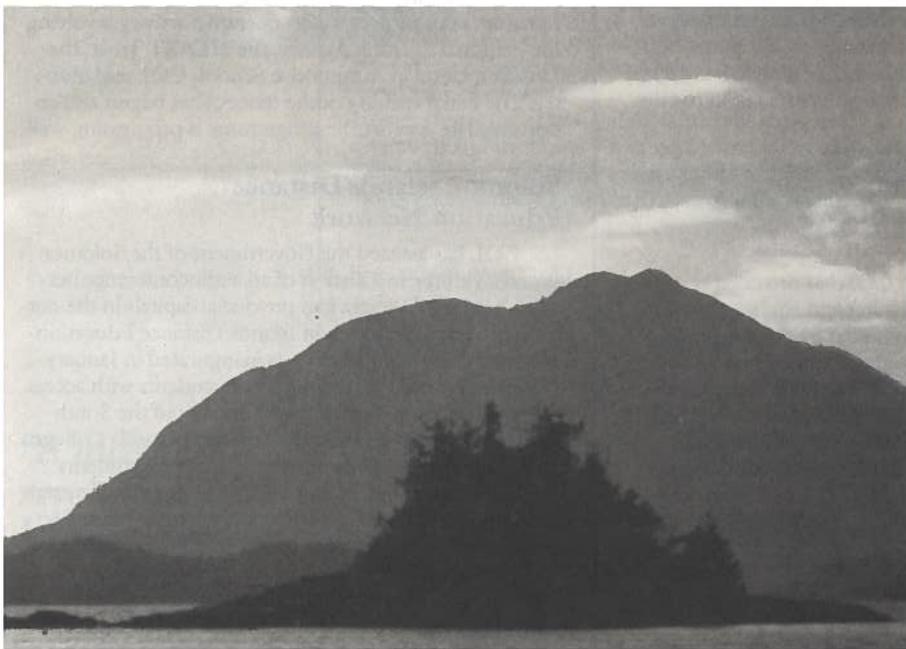


# COMLEARN

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## COL and Small Island States On Being Small and Being Different



**T**aking population as the main criterion and regarding one million as the upper limit, over thirty of the fifty members of the Commonwealth can be described as small states. Almost half of these have populations of less than 200,000 and several are less than 100,000. And, most of the small countries in the world are members of the Commonwealth.

Inevitably, several programmes of Commonwealth co-operation focus on these small states which constitute such a large proportion of its overall membership. There are important differences to be taken into account when developing programmes for this group of countries. Some of these differences pertain to factors such as being landlocked or sharing a border with a larger neighbour, being an island or comprising more than one island, and geographical location itself, e.g. being in the Mediterranean as different from the Indian Ocean. Even in a given region, proximity to or distance from each other is a major consideration. This is the case in the Caribbean where they are relatively close to each other, and by contrast in the Pacific where the distances between them are great. Small states are certainly not homogeneous and both planners and practitioners have become sensitive, especially in regions that appear superficially similar, to the particularities of individual countries and the need to address their distinctive features. Having said that, of course, it does not mean that some problems are not common. Indeed, some small states have problems in common with much larger countries but often the difficulties weigh particularly heavily on the smaller entities. This is most evident in the context of human resources development.

The severely restricted human resources, for example, which are a function of small size, can critically constrain a country's overall development capacity. COL, which is itself quite small when compared to other international organisations, seeks to expand and enhance the human resources available in small states by increasing access to education and training and by improving their quality.

In this edition of *COMLEARN* we highlight some of our efforts.

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## Meeting the Challenge of Human Resource Development in Small States: Some COL Initiatives

### Teacher Education in Jamaica

In July 1991, with technical and financial assistance from COL, the Ministry of Education in Jamaica launched a pilot project to upgrade by distance some 170 primary school teachers from certificate to diploma level qualification. Just over 120 of these successfully completed the course in June 1993, and several achieved grades equal to or better than their counterparts doing it in the traditional manner. As a result of this over 500 teachers have applied this year to do the course by distance, but the Ministry is only able to enrol 300.

### Expanding university enrollment in Guyana

Deficiencies in English, Science and Mathematics in pupils emerging from the school system have seriously affected enrollments at the University of Guyana, especially in the Sciences where the need is greatest. With substantial inputs from COL, including professional advice, training, several items of equipment, and an audioconference network linking three major sites, the Institute of Adult Education at UG has begun to deliver pre-university courses by distance. Over 200 students are now enrolled in pre-university English, and distance learning materials are currently being prepared in mathematics and the sciences.

### Skills development using distance education at Sir Arthur Lewis Community College, Saint Lucia

Over the past three years COL has provided consultant advice and assistance, training and equipment to establish a distance education unit at Sir Arthur Lewis Community College at its headquarters in the capital Castries, and one study centre at Vieux Fort, the southernmost tip of the island. Skills training initially for secretaries and clerks using materials from North Island College, British Columbia, adapted to the St. Lucian environment, will commence at the Vieux Fort centre next academic year.

*"... a pilot programme is being implemented in Jamaica to train several men and women as motor mechanics."*

## Marine Resources Management in Small States

The need for education and training of persons involved with decision-making in marine affairs in small island states, and of educators/teachers of marine subjects that touch on aspects of marine affairs at a management level, is universally accepted. To examine how distance education might contribute to addressing this need, COL convened an international symposium in Malta in 1989 where twelve units of a distance education syllabus on marine resources management were developed and the target audiences identified. A follow-up workshop in 1990 convened jointly by COL and The International Centre for Ocean Development reaffirmed the potential of distance education for human resource development in the marine sector.

### Alternative Delivery Mechanism for Technical/Vocational Education and Training: Automotive Mechanics Training in Jamaica

Utilising the Automotive Mechanics Integrated Training System (AMMITS) from Queensland Distance Education College (QDEC), Australia, a pilot programme is being implemented in Jamaica to train several men and women as motor mechanics. The programme was initially developed to train First Nations people in the outlying communities of Northern Australia, and utilised the expertise that resided in industry to implement the training, rather than taking young people from their communities to centrally located colleges. The Jamaican pilot project is a co-operative activity involving the National Training Agency, the HEART Trust, the Jamaican German Automotive School, COL and industry. The initial training of the trainees has begun and reports to date are that the programme is progressing well.

