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COL and the International Council for Distance Education



Awards of Excellence Announced

Ms. Marian Croft, President of ICDE, and Dr. H. Ian Macdonald, Chairman of COL, have announced the recipients of the first set of jointly-sponsored *COL/ICDE Awards of Excellence* to recognise individual and institutional achievement in distance education. The presentations will be made at the 17th World Conference of the International Council for Distance Education (ICDE), to be held this month in Birmingham, England. Award criteria and terms of reference were established by COL and ICDE last year and issued in a Call for Nominations, which described the variety of "significant contributions to the development of distance education in practical and/or theoretical terms" that would be considered by the three-person adjudication committee.

The individual honours go to Sir John Daniel, Professor G. Ram Reddy, and Professor Sharifah H. Shahabudin, and the institutional award goes to Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University.

Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University

The Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University (STOU) was established by royal charter in September 1978, and enrolled its first students just two years later. Its primary objective is to provide improved and ultimately equal access to university education throughout Thailand and particularly to people who have been deprived of the opportunity to participate or who wish to return to undertake degree studies. It currently enrolls a total of approximately 203,000 students in its undergraduate, post-graduate and continuing education programmes although the bulk of these, about 200,000, are enrolled in undergraduate degree programmes.

Highlights

<i>Awards of Excellence</i>	1
<i>COL/ICDE Research Agreement</i>	4
<i>COL Papers to be Presented at ICDE</i>	4
<i>COL Appoints OLI Director as New President</i>	6
<i>Southern Africa</i>	8
<i>COL in Action</i>	10
<i>New Publications</i>	12

"The university has shown the way to other institutions,"

STOU has been a leader in the development of instructional and support services and in the use of educational technology as an aid to instruction. It has always sought to devise optimal solutions in providing service to students, both in metropolitan and remote areas of the country. The university has, in addition, shown the way to other institutions, particularly in its own region, in making the results of its work known and available to its sister institutions.

In 1986, the Asian Development Bank sponsored the first regional seminar on distance education at STOU and, as host institution, STOU was instrumental in ensuring the establishment of the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) during that event. It signalled its commitment to the work of AAOU by providing facilities and staffing for the secretariat on the STOU campus in Bangkok where it still resides. Further, STOU was prominent in the establishment of the Distance Education Regional Resource Centre (DERRC) in 1988, an organisation which is also housed at the university. Finally, in 1993, under a project sponsored by the Thai government, STOU has been extending its help to the Hanoi Open University in Vietnam.

In making the award to STOU, COL and ICDE recognise the significance of the university for the people of Thailand and for the south-east Asian region as a whole and pay tribute to the work of STOU's two Presidents, Professor Dr. Wichit Srisa-an and Professor Iam Chaya-Ngam, and their staff in making possible this major achievement in distance education.



Sir John Daniel

Since his involvement with distance education began with a two-month workshop at the UK Open University in 1972, Sir John Daniel has set out to bring distance education into the main stream of higher education. His influence in a series of posts since that time has done much to bring this about.

In 1973, he became the third employee – as co-ordinator of educational technology – of the new

Télé-université de Québec (Canada). He was later promoted to be director of studies and, in these two posts, he was centrally involved in the development of the institution's distance teaching systems. From Québec, he moved in 1978 to become Vice-President, Academic, at Athabasca University in Edmonton, Alberta (Canada) and, in the two years he spent there, did much to establish the credibility of the institution, particularly among universities and colleges in western Canada.

He returned to the province of Québec in 1980 to become Vice-Rector, Academic, at Concordia University, a large urban institution not involved in distance education; but he retained his attachment to distance education as he presided over the emergence of ICDE as the pre-eminent international professional body in the field. In 1984, he was appointed President of Laurentian University in Sudbury, Ontario (Canada) and, under his guidance, this institution became the fastest growing university in Ontario with a staggering 200% increase in enrolments in its distance education programme. Most recently, in 1990, he was appointed Vice-Chancellor of the UK Open University, a position that he still holds and in which he is widely credited with leading the highly successful integration of the university into the UK's newly unified system of higher education.

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Sir John's influence has not, however, been felt merely in institutional matters. His close involvement with ICDE has continued in the years since his presidency, most recently with a report for the incumbent president on the operations of the secretariat. He chaired the planning committee for the establishment of the Commonwealth of Learning and was a member of its founding Board of Governors. He has been and continues to be much in demand as a speaker and lecturer on distance education; and his lengthening list of publications testifies to his influence as well as to his immense industry.

Finally, it is a tribute to his success in achieving the goal of bringing distance education into the mainstream that he has, in 1993, been appointed as the first non-American trustee of the Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching and, in 1994, been knighted by the Queen for "services to higher education."



Professor G. Ram Reddy

Professor G. Ram Reddy has recently retired from his position as Chairman of the University Grants Commission in India with the universal respect and regard of practitioners of distance education. During the last twenty years, he has become one of the best-known and influential figures in the field.

