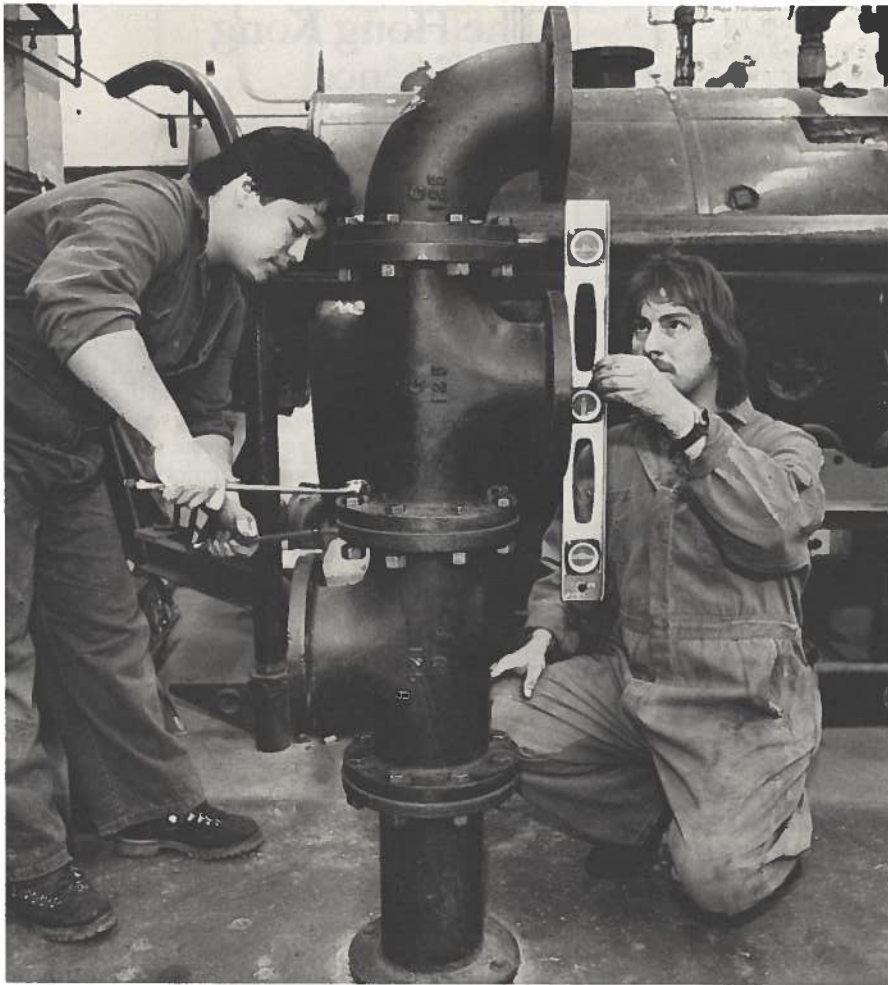


COMLEARN

NEWS PUBLICATION OF THE COMMONWEALTH OF LEARNING

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COL and Technical/ Vocational Education



It is widely acknowledged that the need for technical and vocational education and training in the Commonwealth is substantial. In the "Briggs Report" (Towards a Commonwealth of Learning) published four years ago, the situation was described thus:

"There is almost insatiable demand both from employers and from individuals wanting to master these skills for personal use and for application in their jobs. The demand is common to all Commonwealth countries and there is considerable uniformity of content in the subject matter. In many countries the greatest manpower demands for vocationally trained personnel are experienced at an intermediate level of skills, where there are serious shortages of technicians and middle-level workers and those already in employment need updating in new techniques to keep abreast of technological advance."

The demand described above confronts COL with one of its most formidable challenges, especially as many practitioners find it difficult to believe that it is possible to deliver technical and vocational education at a distance – however that phrase is interpreted. Nonetheless the urgency of the need for technical skills at many levels is so great in most countries of the Commonwealth that the possibility of developing these skills by distance learning has to be explored. This is so particularly in countries where resources of training personnel, workshop and similar facilities are very limited.

It is possible to construct learning packages, which may involve multimedia approaches, to address the theoretical aspects of tech/voc, but competencies in practical skills can only be achieved by practice. This implies that the learners need access to workshop facilities, and instructor support on site. Solutions to these problems will vary depending on local conditions, but there are at least three possibilities:

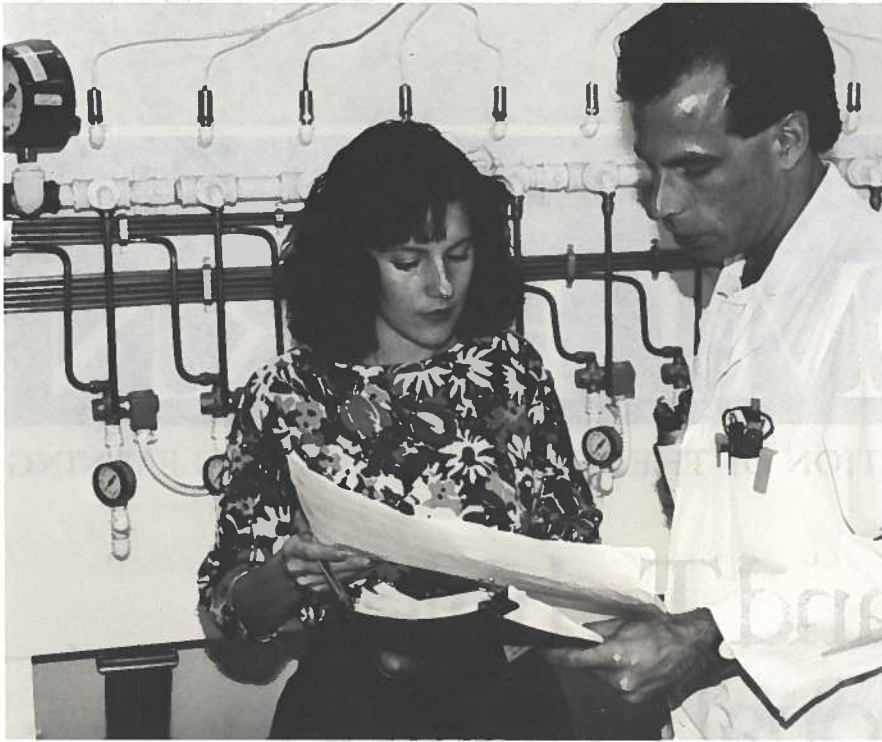
- (i) Using facilities of existing educational institutions
- (ii) Using the facilities of local companies
- (iii) Utilising a "mobile workshop" approach

There will be advantages and disadvantages for each of the choices, but the ultimate test is the cost effective development of competencies in the relevant skills areas.

Given the experience of a number of countries such

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There is an important role for COL in pointing the way forward for the increasing involvement of women in non-traditional work areas.

as Australia, Canada and New Zealand, where technical and vocational education is delivered successfully by distance in a number of institutions, one role for COL is as an information resource. This involves drawing on the experience and expertise of these institutions and helping to make them available elsewhere in the Commonwealth where specific needs have been identified. Central to the execution of that role is that of facilitator.

The transfer of learning materials between institutions needs, however, COL to first of all establish the extent and availability of such materials. Fortunately, in a number of countries, there are compilations of existing technical and vocational courses by distance and one can draw on and complement these publications. During 1991, COL will prepare and publish a directory of teacher education courses available by distance. If this model, in terms of structure, content and format, proves acceptable, it will be followed by directories in selected areas of technical and vocational education, such as electronics, small business management, information technology, etc. In this way, with directories being updated on a regular basis both electronically and in print, COL should be able to provide a useful information service in the area of technical and vocational education.

A major concern in many Commonwealth countries is related to the availability and quality of technical instructors. In developing countries, in particular, it is often difficult to attract and keep the services of good technical instructors, given the disparity of rewards between the public and private sectors. It is possible that the development of courses for training or upgrading technical instructors by distance may help to alleviate some of the problems, and COL will vigorously pursue the development of such courses. The balance in these courses between pedagogy and subject content will vary, depending on local circumstances, and the first priority may be to develop a generic core of pedagogical material with local development of specific subject content as the complementary second step.

Given the potential of distance learning for widening access to educational opportunity, there is an important role for COL in pointing the way forward for the increasing involvement of women in non-traditional work areas. This issue has been highlighted in a recent Common-

wealth Secretariat/Caribbean Association for Technical and Vocational Education and Training publication. The publication refers, inter alia, to a Training Programme for Women in Grenada and states that one of the lessons learned is "the importance of providing women with chances and choices through alternative and/or supplementary education and training programmes not only to acquire new skills but also to gain on-the-job experience in non-traditional areas".

Dissemination of information about distance learning materials and encouragement of appropriate institutional linkages may help to increase the involvement of women in appropriate education and training programmes.

The challenges faced by COL in the area of technical and vocational education are considerable, but we have begun to address some of the main issues. For example, even though there is a need for extensive use of distance education methodologies to provide appropriate technical and vocational education in both quality and quantity, the issue of the standards to be adopted for particular crafts and trades remains. This is a matter of considerable relevance for smaller countries within the Commonwealth, and one which COL is giving due attention.

Consideration of such issues will guarantee that technical and vocational education will continue to be an area of high priority in our programming.

The Hong Kong Conference

November 19-23, 1990

The City Polytechnic of Hong Kong was the setting for a major conference on technical and vocational education sponsored by COL towards the end of last year. There were altogether over 50 participants representing 25 countries, 22 institutions and 9 government ministries.