### Solomon Islands Distance Education Network

COL has assisted the Government of the Solomon Islands with the installation of an audioconference network between Honiara and provincial capitals in the outlying islands. The Solomon Islands Distance Education Network (SIDEN), which was inaugurated in January 1993, will be used partly to provide students with access to the satellite network of the University of the South Pacific, and partly to assist the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education to provide support for students enrolled in the new distance education programme established by the College. The first courses to be offered to students in seven provincial (outer islands) towns through SICHE/SIDEN have been developed with funding arrangements under the joint COL/Australian International Development Assistance Bureau (AIDAB) Programme for the Southwest Pacific and with assistance from Charles Sturt University. A course in mathematics began in January 1993, and one in English in February. The courses are aimed at adult basic levels and particularly at upgrading untrained teachers in provincial schools.



### Centre for Professional and Continuing Education in Brunei Darussalam

A Centre for Professional and Continuing Education has been established by COL on the campus of the Universiti Brunei Darussalam. The Centre is equipped with compressed video teleconferencing facilities, an audioconference system, a computer training unit, and text-processing capabilities. Arrangements have been made to link the Centre with relevant Australian institutions in the first instance, and next with Canadian institutions when appropriate telecommunications channels are available (later in 1993). The initial programmes to be offered at the Centre have been identified and will commence once the links are in place.

### Distance Education and Human Resource Development in Mauritius

In April 1991, the President of COL and the Mauritius Minister of Education signed a nine-point Memorandum of Understanding outlining a course of action for Mauritius for the implementation of distance education throughout the country. Since then COL has helped to put in place the necessary infrastructure for the purpose. Desktop publishing systems have been supplied to selected institutions to assist in the production of distance learning material, and equipment provided for the establishment of an audioconference network of five learning centres. In addition through COL's mediation a project to develop a link between the University of Mauritius and Laurentian University has been established with substantial financial support from the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA). The project which will run for a five-year period will include the sharing of resources and expertise, as well as the development at the University of Mauritius of an infrastructure to create and deliver courses at a distance. At a different level, the Mauritius Industrial and Vocational training Board is currently offering by distance a number of technical/vocational courses made available to it through licensing agreements negotiated and purchased by COL.

### Distance Education for Human Resource Development in the Eastern Caribbean Region

The successful delivery of courses by distance at Sir Arthur Lewis Community College in St. Lucia has been a major factor in generating interest in distance education in the Eastern Caribbean as a whole. This interest culminated in a request to The Commonwealth of Learning from the Organisation of Eastern Caribbean States (OECS) to investigate the possibilities of extending these course offerings to students throughout the Region. As a result of visits by professional staff to the various territories and on the basis of consultations with educators there, COL, working closely with relevant individuals and agencies in the Region, has developed a proposal and implementation plan for a Distance Education Pilot Project for the Eastern Caribbean.

The Project has recently been given unqualified approval by the Ministries of Education in the Region, and COL has committed resources to enable it to be carried forward. The Project is based on the concept of the creation of a network of community colleges in the Region, through which courses originating at one College may be offered to students in the other territories through their local colleges. The main purpose of the pilot is to test the feasibility of offering to students in the region a selection of basically print-based courses through distance education methodologies, with the aim of eventually increasing the course offerings if the results

of the pilot demonstrate success. For the purpose of the pilot, the courses to be offered will be ones originating from Sir Arthur Lewis Community College in Saint Lucia.

### Distance Education and Human Resource Development in Southern Africa

A quiet revolution in human resource development through distance education has been taking place in Southern Africa over the last twenty years. Since 1972, several distance teaching institutions and staff of the three smallest countries have met and exchanged information, materials and experiences on a regular basis. Functioning under the umbrella of the then Universities of Botswana, Lesotho and Swaziland, the joint Correspondence Committee (BLSCC) facilitated collaborative activities in distance education between and among the three countries. Gradually the membership of the joint committee was expanded to include the neighbouring countries and its name changed to the Distance Learning Association of Southern Africa (DLASA). More recently, the association has transformed itself into the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA) with a total membership of fourteen institutions in seven countries.

Through COL/AIDAB assistance co-ordinated by the Programme Advisory Committee for Southern Africa, DEASA has emerged as a major professional association for human resource development in the sub-region. Its main activities have focused on the training of staff in the various aspects of distance education including course writing, editing and the application of media technologies, the production and distribution of handbooks developed at the training workshops and the production of a regular newsletter to facilitate information sharing among the members.

Plans are currently underway to establish a network of activities between DEASA and the newly founded distance education associations in Zambia (ZADE) and West Africa (WADEA) both of which are professionally and financially supported by COL. The main thrust in all these activities is to support the efforts of national and regional groups of indigenous distance educators so that they can develop the administrative structures and materials that best meet their needs at their present stage of development.

#### HONOURS TO COL:

At a ceremony held in Colombo on March 12, 1993, the Open University of Sri Lanka awarded **Prof. James Maraj**, President of COL, with an Honorary Doctor of Letters. He is the first non-Sri-Lankan to be awarded such an honour. And, on July 8, 1993, Prof. Maraj was awarded an Honorary Doctor of Laws by the University of Hull (U.K.). At both occasions recognition was made of his years of service to the Commonwealth and his advocacy on behalf of developing countries and especially small states. In acceptance speeches, the President noted that the honours were also a recognition of the world-wide distance education "movement" and a tribute to the work that has been undertaken and accomplished by all of COL's staff members and associates.