Professor Reddy first came to the notice of the distance education community when he was appointed to be the founding Vice-Chancellor of Andhra Pradesh Open University (now Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University) in 1982. Having overseen the early years of the development of this institution, he moved on in 1985 to become the founding Vice-Chancellor of India's national open university, the Indira Gandhi National Open University. Again, he was responsible, within a very short time, for the planning and establishment of an effective distance teaching system on a massive scale; and his work has formed the basis for the extraordinary progress made by the institution in its first ten years of operation.

From IGNOU, he moved to Vancouver, British Columbia, to become the first Vice-President of the new Commonwealth of Learning, remaining there from 1989 until he returned to India in 1991 to take up a new appointment as Chairman of the University Grants Commission. He retired from that post at the end of 1994, after persuading the Indian tertiary education system to undertake measures of major significance in strengthening and extending the provision of distance education opportunities for Indian students.

Professor Reddy's influence has not, however, merely been seen in institutional or national terms. During his time at IGNOU, he was instrumental in the establishment of the Asian Association of Open Universities, an organisation that has subsequently become a major force in the region. He was involved with the planning of the Commonwealth of Learning and, following his service as Vice-President, became and remains a member of its Board of Governors. He was heavily involved with the planning of the new Bangladesh Open University and has, more recently, served as a member of a panel of experts charged with

"During the last twenty years, he has become one of the best-known and influential figures in the field."

reviewing and making recommendations on the future of distance education in South Africa. He has been closely involved with ICDE and delivered a keynote address at the Caracas convention in 1990. His long list of publications in the field of distance education includes the influential *Open Universities: The Ivory Towers Thrown Open*, published in 1988.

Professor Reddy's contributions to the development of distance education in his own country and around the world were recognised by the award of an honorary doctorate by the UK Open University, an honour that he holds along with similar awards from a number of other open universities.

Professor Sharifah H. Shahabudin



The committee adjudicating the COL/ICDE Awards for 1995, have recommended that a third individual award be given on this occasion and that, in future, an additional category of individual award be established to recognise significant emerging work in distance education. On this occasion, therefore, a special award has been made to Professor Sharifah H. Shahabudin of the Faculty of Medical Education, Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia.

In 1993, Professor Shahabudin was responsible for launching the first distance teaching programme at her institution and the first medical distance teaching programme in medical education in Malaysia. This is a post-graduate programme in family medicine that has signalled a significant advance not merely in teaching in the discipline itself but also in the use of educational technology and in collaborative activity among government, university and the private sector. Although it is still small in numbers, the programme is beginning to make an impact in medical education in Malaysia and is regarded as at least potentially a major advance in the field.

The committee has recommended that Professor Shahabudin's work with this programme, although it is still in its emerging stages, be recognised with a special award.

COL/ICDE Research Agreement 1992-95

At the Bangkok conference of the International Council for Distance Education, in November 1992, ICDE and the Commonwealth of Learning signed an agreement designed to encourage research in distance education. The Presidents of the two organisations, Ms. Marian Croft for ICDE and Professor James Maraj for COL, agreed to nominate Dr. Ian Mugridge to administer the agreement in view of his strong connection with both organisations.

Following this decision, a six member advisory group representing both Commonwealth and non-Commonwealth countries was set up to provide initial input on directions for research. This group consisted of Ms. Jocelyn Calvert, Deakin University, Australia; Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan, Open Learning Institute, Hong Kong; Dr. Ger van Enkevort, Open Universiteit, the Netherlands; Professor Iam Chaya-Ngam, Sukhothai Thammathirat Open University, Thailand; Dr. Gary Miller, Pennsylvania State University, United States; and Dr. Alan Tait, Open University, United Kingdom.

Discussions among this group led to the first event sponsored by the two organisations. It was decided that, since one of the major areas of interest appeared to be the funding and costing of distance education, it would be reasonable to take advantage of the annual conference of the Asian Association of Open Universities in Hong Kong in November 1993, which took as its theme the economics of distance education. A post-conference seminar was thus organised in which representatives of a number of distance teaching institutions focused on the question of the funding of open universities, taking as the basis for their discussions a set of specially commissioned case studies. These case studies have subsequently been published by COL as *Perspectives on Distance Education: The Funding of Open Universities* (Vancouver 1994). The second outcome of the seminar was the formation of a COL/ICDE research group on funding and costing of distance education, chaired by Mr. Chris Curran of the National Distance Education Centre, City University of Dublin.

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The advisory group also indicated very strongly that one of the bases for research was information about research being planned or undertaken. Accordingly, COL set up a research bulletin board that has now been operating for about a year and has about two hundred subscribers to date. Access to the bulletin board can be gained electronically through the Internet at colicde-request@unixg.ubc.ca or by writing to the moderator, Dr. Ian Mugridge, at COL headquarters in Vancouver.

The third initiative relates to the growing area of quality assurance. In June-July 1994, COL, along with the Indira Gandhi National Open University and the Indian University Grants Commission, sponsored a seminar on quality assurance for the Indian distance teaching universities in New Delhi. The case studies discussed at this seminar, which included a commissioned bibliographical study of the literature on quality assurance in distance education, were published by COL as *Perspectives on Distance Education: Quality Assurance in Higher Education (Vancouver, 1994)*. A joint research group, chaired by Ms. Jocelyn Calvert and Dr. Alan Tait has subsequently been formed.

A full report on the research agreement will take place at the Birmingham ICDE conference; and discussion at this session will begin to lay out future activities under this initiative.

COL papers to be presented at ICDE

COL staff members will be presenting three papers at the 17th World Conference of ICDE in Birmingham: *The Use of “Small Media” for Distance Learning*, *The Establishment of an Infrastructure for Distance Education in Africa*, and *The COL Student Record/Management System*.

The Use of “Small Media” for Distance Learning

The paper on *The Use of “Small Media” for Distance Learning*, jointly prepared by Mr. Richard Simpson, Dr. Abdul Khan and Mr. David Walker, analyses the major problems encountered in selecting media for small-scale distance education programmes and presents case studies from COL’s experience in using “Small Media.” Considering that 30 out of 51 Commonwealth member countries are small states, this subject is of particular interest to COL.

The steady expansion of the role of communications and information technology in society has paralleled an increasing awareness of their value for education and training purposes. Although developing countries have a critical need for effective means of human resource development, their access to advanced information technologies for distance learning purposes is often hindered by



the high cost of introducing such systems. The cost benefit function is particularly disadvantageous in relation to the use of large-scale distance learning systems by smaller countries and institutions. Whether it relates to telecommunications networks, audio/video production and distribution systems, or even the publishing of print-based materials, smaller institutions on their own cannot generate the economies of scale which can justify the deployment of technology on the same level.

For smaller states, and/or the educational institutions they support, there are two means of overcoming their inherent scale disadvantages – first, through the articulation and conclusion of alliances for sharing costs and resources; and, secondly, through the innovative use of advanced computer-based technologies for perfecting small-scale systems supportive of distance learning activities. The Commonwealth of Learning, in pursuing its mandate to promote the development and utilisation of distance education internationally, has been active in each of these areas: encouraging partnerships and co-operation among Commonwealth educators and promoting the adaptation of information technologies to the needs of smaller institutions.

The paper concentrates on COL's work in the latter domain, describing the organisation's efforts at "prototype development" aimed at developing "small media" solutions appropriate to the requirements of smaller distance education programmes. Three prototypes in particular are described – the first, a digital video production and editing system being trialed in the Maldives; the second, a field recording studio for radio production; and finally, a mini-publishing system, being designed for the production of print-based educational material in Africa. The paper describes these prototypes, and discusses their general utility in a developing country, small state context.

The Establishment of an Infrastructure for Distance Education in Africa

Professor Peter Kinyanjui's paper provides an overview of the recent developments in distance education in Africa with a focus on some of the attempts being made to establish basic infrastructure in support of national and regional programmes. It examines the current practices, issues and developments in the application of distance education and associated communication technologies to improve quality in education and training.

Particular emphasis is placed on on-going international collaborative activities which are generally building into a networking of associations, institutions and individuals dedicated to the promotion of distance education for human resource development throughout the continent.

The paper provides examples of practical co-operation in the exchange of information, materials and expertise in distance education, the training of distance educators and media support staff, the

application of modern communications technologies and the conduct of relevant research and evaluation.

The paper concludes with a plea to international organisations and agencies for more resources and greater support in order to enhance the existing infrastructures for national and regional distance education programmes.

The COL Student Record/Management System

Ms. Susan Phillips will present a paper on the development of COL's Student Record/Management System. Since becoming operational in 1989, The Commonwealth of Learning has received many requests for assistance in the area of open learning/distance education institutional management, and specifically in tracking and maintaining student records. As a result, staff at COL conducted a search but could not locate a computerised system that would meet its clients' needs while taking into account the constraints they face. Accordingly, a decision was taken to contract with a local community college, which had expertise in computerised student registration, to develop a generic system.

Once the specifications were agreed upon by COL and the college contracted to do the programming, the Student Record/Management System (SRMS) was written, modified and tested. When the programming and in-house testing were complete, a division of a second community college agreed to field-test the System and to write a User Manual in exchange for the rights to use the software. This college has indicated satisfaction with the System, and is currently working with COL and the college that undertook the initial development to produce an enhanced, upgraded version.

The SRMS, a database system programmed to store and retrieve information on students, is designed in a flexible manner such that only certain functions may be used if the user determines these are the most suitable to meet local requirements. There are two levels of data stored in the System – one that is useful at an institutional level and a second that a tutor would find more pertinent. At both levels, data are recorded and available for perusal on the screen, as well as for inclusion in hard copy reports.