*"The Project is based on the concept of the creation of a network of community colleges in the (OECS) Region..."*

*"A quiet revolution in human resource development through distance education has been taking place in Southern Africa over the last twenty years."*

## Increasing Access to Education and Training in Small States

### DUAL MODE UNIVERSITIES IN THE PACIFIC AND THE CARIBBEAN

In the Caribbean and the Pacific, where virtually all the Commonwealth countries are small states separated by great distances over water, satellite communication has become an essential part of distance education in higher education. The University of the South Pacific and the University of the West Indies have been pioneers in the use of audioconferencing so that students on remote islands can interact with lecturers far removed from them. In 1990 36% of USP's equivalent full-time student teaching load comprised distance education students living and studying on off-campus islands. By contrast the UWI has used audioconferencing for selective purposes, although in its new ten-year development plan it is envisaged that by the year 2000 roughly one-eighth of the projected student population of 18,000 will be studying by distance.

Both universities, and the governments that support their work, are convinced that a greater commitment to distance education approaches is essential if the needs of their small island communities for human resource development are to be met. In association with the two universities, COL has conducted comprehensive appraisals of what each university needs to do to develop distance education programmes as integral parts of their responsibility for teaching, research and community service. Both universities are now acting on the basis of recommendations made in these reports. In the case of the University of the West Indies, these recommendations were a main plank of the conditions of the loan agreement between the Caribbean Development Bank and the University, involving the sum of US \$10 million for the expansion of the latter's distance education programme.

*"Both universities, and the governments that support their work, are convinced that a greater commitment to distance education approaches is essential..."*

## THE POTENTIAL OF OFF-SHORE DISTANCE EDUCATION

Many nations do not have the economic or population base to support full-fledged universities or even colleges of their own. They must therefore depend on other nations for the provision of higher education and training for their people with all the problems that this dependence implies. Such problems range from the frequently considerable expense of providing an overseas education to the tendency of the beneficiaries of such an education not to return home after completing their studies. It has become increasingly clear therefore that one of the more useful services that COL can perform is to devise a means by which small Commonwealth states can provide access to higher education for their people without the need, hitherto often felt to be inescapable, of their having to leave home to undertake it.

One solution that has been investigated is the provision of distance education degree and diploma programmes by overseas institutions. A model for this activity was pioneered by the University of Waterloo in Canada which delivered a small distance education degree programme in Saint Vincent and the Grenadines which, before it was discontinued, enabled a number of candidates to successfully complete a humanities degree. This idea is now being expanded by COL to involve not merely other small Commonwealth states but also a wider variety of programmes, specifically designed to meet local needs. Using the resources COL has, to draw on courses from all parts of the Commonwealth, it is possible to design degree programmes in, for example, teacher education, a high priority in many small states, which can be put together using courses from several institutions with identified local needs in mind. Such a programme can be delivered and accredited by a single institution with local support only.

*"Using the resources COL has, to draw on courses from all parts of the Commonwealth, it is possible to design degree programmes ... which can be put together using courses from several institutions with identified local needs in mind."*

In concrete terms, COL has begun working with the governments of the Maldives, the Seychelles and The Gambia to deliver such programmes through the Open Learning Agency of British Columbia, Canada. Governments have been asked to identify the principal needs for degree programmes within their countries. COL, in collaboration with OLA, is responding by proposing programmes based on the courses not merely of OLA itself but on others developed by other institutions in several Commonwealth countries that can be acquired by COL and delivered by OLA through its normal distance education methods. This distance delivery will be accompanied by local support in each country, designed to provide students with advice and support appropriate to their needs as they proceed through their programmes.



## DISTANCE EDUCATION NETWORKS FOR SMALL STATES

Modern telecommunications technology provides unprecedented opportunities to conquer the "tyranny of distance," which has often hindered the provision of essential public services. In the field of education and training particularly, telecommunications systems and services can play an increasingly important role in ensuring that learning opportunities can be made available, regardless of location and size of community. Advances in digital telecommunications make possible a considerable array of electronic services which can be deployed for the purpose of open learning, ranging from teleconferencing and inter-active video to multimedia computer-based training. Moreover, with the development of higher capacity communications technologies, based on fibre optics and satellite systems, the unit costs of telecommunications continue to decline.

The large scale telecommunications systems produced by modern communications technologies generate enormous economies of scale, which can be made available to the user community. Indeed, over a number of years, giant international corporations and government agencies have typically taken advantage of these cost economies in the operation of their world-wide corporate networks. By virtue of their size and the quantity of traffic which they generate, such organisations have been able to afford the huge investments in capital and operating costs that are involved in private, customised networks of this kind. In the absence of similar size and resources, however, smaller states and their institutions have often been unable to seize the benefits which can accrue from extensive use of telecommunications networks, and from their application in the field of education.

*"Advances in digital telecommunications make possible a considerable array of electronic services which can be deployed for the purpose of open learning..."*



The inability of smaller states and distance education institutions to enjoy the economies of scale possible from large-volume use of telecommunications has emerged as an area of special concern to The Commonwealth of Learning. A major feature of COL's mandate is the emphasis placed on encouraging co-operation and collaboration among Commonwealth educational institutions and in promoting the use of communications technologies for the purpose of human resource development. As a result, COL has recently concentrated its energies on investigating new approaches to communications networking which might assist educators in overcoming the problems faced by small volume, specialised users.

*"The inability of smaller states and distance education institutions to enjoy the economies of scale possible from large-volume use of telecommunications has emerged as an area of special concern to COL."*

In October 1992, as part of this effort, COL commissioned MPR Teltech of Vancouver, Canada to undertake a comprehensive study of the feasibility of establishing a telecommunications network for distance education serving Commonwealth countries in the Asia/Pacific region. The main objective of the COL/MPR study was to design a network configuration which would enable distance education institutions located in the Asia/Pacific region to deliver distance education and training more effectively, as well as allow for the enhancement of communications links among those institutions. It therefore investigated a range of technological and costing options for the development of a network which could be accessed by a number of distance education institutions and utilised according to their specific needs and capabilities.

The study's Final Report, which was completed in June 1993, defines and designs a "core," satellite-based network which will provide a basic level of distance education capability, encompassing high-quality telephone conferencing and computer messaging. Complementary to the proposed "core" network are the various systems and services derived from the conventional, tariffed services of local and international carriers. Indeed, to respond to the diverse needs of the distance education community, the report essentially fashions a "Network of Networks," which will make optimal use of available systems and services and provide maximum flexibility to users.