COL has provided over forty copies of the software and accompanying manuals to institutions in developing Commonwealth countries. Copies have also been provided to institutions in developed countries, at a nominal cost, and interest continues to be expressed, in both the original and in the enhanced version that is nearing completion.

Video Series to be recorded at ICDE

COL has booked the University of Birmingham production studios, during the ICDE World Conference, to videotape panel discussion on selected topics. Panelists will be chosen from the many experts on hand at the conference. Some of the topics selected for the video panel discussions are: *Distance Learning and Non-Formal Education*, *Technical and Vocational Education through Distance Learning* and *Managing Student Support Services*. The recorded material will be used to develop broadcast-quality video programmes.

A similar effort at the 16th ICDE World Conference in Bangkok in 1992 resulted in the production of a series of video programmes on various aspects of distance education. The series was very well received by distance educators throughout the Commonwealth and elsewhere.

Distance Education in Guyana

The Minister of Education in Guyana has appointed an advisory committee to review a draft national policy for distance education. The draft policy was developed with assistance from Mr. John Tayless, a former COL staff member and currently UK Overseas Development Administration (ODA) consultant to the Guyana National Centre for Education Resource Development (NCERD). COL's Regional Co-ordinator in the Caribbean, Dr. Dennis Irvine, has also provided input and has met with the Minister to discuss the policy development. The committee is to report within six months.

Canada to host Second Global Conference on Lifelong Learning

The World Initiative on Lifelong Learning has announced the selection of Ottawa as the site for the Second Global Conference on Lifelong Learning. The conference will be organised by the Canadian Alliance for Lifelong Learning and will be held from September 23 to 25, 1996. It will build on the First Global Conference, held in Rome in December 1994, which attracted over 500 delegates from over 50 countries. Contact: PO Box 55068, 1800 Sheppard Ave East, North York, Ontario M2J 5B9 Canada.



Gajaraj Dhanarajan

COL Appoints OLI Director as New President

The Chairman of the Board of Governors, Dr. H. Ian Macdonald, has announced the appointment of Dato' Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan as the new President and Chief Executive Officer of The Commonwealth of Learning (COL). Professor Dhanarajan, who succeeds COL's founding President, Professor James A. Maraj, will assume his duties in Vancouver upon completion of his current term as Director of the Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong on July 31, 1995.

Announcing the appointment, Dr. Macdonald said, "We are delighted that Professor Dhanarajan will add his skills and stature to the important tasks before COL. He has earned world-wide respect as an active advocate of open learning and distance education, especially in Asia, and this influence will

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gain new importance as he launches his work on behalf of the entire Commonwealth through COL. Under his leadership, we expect COL to maintain and enlarge its active and vigorous role within the international educational community.”

During the past fifteen years, Professor Dhanarajan has participated in establishing a number of distance education systems in South and Southeast Asia, and organised a successful network of distance education research in Asia with support from Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC) from 1985 to 1989. He joined the newly established Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong in 1989 as Associate Director (Academic), becoming its Director in 1991. In 1992, the Institute honoured Dr. Dhanarajan by conferring on him the title of Professor. In the same year, the University of Maryland University College (USA) awarded him an Honorary Doctorate in Humane Letters. In July 1994, he was conferred with an Order of Chivalry by the State of Penang, Malaysia.

Professor Dhanarajan is also the current Secretary General of the Asian Association of Open Universities, has been on the Executive Board of the International Council for Distance Education (ICDE), and was educational advisor to the International Union for the Conservation of Nature. He is a Malaysian citizen and holds a Ph.D. in Biology from the University of Aston in Birmingham.

The appointment results from a thorough search which began with a public invitation for applications and nominations in August 1994. The competition attracted 110 candidates which were narrowed down to a short-list of eight. Under the Chairmanship of Dr. Macdonald, the Search Committee consisted of Professors Clifford Blake, Walter Kamba, and Ram Reddy from the Board of Governors, along with Mr. Donald Hamilton (an original Board member whose term concluded on December 31, 1994), Sir Keith Hunte from the University of the West Indies (Barbados), and Ms. Marion Croft, the current President of the International Council for Distance Education.

Following further review, including interviews of the eight short-listed candidates, the Search Committee made a unanimous recommendation to the Board that Professor Dhanarajan be appointed as President.

COL's Director of Communications and Information Technologies, Mr. Richard Simpson, remains as Acting President until Professor Dhanarajan arrives in Vancouver in September 1995.

Maraj to lead the TEC in Mauritius



Upon retirement from COL, founding President, Professor James A. Maraj has taken on a new assignment as Executive Director of the Tertiary Education Commission in Mauritius.

At a reception held in his honour prior to his leaving Vancouver, Chairman, Dr. H. Ian Macdonald told the gathered business, education, and governmental leaders that “we have been extremely lucky to have someone of the experience, commitment, and extraordinary capacity for work, possessed by our founding President. What has been accomplished here, in a few short years, and in the face of diminishing resources, is truly astonishing.”