The concept of a regional, shared-user network, as developed in the COL/MPR study, could provide the model for distance education networking throughout the Commonwealth, particularly in those areas where there is a high proportion of small states and institutions and where such a network could usefully supplement the coverage of conventional networks and services. The technical and operational parameters of the proposed network could very easily be adapted to the distance education requirements of regions such as the Caribbean, Southern Asia, and Africa, and thus form the basis of a comprehensive plan to address the needs of Commonwealth countries in these regions.

*"... a global electronic network linking people interested in small islands with each other."*

## SMALL ISLANDS INFORMATION NETWORK

The Small Islands Information Network is a global electronic network linking people interested in small islands with each other and with information relevant to small islands.

### Background

In 1990, the Institute of Island Studies embarked on a bold new project to establish an easily accessible information network with a view to mitigating problems such as remoteness, isolation and lack of infrastructure inherent in small islands. One of the primary objectives of the Small Islands Information Network (SIIN) is to enhance the capacity of small islands to cope effectively, creatively and sustainably with threats to their fragile ecosystems, and facilitate access to environmentally sound technologies and policies for sustainable development.

The SIIN is a natural evolution in the work of the Institute. Located in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island (Canada), the Institute of Island Studies is a research, education and public policy body based at the University of Prince Edward Island. Since its founding in June 1985, the Institute has carried out a wide range of research projects; mounted several public forums on major contemporary issues; published books, reports, brochures, videos and records/tapes and sponsored community-based projects, workshops, seminars and conferences. A popular programme is the annual Island Lecture Series.

*"One of the primary objectives is to enhance the capacity of small islands to cope effectively, creatively and sustainably with threats to their fragile ecosystems, and facilitate access to environmentally sound technologies and policies for sustainable development."*

In 1989, the Institute's Board of Directors commissioned Cambridge-based environmental consultant James Ramsay to write a report entitled *International Small Islands Research: The Global Context and Is There a Role for the Institute of Island Studies?* This led to the establishment of an active small islands research programme, which includes the SIIN. In September 1992, the Institute hosted a very successful international conference called "An Island Living: Patterns of Autonomy and Dependence in the Small Islands of the North Atlantic."

A prototype of the Small Islands Information Network was set up in 1991 using the LISTSERV facility at the University of New Brunswick. The number of subscribers to SIIN has grown to 100 small islands researchers, academics and policy makers from all over the globe. Proposals for additional services to be supplied by SIIN have been prepared and submitted to various funding organisations. These include a basic database about small islands, directories of organisations and people interested in small islands and a bibliography of materials relevant to small islands.

### Current Services

The LISTSERV allows individual members of the SIIN to send electronic-mail (e-mail) messages to the entire LIST, and retrieve a list of the members with individual e-mail addresses, biosketches of the members, the full text of papers which have been stored electronically, a preliminary Directory of Organisations doing work related to small islands, and the current trial version of the bibliography. This service facilitates electronic discussions on topics of current interest, and distribution of notices of and reports on island-related events such as conferences, meetings, etc.

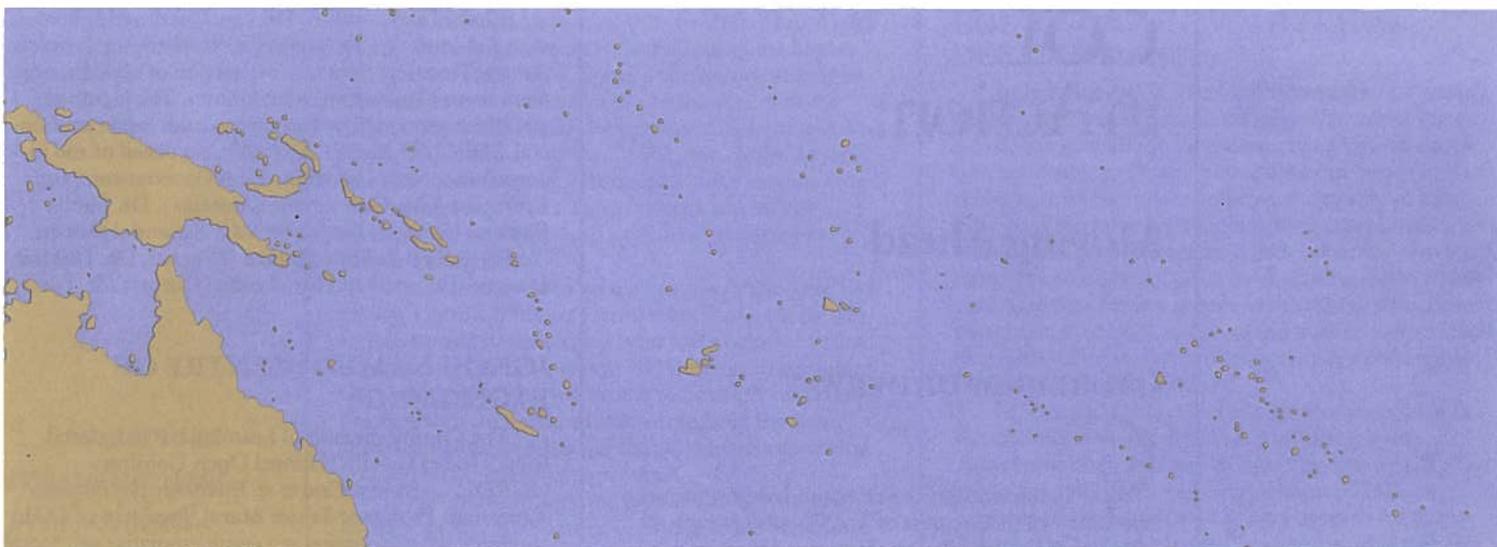
One of the most remarkable aspects of such LISTS is how much help one can obtain from other members. A request from Brian Turner who tutors English at Smith College in Northampton, Maine (USA), for information about Fijian myths and legends was forwarded by Catherine Edward to the SIIN. In a remarkably short time, a reply was received from one of the top experts on Fiji and Samoa, Morgan Tuimaleali'ifano. He sent his outstanding bibliography on the topic (part of a UNESCO project) and it is now available electronically to the entire LIST.

## Global Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing Countries

Following on the United Nations Conference on Environment and Development (UNCED) held in Rio de Janeiro, June 1992, the United Nations General Assembly (UNGA) adopted Resolution 47/169 authorising the convening of the First Global Conference on Sustainable Development of Small Island Developing States. The Conference, which will take place in Barbados in April 1994, will:

- review current trends in socio-economic development of Small Island Developing States;
- examine the nature and magnitude of the specific actions and policies relating to environmental and development planning to be undertaken by these states, with help from the international community;
- identify the elements that these States need to include in their medium and longer-term sustainable development plans;
- recommend measures for enhancing the endogenous capacity of these States; and
- review whether institutional arrangements at the international level enable these States to give effect to the relevant provision of Agenda 21, the Action Plan coming out of the UNCED to achieve sustainable development.





*“The potential of networking is enormous and small islands have more to gain than most..”*

#### Plans For The Future

When resources become available, facilities will be installed to provide services such as a “gopher site” or a “World-Wide Web” server together with a more user-friendly electronic mail system including a conferencing capacity which allows smaller, more specialised discussions.

The Islands Basic Database will be a valuable source of basic data on small islands around the globe, useful for policy makers, researchers, travel agents and anyone else interested in comparative statistics. At least one full-time staff member will be required to gather, check and enter the required data each year.

The main focus of the Bibliography will be the sustainable development of small islands. It is hoped that the latest computer software such as International Development Research Centre’s MINISIS or CERN’s World Wide Web will provide two features particularly suited to problems of sustainable development. First, users such as

*“The Islands Basic Database will be a valuable source of basic data on small islands around the globe.”*

policy and decision-makers should be able to integrate information from different disciplines to look at a single island in a holistic way. One should also be able to undertake comparative studies of different islands on a single issue such as energy or coastal management. This major undertaking will require significant funding if it is to be done properly.

It should be possible for organisations such as The Commonwealth of Learning to deliver educational materials over such a network. Last year, 15,000 people enrolled in a course on networking given over the Internet computer networking service.

The potential of networking is enormous and small islands have more to gain than most. The Institute is confident that the Small Islands Information Network can and will play a key role in the sustainable development of small islands.

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# COL in Action:

## Moving Ahead

### COL REVIEW UNDERWAY

**C**ommonwealth Governments have commenced their review of the progress of The Commonwealth of Learning. A Progress Review Team was constituted in May and its recommendations will be considered by Heads of Government when they meet in Cyprus later this year. Heads of Government will also receive a report from COL's Board of Governors.

At stake is the future of the organisation as an effective means for Commonwealth co-operation in education and human resource development. At their meeting in Vancouver in 1987, Heads of Government gave this new international organisation an initial five-year mandate to create and widen opportunities for learning, by promoting co-operation among Commonwealth educational institutions, utilising the potential of distance education techniques and the application of communication technologies to education and training. COL became operational in 1989, when its founding and current President, **Prof. James A. Maraj** was appointed.

The **Rt. Hon. Lord Briggs of Lewes**, Chairman of the COL Board of Governors, and a visionary in the creation of the organisation, was on hand to welcome the Review Team at their inaugural meeting, which was held in Vancouver in May. In recalling the organisation's achievements, he remarked that "COL had, from the beginning, been much more than an institution which is concerned with distance education. It has been fundamentally concerned with the *relationship* of education to development and had already made a significant contribution in that regard."

Prof. Maraj briefed members at the opening session on COL's evolution and its development. Noting that COL's performance record would speak for itself, he urged the Team to recognise the opportunity which the Review provided them to contribute to the revitalisation of the Commonwealth itself. Practical, functional co-operation had to be accorded a higher place in the priorities of the Commonwealth since it was in that sphere that the benefits of Commonwealth membership were most manifest, he asserted.

Funding during this period has been on a voluntary basis by member states. Twenty eight of the fifty Commonwealth countries have financially supported COL and all have benefited from its influence and its programming. COL is active throughout the Commonwealth in areas as diverse as literacy and higher education, technical/vocational training, continuing professional development, training materials acquisition and women in development.

*"At stake is the future of the organisation as an effective means for Commonwealth co-operation in education and human resource development."*

Chaired by Canadian, **Dr. Ian Macdonald**, President Emeritus of York University, Toronto, the Progress Review Team represents a cross-section of key educators from seven Commonwealth countries. The members, who were appointed by Commonwealth Secretary-General, **HE Chief Emeka Anyaoku**, on behalf of and in consultation with Commonwealth Governments, are: **Professor J.M. Gawthorne** (Australia), **Dr. Sheila Browne** (Britain), **Professor V.C. Kulandai Swamy** (India), **Alhaji Yahaya Hamza** (Nigeria), **Dr. Iftikhar Hassan** (Pakistan) and **Mr. Leton Thomas** (St. Lucia).

### IGNOU NAMED "CENTRE OF EXCELLENCE"

The Commonwealth of Learning has designated India's Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) as its first *Centre of Excellence for Distance Education*. **Professor James Maraj**, President of COL, conferred the designation at a commemorative ceremony held in Delhi in May.

In describing COL's Centres of Excellence programme, Prof. Maraj noted that the Centres "would be called upon to actively participate in Commonwealth co-operative endeavours to identify, nurture, and strengthen open learning institutions throughout the Commonwealth, particularly in the Third World, so that they too can provide increasing access to education and training of the highest quality and thus also become centres of excellence with both national and international recognition."

At the ceremony, Prof. Maraj also announced that COL will be establishing a distance education audio-conferencing network which will immediately link IGNOU with its regional centres, and with other open universities in India. The network will later be expanded to embrace educational institutions in Bangladesh, Pakistan, and Sri Lanka. He also announced COL's participation over the next three years in the establishment within IGNOU of an Institute for Training in Distance Education.