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Commonwealth Secretary-General, H.E. Chief Emeka Anyaoku, and Dr. Macdonald, will jointly host a tribute to Professor Maraj, to acknowledge his many years of service to the Commonwealth, at Marlborough House in London on June 30. It will be attended by London-based diplomatic and governmental representatives as well as many international leaders in the education field who will be in the country attending the 17th World Conference of the International Council for Distance Education.

Southern Africa

COL Joins "African Global" Consortium

The Commonwealth of Learning has welcomed the recent announcement from the South African Government regarding its support for the work of the "African Global" consortium, aimed at strengthening the country's telecommunications and information infrastructure.

On March 29, South Africa's Government of National Unity announced that the consortium of world-leading international companies and organisations would be conducting certain feasibility studies and negotiations with relevant South African institutions. Along with The Commonwealth of Learning, the participants in this initiative include Alcatel, Bell Atlantic, Matra Marconi Space, Philips, and Teleglobe International. The work of "African Global" will be co-ordinated by LCC Rothschild, based in Monaco.

"As an international agency devoted to the application of communications and information technologies to education and training, COL welcomes the opportunity to join with other members of the consortium to reinforce their contribution to the process of social and economic renewal in Southern Africa," said Mr. Richard Simpson, COL's Director of Communications Technologies and Acting President.

"From COL's standpoint, working with the African Global group provides us with a unique opportunity to fashion new and innovative ways of delivering education and training through advanced communications. Within the consortium, COL's experience and expertise in distance education and open learning can be usefully aligned with the technology strengths of our partners."

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COL's participation in the consortium has formed an important part of a broader effort led by COL's former President, Professor James Maraj, aimed at helping to define the techniques and strategies that can enhance access to quality education and training for all South Africans.

Professor Maraj and other senior officials of COL, including the Head of African Programmes, Professor Peter Kinyanjui, have been actively engaged in discussions with a large number of educational bodies in South Africa, and participated in the International Donor Conference on Human Resource Development in the Reconstruction and Development Programme, which was convened by the Government of South Africa in October 1994, and co-sponsored by the United Nations Development Programme and the Commonwealth Secretariat.

With other members of African Global, COL is currently engaged in the definition of a series of joint studies and projects, which would be supportive of South Africa's Reconstruction and Development Programme. Specific proposals for consideration by South African authorities are expected to be forthcoming in the near future.

The Commonwealth is a world-wide association of independent countries, which work together to advance global progress in economic development and social justice. South Africa rejoined the association as its 51st member on June 1, 1994 – 33 years after it left in response to criticism of its apartheid policy.

COL/AusAID Programme For Southern Africa Progresses

The Programme Advisory Committee of COL/AusAID (formerly AIDAB) Programme for Southern Africa held its meeting on March 1, 1995 in Harare, Zimbabwe. The meeting was chaired for the first time by the Hon. Dr. G.K.T. Chiepe, Minister of Education, Government of Botswana. The Minister had recently accepted the position as Chairperson of the PAC, while Professor Peter Kinyanjui, COL's Head of African Programmes and Training, agreed to continue to serve as Secretary of the Committee.

In welcoming the members to the meeting, the Minister expressed her support for COL, recalling that she attended the 1987 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Vancouver, Canada, when COL was created, and, more recently, was present for COL's favourably received report at the 12th Commonwealth Conference of Education Ministers, which took place in November 1994 in Islamabad, Pakistan.

The PAC Meeting reviewed the programme activities in the Southern African sub-region and also provided guidance for the preparation of three-year rolling plans for projects and programmes funded under the COL/AusAID Programme.



Distance Education in South Africa

South African Minister of Education, the Honourable Professor S.M.E. Bengu, released the report on the state of distance education in South Africa on May 11, 1995. Speaking in Johannesburg he called for substantial transformation of the public distance education institutions. The Report was prepared by an International Commission, chaired by Dato' Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan (President-designate of the Commonwealth of Learning) and organised by the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) at the request of the ANC. It was highly critical of the present public institutions. They must, he said "... move human and other resources away from the huge numbers of cost ineffective courses to a few relevant courses with extensive learner support." This will involve freezing many posts and giving the resources to new posts which will support the studies of students throughout the country.

However, he welcomed the vision of the future the report presented. This will be one in which "Education and training should be available to all South Africans under conditions they can meet throughout their lives." Open learning approaches using distance education methods will be a key to that vision.

Two recommendations of the Report are already under way – the Minister is discussing with SAIDE the establishment of a National Open Learning Agency. He is also considering a proposal that distance education programmes should be developed in key priority areas. Educational institutions would be asked to tender for the funds to plan or deliver them. In this way, South Africa could develop a network of providers, organising learning opportunities for people wherever they are and whatever their needs. One of these is already under way. The Gauteng Youth College will pilot a scheme for large-scale support of out-of-school youth in 1995, with possible replication in other provinces.

The minister concluded by complimenting the Commissioners on the quality of their work and the depth and scope of their vision. "With contributions of this kind . . .," he said, "... we can surely look forward to a more just and equitable education system where more and more people have democratic access to knowledge, skills and learning."

In addition to Professor Dhanarajan, the Commission of International Experts included COL Governors, Professor G. Ram Reddy and Mr. William L. Renwick, as well as COL's Head of African Programmes, Professor Peter Kinyanjui. The Commission's report, *Open Learning and Distance Education* is published by Macmillan at R40.00 or US\$10.00 and is available from SAIDE.

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SEAMEO Examines Distance Education

Three members of COL's professional staff — Patricia McWilliams, Programme Officer (Training), Ian Mugridge, Senior Consultant (Higher Education), and Peter McMechan, Director (Pacific Programmes) — acted as consultants to a workshop convened in April at the Centre for Innovation and Technology in Education (INNOTECH), under the auspices of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Organisation (SEAMEO) network. The workshop brought together the directors of the twelve centres in the SEAMEO system, together with the person in each centre designated to be the co-ordinator of the local distance education initiative. The Director and the Deputy Director of the Southeast Asian Ministers of Education Secretariat (SEAMES) also participated.

Distance education had been a major theme discussed at the Second SEAMEO Thematic Symposium on Co-operation and Linkages in 1993 (essentially a "retreat" meeting of the ministerial oversight group, SEAMEC). The twelve centres reporting to SEAMEC each have their own boards, and each is provided with core funding by the respective host government. Collectively, the SEAMEO centres cover several areas of research and training: tropical medicine, tropical biology, agriculture, archaeology and fine arts, English language and linguistics, innovation and technology in education, science and mathematics education, higher education and vocational/technical education. Over the quarter-century of their operation, the normal pattern has been for centres to offer specialised training courses, and the SEAMEO nations sponsor students to attend the courses.

In recent years, however, two things have happened to force an examination of the potential of distance education. First, while training needs have been expanding, national funding has not kept pace and all of the centres have encountered financial difficulties. Second, the Indo-Chinese countries are now in the process of joining (or re-joining) the regional grouping. Vietnam, Lao PDR, and Cambodia have even greater training needs than the original six countries and, currently, even less resources to apply to training needs.

At an earlier workshop (in December 1994) the SEAMEO centre directors had decided to work towards an integrated distance education network to link the twelve centres, and provide a means for taking relevant courses to students in their own countries. As this matches COL's mandate, the SEAMEO group and COL have much in common — particularly since the three Commonwealth countries in the region (Malaysia, Brunei Darussalam, Singapore) are also active members of the SEAMEO group.

The COL consultants and the senior staff of the SEAMEO centres analysed the various aspects of the planned development, with a target of establishing SEAMEO/ODLN — the SEAMEO Open and Distance Learning Network. By the end of the week, the outlines of a feasibility report had been determined, and each of the centres had presented their own planning needs for the addition of distance education to key areas of their work in the region.

COL in Action

Sports Videos

In conjunction with the Coaching Association of Canada and the Commonwealth Games Association of Canada/Commonwealth Sport Development Programme (CSDP), COL has distributed videos and associated coaching/training material to an initial group of eight developing Commonwealth countries. As they compete independently in the Commonwealth Games, associated territories have been included in this programme.

To date, material has been provided free-of-charge by The Coaching Association of Canada, the Canadian Cycling Association, Field Hockey Canada, Badminton Canada, the Canadian Canoe Association, and Volleyball Canada. COL gratefully acknowledges this contribution to the development of sporting programmes world-wide.

Learning Materials

Computer Applications Workbooks: In February 1995 COL circulated to all Commonwealth Ministries of Education an updated list of thirty-two computer workbooks developed by BC Tel Education. The workbooks can be used in any of three ways – as self-study, in a tutorial session and as a component in a distance education course. Since the list has been sent out, COL has received responses from over twenty Ministries or institutions requesting some or all of the workbooks. In at least two cases, a master set is to be provided to the local institution/Ministry and additional sets duplicated from this master locally and provided to other institutions and learning centres. These materials are being despatched as the requests are received and should arrive at the requesting institutions/Ministries within a month to six weeks after the request was received at COL Headquarters.

The Learning Game: COL approached Massey University in New Zealand regarding an agreement for the rights to duplicate and distribute master copies of *The Learning Game*, a “self-taught course in study skills for students learning at a distance.” The rights have been granted, and the funds requested met by a grant from the New Zealand Overseas Development Administration, for which COL is grateful. COL has sent information about the course to all Commonwealth Ministries of Education, as well as bound copies to a number of selected institutions. Requests have been received for additional preview publications, as well as for master copies suitable for duplication.

“The Learning Game, a “self-taught course in study skills for students learning at a distance.”