The COL announcements were made on the occasion of IGNOU's fourth convocation, which was presided over by **HE Shri Ramaswamy Venkataraman**, former President of India. Delivering the key-note convocation address, the **Rt. Hon. Lord Briggs of Lewes**, Chairman of COL's Board of Governors, referred to IGNOU as "the jewel in the crown" of Commonwealth open learning systems. He commended IGNOU in achieving far-reaching accessibility of its courses, quality in its instructional efforts, and worldwide recognition and influence.

Also at the convocation ceremony, **Professor G. Ram Reddy**, Chairman of India's University Grants Commission and IGNOU's first vice chancellor, was awarded an honorary D.Litt. Prof. Reddy served as COL's vice president from 1989 to 1991. **Prof. V.C. Kulandai Swamy** is currently IGNOU's vice chancellor.

### BRUNEI CENTRE COMPLETED

The Commonwealth of Learning's co-operative project with the Ministry of Education in Brunei Darussalam to establish a Centre for Professional and Continuing Education has now been completed and the operation of the Centre has now been turned over to the Ministry.

In November 1992, in conjunction with the meeting of the COL Board of Governors, held in Bandar Seri Begawan, Brunei Darussalam, the **Rt. Hon. Lord Briggs of Lewes**, Chairman of the Board, presided over the official opening of the COL/Brunei Centre for Professional and Continuing Education, and Vice Chairman,



Mr. Don Hamilton handed over to Dato Haji Abdul Razak, Permanent Secretary for Education for Brunei Darussalam (and a COL Board Member nominated by his government) a record of the establishment of the Centre. The COL Senior Programme Officer responsible for the establishment of the Centre, Mr. John Tayless (a Canadian) remained in Brunei for three months after the completion of the Centre fitments and official opening, in order to ensure an orderly transition to Brunei management.

The Centre, located on the campus of the State University, Universiti Brunei Darussalam, in the capital city of Bandar Seri Begawan, has been well equipped with a computer lab, seminar rooms and the latest communications technology that will enable to establish educational linkages with sister institutions throughout the Commonwealth, utilising state of the art video-conferencing and audio conferencing equipment.

In co-operation with the university, the Institute of Technology, the Nursing College and the Vocational Training Colleges, the Centre will provide in-service professional development opportunities to both the public and the private sectors utilising distance education methodology.

In countries of modest population, with the corresponding lack of critical mass and economies of scale, it makes eminent sense to utilise educational and training programmes that have already been developed elsewhere, particularly when these are available in the distance education, modularised format. Employing modern video and audio technology to provide personalised tutorial support and well-written learning materials helps to ensure that an educational service of high quality is made available to the client.

The Brunei Centre will focus its activities particularly on:

- implementing needs assessments in both the public and private sectors,
- identifying and developing programmes to meet stated needs,
- establishing linkages with all public and private training institutions in the State,
- establishing linkages with appropriate educational and training institutions in the Commonwealth,
- developing appropriate delivery systems that utilise the various systems of information distribution available in Brunei Darussalam,
- utilising appropriate educational technology and media for the delivery of courses and training programmes,
- developing an infrastructure to support distance education in Brunei Darussalam,
- establishing student support structures and tutorial networks,
- providing training in the writing of curriculum for modularised, distance education courses, and
- evaluating the effectiveness of the programmes and courses delivered by the Centre.

Brunei Darussalam, with its new Centre for Professional and Continuing Education, is in a position to provide its citizens access to educational services that will enable them to retain their employment while ensuring that they continue to upgrade and advance their skills in a decade where such in-service training and professional development has become the *sine qua non* for nations wishing to advance their economy's competitiveness and their people's standard of living in what is increasingly a competitive global environment.

## COL'S WORK IN WOMEN AND DEVELOPMENT

Since its inception, the Commonwealth of Learning has sought to contribute to the improvement of the status of women through increasing their access to education and training. Distance education can be a means of enabling more women to improve the quality of their lives, to play a more active role in their communities, and make a greater contribution to their countries' development. Priority is being given to improving access to relevant education for key groups such as those who, despite poor basic education, must acquire skills to support families, or to those who wish to re-enter the workforce or become community leaders.

In keeping with the global priorities enunciated in the *Nairobi Forward-Looking Strategies for the Advancement of Women*, and the *Commonwealth Plan of Action on Women and Development*, COL has emphasised the importance of inter-agency and inter-institutional linkages, sharing knowledge, expertise and resources, the co-operative development of educational and training resources and programmes. As women's educational needs and priorities are often neglected and thus far more wide-reaching than that of the population at large, attention has been focused on areas such as literacy, agriculture, marketing and small business, the law, the environment, health, teacher training, and gender and development.

*“COL has sought to contribute to the improvement of the status of women through increasing their access to education and training.”*

COL was represented at and reported to the Third Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs held in Ottawa in 1990 and also at the fourth meeting of Women's Ministers, held in Cyprus in July of this year. As a cross-cutting priority for COL, Women in Development issues are considered in planning all of its regional and functional activities. This focus on COL's work is reviewed extensively in COL's *Progress Report to the Fourth Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Women's Affairs* (Cyprus, 1993).

## STUDENT RECORD MANAGEMENT SYSTEM (SRMS)

In response to a number of requests for assistance with the management of student records in an open learning/distance education environment, COL undertook the development of a computer programme uniquely designed to meet this need. A computerised database system, the *Student Record Management System* (SRMS) is a single-user system which runs on a microcomputer platform. The System is now available without charge to institutions in developing Commonwealth countries and several orders are already being processed.

The System was developed during 1992 in cooperation with the Systems Management Group at Camosun College (British Columbia, Canada). It was then tested and evaluated by the Health Sciences Division at Grant MacEwan Community College (Alberta, Canada). The Division was also responsible for producing a User Manual and has now adopted the System for its own administration.

*“... in-service training and professional development has become the sine qua non for nations wishing to advance their economy's competitiveness and their people's standard of living.”*

## RECENT PUBLICATIONS

The following titles have been published recently by The Commonwealth of Learning and are available upon request.