Monash Materials: COL has also entered into an agreement with Australia’s Monash University to provide sixty sets of ten publications to selected institutions in developing Commonwealth countries. These publications contain research articles and studies in the field of distance education and open learning, and would be very useful for students studying for an advanced degree. This is a COL/Monash collaborative initiative, and COL is grateful for the support that Monash has provided.

OECS Distance Education Pilot Project

In furthering the COL/OECS Distance Education Pilot Project, three educators from the Eastern Caribbean travelled to British Columbia, Canada, for two and a half weeks under the auspices of the BC/COL Fellowships Programme. Support was also provided for the visit by the Canada Training Awards Project, for which COL is grateful. The educators, from Grenada, St Kitts-Nevis and St. Vincent and the Grenadines, are all designated to play important roles in the Pilot in their home countries. Through the visit, which was primarily to North Island College located on Vancouver Island, the Fellows received training in regard to the courses being offered through the Pilot as well as general information, advice and guidance related to the delivery of distance education courses.

Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme Underway

Under the first phase of the Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme, more than 100 students in 18 Commonwealth developing countries have now started their course work in the two-year Masters of Distance Education Programme offered by Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) in India. The Scheme is sponsored by COL in collaboration with IGNOU and the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation, India.

The Masters Programme is delivered by distance using a mix of media supported by locally recruited tutors/counsellors. With the co-operation of educational institutions throughout the Commonwealth, COL and IGNOU are organising workshops to train the tutors who will conduct counselling sessions at the end of each year of study, just before examinations take place.

It is expected that a second intake of students will take place during 1997, and Ministries of Education will be advised of the programme offerings, admission requirements and application procedures at that time.



People

The Canadian Government has appointed a new representative to the COL Board of Governors. **The Honourable Iona Campagnolo, P.C.**, Chancellor, University of Northern British Columbia (Prince George) has joined the Board as a Vice-Chair. Ms. Campagnolo replaces founding Board member, Mr. Don Hamilton.

Chancellor of the UK Open University and former COL Chairman, **the Rt. Hon. Lord (Asa) Briggs of Lewes**, was quoted recently in the *Times Higher Education Supplement* his hopes for 1995: "... that the British Government should give a sufficiently large grant to The Commonwealth of Learning to ensure that its future is guaranteed ..."

Dr. Karen Evans, Director of Graduate Studies in Education at the University of Surrey (UK) and Associate Director of Surrey University Centre for Commonwealth and European Education and Development (SUCCEED) was attached to COL as a visiting fellow for a two-month period in late 1994. During this period, Dr. Evans researched and prepared a paper on "Barriers to Participation of Women in Technological Education and the Role of Distance Education."

Dr. Doug Shale, Academic Analyst, Office of Institutional Analysis, University of Calgary (Canada), has been attached to COL as a visiting fellow during the 1994/95 academic year. Dr. Shale has been working on COL's Asia/Pacific Telecommunications Network Project, producing a comprehensive concept document, based on various studies to date, and funding proposals.

Dr. Ravi Kanth joined the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), in New Delhi, as Programme Officer (Media Exchange) on May 1, 1995. Before joining CEMCA, Dr. Kanth was completing his Ph.D. in Educational Television at the University of Stirling, UK. He has considerable experience in producing audio-video programmes for distance education and administering a media unit within an open university. As a producer at Dr. B.R. Ambedkar Open University (Hyderabad), he was responsible for producing audio-video programmes for various University courses. Dr. Kanth has worked as a media consultant, trainer and tutor for several organisations. As Programme Officer (Media Exchange), Dr. Kanth is responsible for a key component of CEMCA's mandate: identifying educational media resources and providing information on educational media and technology to organisations within Commonwealth Asia. He maintains liaison with educational and media organisations and facilitates exchange of educational media resources.

Ms. Edlana Adams, from the Ministry of Education in St. Vincent and the Grenadines, **Ms. Vaple Burt**, from the Ministry of Education in St. Kitts-Nevis, and **Ms. Maria Williams**, from T.A. Marryshow Community College in Grenada, conducted a study visit to British Columbia and COL Headquarters under the auspices of the COL/OECS Distance Education Pilot Project and the BC/COL Fellowships Programme.

Dr. Sohanvir S. Chaudhary, of the Indira Gandhi National Open University School of Education and **Mr. S. Sengupta**, Deputy Registrar (STRIDE), IGNOU, both visited COL and British Columbia institutions in May 1995 as part of their Association of Commonwealth Universities fellowships.

COL was honoured by the visit of the Rector of the United Nations University, **Dr. Heitor Gurgulino de Souza**, who was in Vancouver attending the Fifth Asian and Pacific Universities Presidents' Conference in May 1995.

Professor J.N. Oleap Fernando, Dean of the Faculty of Natural Sciences and Senior Professor of Chemistry at the Open University of Sri Lanka, was attached to COL for a study visit in June 1995, in connection with his participation at the 3rd International Symposium on Technician Education and Training, which was held in Vancouver.