**Perspectives on Distance Education: Distance Education in Single and Dual Mode Universities:** Edited by Dr. Ian Mugridge, Vice President, Student Support and Open University, at the Open Learning Agency of British Columbia (Canada), and Senior Consultant, Higher Education, at The Commonwealth of Learning. This publication is a collection of ten papers commissioned for COL's Delhi Symposium on Reforms in Higher Education - with particular reference to distance education (August 1992) and provides a summary of the Symposium itself. (158 pages)

**Perspectives on Teacher Education: Teacher Education in Science, Mathematics and Technical/Vocational Subjects (Report of a Round Table on Teacher Education convened by The Commonwealth of Learning in Vancouver, June 1992):** Twenty papers presented at the Round Table by experts in the field are included in this publication. (193 pages)

**Visiting Fellowships Programme (Papers Presented by the 1992 Visiting Fellows, October 1992):** Visiting fellowships to British Columbia (Canada) in 1992 represented eight Commonwealth developing countries: The Bahamas, Maldives, Malta, Nigeria, St. Vincent & the Grenadines, Tonga, Tuvalu, and Vanuatu. (90 pages)

**A Compendium of Activities, April 1993:** Since 1990, The Commonwealth of Learning has published *A Compendium of Activities* to provide a detailed account of the work and history of accomplishments of the organisation. In addition to being a reporting vehicle, the *Compendium* also serves as a reference for practitioners, with an interest in distance learning in Commonwealth countries, in the major areas on which COL's programmes are focussed. (102 pages)

**Annual Report 1992 - Moving Ahead:** 24 pages, including financial summaries

**Study of Educational Telecommunications Requirements for the South Pacific:** (R. Matyas, MPR Teltech Ltd, May 1993). This is a comprehensive study

of the technical and economic feasibility of establishing a COL communications network in the Asia/Pacific region. Based on extensive consultations with the educational and communications communities in the region, the findings and conclusions of the MPR study provide a thorough economic and technical rationale for the development and operation of a shared, multi-user regional telecommunications network for distance education and suggest a practical means of addressing the telecommunications needs of the educational community internationally. (96 pages)

**Telecommunications in Support of Education - An Agenda for Telecommunications Companies and Educators:** (J.A. Gilbert & Associates, September 1993). This briefing reviews the factors which surround the use of telecommunications by educators internationally, with particular emphasis on the developing world. It suggests issues to be addressed to increase the appropriate use of telecommunications in support of education. (34 pages)

**Library Services to Distance Learners: A Report.** (Elizabeth Watson, Learning Resource Centre, University of the West Indies, Barbados, 1992) The study, on which this publication is based, examined library and information services available to tertiary-level distance learners in selected institutions in three Commonwealth countries: Canada, India and Britain. (45 pages)

**Linking Women with Sustainable Development:** (Dr. Krishna Ahooja-Patel, November 1992). This report examines the complex issues of women and the environment, and their interdependence, from an historical and international dimension. Using both primary and secondary source materials, the document suggests ways in which the theme of Women and Sustainable Development can be incorporated into formal curriculum development, training, and non-formal education. (89 pages, plus annexes)

**Selected readings from the presentations at the 8th Annual Conference of the Canadian Association for Distance Education / Lectures choisies parmi les communications prononcées au 8<sup>e</sup> Congrès annuel de l'Association canadienne de l'éducation à distance.** CADE '92, *New Alliances*, was held in Ottawa, Canada in May 1992. (220 pages)



## BURSARY SCHEME FOR DISTANCE EDUCATION STUDENTS

Recognising a need for support for students studying in alternative modes, COL, in co-operation with the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC), has launched a Bursaries Scheme for distance education students. Through the Scheme, selected institutions in developing Commonwealth countries that offer courses by distance are provided with modest funds to cover the fees of their distance education students and, in this way, assistance has been provided to a large number of students who may not otherwise have had the opportunity for further education. Most of these students are mature people working at improving their qualifications and thereby their living standards. They make enormous sacrifices in order to pursue further studies but they are not normally eligible for scholarships or grants as these are confined to students studying in the traditional manner. The resources usually required to support a full-time student for three or four years at a university, if applied to distance education students, covers a much larger number of worthy individuals. The only conditions of the grant are, as far as possible, that there should be an equal number of women and men receiving bursaries, and that funds are used to meet the course fee costs.

Among the institutions that received the first tranche of support (1991/92 academic year) were Allama Iqbal Open University (Pakistan), Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (formerly Andhra Pradesh Open University, India), the College of Arts, Science, and Technology (Jamaica), Makerere University (Uganda), the Open University of Sri Lanka, the University of Guyana, the University of Nairobi (Kenya), the University of Papua New Guinea, the University of the South Pacific, the Cave Hill Campus (Barbados) and the Mona Campus (Jamaica) of the University of the West Indies, and the University of Zimbabwe.

COL has requested and received, in a number of instances, information regarding the disbursement of funds provided through the Bursaries Scheme for Distance Education students for the 1991/92 period. A second tranche of similar funding, for the 1992/93 period, has been disbursed to the institutions that have provided the requested information. All information received to date indicates the Scheme has been put to good use. Nine institutions have reported that a total of 805 students (455 females and 350 males) have received support.

Also for the 1992/93 year, an additional thirteen institutions have been offered the same opportunity. So far, six have accepted: Indira Gandhi National Open University (India), Kota Open University (India), Sir Arthur Lewis Community College (St. Lucia), The College of the Bahamas, the University of Zambia, and Yashwantrao Chavan Maharashtra Open University (India).

It is hoped that through the on-going support of the CFTC, COL will be able to continue to offer these funds to educational institutions delivering courses by distance, in order for them to provide the bursaries to students who, for financial restrictions, could not otherwise enrol in the courses.

*"... in this way, assistance has been provided to a large number of students who may not otherwise have had the opportunity for further education."*

## COL FELLOWSHIPS PROGRAMME

### COL/BC Visiting Fellowships Programme

Now in its fifth year, COL's Fellowships Programme continues to be one of the organisation's most successful endeavours in enhancing Commonwealth - co-operation. In partnership with the British Columbia (Canada) government, senior educators working in the area of distance education, or earmarked for such positions, are brought to British Columbia to study the techniques and infrastructures used to deliver and administer distance education courses, with the idea that they will return to their home countries to implement what they have learned as appropriate. Eight to ten educators take part in the Programme each year. They are hosted in British Columbia during September, and visit BC Government officials as well as several different institutions/agencies involved with open learning and/or distance education. They also spend time at COL's Vancouver headquarters, meeting with staff members and providing presentations on education in their home countries and the potential for distance learning and possible collaboration with British Columbia institutions. Fellows are selected through nominations by their local Ministries of Education.

The participants in the Programme for 1992 were **Ms. Inez Peet** (The Bahamas), **Mr. Abdul Hakeem** (Maldives), **Mr. Paul Galea** (Malta), **Dr. Chris Okwudishu** (Nigeria), **Mr. Lennox Lewis** (St. Vincent & the Grenadines), **Mr. Viliami Takau** (Tonga), **Mr. Sootaga Paape** (Tuvalu), and **Mr. Jesse Dick** (Vanuatu).

1993 Fellows were **Ms. Jessie Kentish** (Antigua & Barbuda), **Ms. Cynthia Thompson** (Belize), **Mr. Desmond La Touche** (Grenada), **Ms. Veronica Fyfield** (St. Christopher & Nevis), **Ms. Veronica Augustin** (St. Lucia), **Dr. Ban Kah Choon** (Singapore), **Ms. Blandina Mkayula** (Tanzania), **Ms. Marcia Riley** (Trinidad & Tobago), **Ms. Margaret Ah Tune** (Western Samoa).

In total, forty-three out of the forty-six developing Commonwealth countries have now sent educators to Canada under the visiting Fellowships Programme.

*"COL's Fellowships Programme continues to be to be one of the organisation's most successful endeavours in enhancing Commonwealth co-operation."*

### Out-Going COL/BC Fellowships Programme

In addition, also in co-operation with the British Columbia Government, COL awards Fellowships to BC educators, providing them with the opportunity to experience at first-hand working in developing countries. Eight Fellowships are awarded annually. The education professionals are sent to developing countries throughout the Commonwealth to provide advice and guidance in educational areas, with particular emphasis on distance education.

Every post-secondary educational institution in BC is invited to nominate candidates. The educators are selected for the Fellowships by matching their expertise to articulated needs in developing countries. They provide expertise through locally run workshops, through needs analysis reports, through working one-on-one with colleagues in the host institutions, and through other means to increase the skills of those involved in distance education and to raise the awareness of the techniques

used in, and the capabilities of, distance education. To date, the educators have come from a total of sixteen post-secondary institutions in the Province, and from the Ministry.

*"The educators are selected for the Fellowships by matching their expertise to articulated needs in developing countries."*

Including those receiving Fellowships during 1993, nineteen developing Commonwealth countries have benefited from the expertise available through this Programme. It is hoped that through this aspect of the Fellowships Programme, linkages will be formed between institutions in developing countries and British Columbia institutions, and new projects will emerge that will enable worthwhile activities to be carried forward.

#### COL/Ontario/Caribbean Governments Programme

A similar visiting Study Fellowships Programme was jointly sponsored by COL and the Province of Ontario, in co-operation with a number of Caribbean governments. Under this Programme, ten educators from the Caribbean visited Ontario in March 1992, and toured various educational institutions, agencies and organisations which use distance education to provide educational opportunities to their clientele.

The Fellows that participated in this Programme were Ms. Thelma Brathwaite (Barbados), Mr. Stanley Nicholas (Belize), Mr. Dennis Bell (Grenada), Ms. Meighan Duke (Guyana), Ms. Nedris Ellis (Jamaica), Dr. Ethley London (Jamaica), Ms. Vaple Burt (St. Christopher & Nevis), Ms. Claudia Frances (St. Lucia), Ms. Yvonne Gaynes (St. Vincent & the Grenadines), and Mr. Hollis Knight (Trinidad & Tobago).

While the Fellows were in Ontario for the three-week Fellowship, they visited the Thunder Bay and Sudbury sites in the Contact North distance education network as well as Cambrian College, Carleton University, Confederation College, Lakehead University, Laurentian University, the Independent Learning Centre, the Ontario Institute of Studies for Education, Ryerson Polytechnical Institute, Seneca College, TV Ontario, the University of Guelph, the University of Ottawa, the University of Toronto, the University of Waterloo, and Wilfrid Laurier University.

#### COL LEADERSHIP AWARDS FOR STUDENT COMMONWEALTH CONFERENCE

The Commonwealth of Learning recently made a contribution to the Royal Commonwealth Society (Ottawa Branch) to provide four Leadership Awards for participants in the 21st Student Commonwealth Conference held in Ottawa on May 2 to 6, 1993. The awards are intended to recognise outstanding leadership by student delegates in the conference proceedings.

Over one hundred senior high school students from schools in every province and the Yukon participated in

the Conference. They discussed topics relating to trade, the environment, technology, health, and indigenous peoples, to mention only a few. A major event in the Conference was a model Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting. The awards were won by the following students for their outstanding leadership in the Conference.

- **Adriana Beemans** (Ottawa, Ontario)
- **Shawn Singh** (Cumberland, Ontario)
- **David Turner** (Calgary, Alberta)

The fourth award was given to the **Sydney Academy**, Nova Scotia for its exemplary contribution to the awareness of Commonwealth Day, by staging a Model Heads of Government Meeting on that day. The two students who organised the event (and subsequently became delegates to the SCC) were **Cyne Johnston** and **Roberta MacInnis**.

Each recipient received a plaque as well as a cheque from COL for \$50. The awards were presented by Lewis Perinbam, Special Adviser to the President of COL, on behalf of COL President Professor James A. Maraj. Mr. Perinbam opened the Student CHOGLM and gave the inaugural address.

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