Professor C.J.H. Schutte, Dean of the Faculty of Science at the University of South Africa, visited COL Headquarters in September 1994 to meet with COL officials regarding collaboration in computer-based education projects.

Dr. Jack Marshall, head of the continuing medical education programme for the Australian College of General Practice met with COL officials in Vancouver in September 1994. Dr. Marshall was seeking advice for the World Association for General Practice and its emerging policy on the use of distance education for CME.

Professor L. Adele Jinadu, Director-General of the Administrative Staff College of Nigeria (ASCON), and **Mr. F.O. Williams**, Director-General of the Nigerian Ministry of Establishments and Management Services, visited COL and local educational institutions to discuss the development of bachelors and masters degree programmes in public sector management, by distance education delivery methods, which ASCON plans to launch later this year in collaboration with the University of Abuja.

Dr. Dennis Irvine, COL's Regional Co-ordinator in the Caribbean, represented COL at the Commonwealth Teacher Education Seminar, held in Trinidad in January. He presented a paper entitled, *The Commonwealth of Learning and Teacher Education: Initiatives and Issues*.

Events

Innovations 2020

The 3rd International Symposium on Technician Education and Training, *Innovations 2020*, took place in Vancouver in June and COL and distance education featured prominently. COL staff members, Ms. Mavis Bird and Mr. David Walker, and Mr. Dave Wilson served as panelists and session moderators. Also, Mr. Brian Stanford, Director of Adelaide Vocational Institute, participated as a panelist via video-conference from Australia. He described the pioneering distance education programmes that have been launched by his Technical and Further Education (TAFE) college.

COL/UK consultations

In connection with attendance at the International Council for Distance Education conference, COL will be holding a series of UK consultations. President-designate, Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan, and Chairman, Dr. H. Ian Macdonald, will be in attendance along with Acting President, Mr. Richard Simpson, and other senior members of COL staff. On June 22, meetings will be held with UK educational institutions; on June 23 discussions will be held with various departments in the Commonwealth Secretariat; and on June 25, engagements have been scheduled with officials of the UK Open University and the International Centre for Distance Learning.

Commonwealth Ministers and Meetings

COL Chairman, Dr. H. Ian Macdonald presented reports on COL at the Twelfth Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (Islamabad, November 1994) and the Second Meeting of Commonwealth Ministers Responsible for Youth Affairs (Port of Spain, May 1995).

In Islamabad, Education Ministers gave COL a much-needed vote of confidence. The pledges of financial support – including a substantial increase in commitment from Britain – constitute a good beginning, but work continues to secure additional funding from other member countries and funding agencies. Education Ministers also paid tribute to outgoing President, Professor James Maraj.

Youth Ministers proposed collaboration between the Commonwealth Youth Programme and COL in the development of training programmes. Both organisations are pursuing this natural partnership.

Asian Open Universities

COL participated at the annual conference of the Association of Asian Open Universities, held in New Delhi in February 1995, sponsoring a panel session and facilitating meetings among the vice-chancellors. COL has been working with AAOU and open university vice-chancellors to further co-operation within the region.

New Publications

The following titles have been published recently by The Commonwealth of Learning and are available upon request. COL has a policy of charging nominal shipping and handling costs on publications orders from institutions in *developed* and *non-Commonwealth* countries. Pre-payments or purchase orders are required.

Strategic Outlook 1995-1998: This document was presented by COL to the 12th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers in November 1994 and was summarised in the November 1994 *COMLEARN (The Way Forward: COL's Strategic Outlook for the Future)*. (four pages)

Education for the Future – A Generic Version of the Report of a Caribbean Task Force on Education: COL/Caricom 1995. Through analyses undertaken by a Caricom Advisory Task Force, a far-reaching policy document was produced which out-

lines a coherent approach to educational development in the Caribbean region. As the document contains much that has relevance and validity beyond the Caribbean, and especially in small island states, COL has produced a generic version of the report for wider circulation. It is hoped that the conclusions and recommendations may provide a stimulus for critical reflection in other parts of the Commonwealth. (41 pages)

Open Universities in South Asia: A Directory of Experts: 1995. This project evolved out of a COL-sponsored meeting of vice-chancellors of open universities in the South Asian region (Sri Lanka, March 1992), which developed a Plan of Action for mutual co-operation among the institutions. COL agreed to compile this directory of available expertise in open universities in the region with a view to promote opportunities for intra-regional and inter-institutional co-operation in a range of functions associated with distance education. (148 pages, plus appendices)

Technical and Vocational Teacher Training Core Curriculum: COL/Caricom 1995. This document was produced with technical/vocational education and training representation from 14 countries and substantive input from eight Caribbean technical colleges and administrative bodies. It provides a distance education training programme for technical and vocational teachers, addressing the core pedagogical needs of the four levels of teachers in this field. (93 pages)

COL in the Caribbean: February 1995. A COL regional newsletter (four pages)

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