This conference was the first major initiative by COL in the area of technical and vocational education and it will be followed up by specific activities which emerged as recommendations from the discussions. One of the crucial educational needs of small countries is to be able to find ways of delivering courses in a wide range of technical and vocational areas for which local resources may be inadequate. The use of distance education techniques and adaptation of teaching materials developed elsewhere can help to place even very small countries in the appropriate international network.

The conference was opened by Sir Quo Wei Lee, Chairman of the Hang Seng Bank and a member of COL's Board of Governors, and was attended by key technical/vocational educators, including some of the leading distance education specialists in the field, from both developing and developed countries of the Commonwealth.

There were three major themes at the conference and, in each case, there were lead papers addressing the theme. The first theme was concerned with Developments in Technical and Vocational Education to meet the needs of countries and regions. The lead paper was given by Mr. Jack Foks, Head of the Victorian TAFE Off-Campus Network in Australia: the title of the paper was "Developments in Distance Education for Technical and Vocational Education". The second major theme was Support for Learners in a Distance Education/Open Learning System. Lead papers were given by Mr. John



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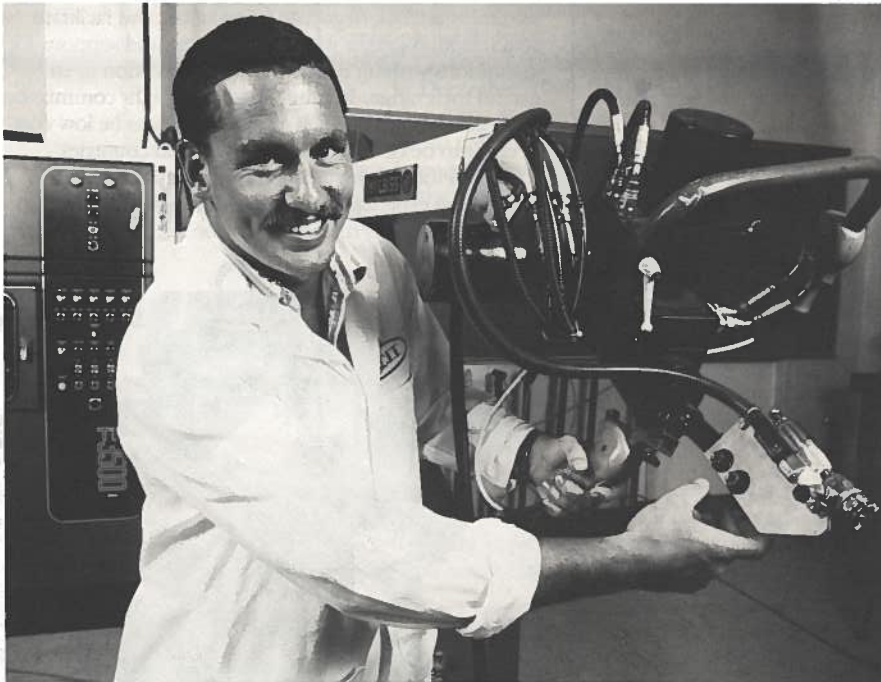
Tayless and Dr. Bob Freeman drawing on experience from North Island College of British Columbia and British Columbia Institute of Technology respectively. The third theme was Cooperative and Collaborative Arrangements for Distance Education, with the lead paper being given jointly by Dr. G. Dhanarajan and Mr. S. Timmers of the Open Learning Institute of Hong Kong. Each lead paper was followed by substantial discussion and one of the features of the conference was the quality of the interactions at both the formal and informal levels.

During the conference, participants reviewed developments in technical/vocational education relevant to the needs of different countries and regions, considered support mechanisms and services for learners in a distance education/open learning system, and discussed co-operative and collaborative arrangements for distance education. They also reviewed samples of distance learning materials developed by institutions in Australia, Britain, Canada, New Zealand and Sri Lanka, in particular.

The conference resulted in several significant outcomes, including an agreement by the "main providers" of tech/voc distance learning materials to make these available to Commonwealth developing countries, through COL, at marginal cost. As a first step, COL is making an inventory of all the materials held by the institutions attending the meeting in Hong Kong.

The conference also identified several projects to be implemented in the Caribbean, Southern Africa and the South Pacific regions, and led to the establishment of a high level tech/voc distance education group of specialists to advise The Commonwealth of Learning.

A number of conference participants expressed their reactions to the conference in writing and a selection of their responses follows.



Dr. AW Sangster (College of Arts, Science and Technology, Jamaica)

"A number of exciting ideas came out of the meeting and some of these were:

- 1) The need for flexibility in the delivery of education. The overall concept of distance education often bringing forward images of hi tech, satellites etc. was broadened to embrace the concept of open learning by less sophisticated means.
- 2) The recognition that increasingly students will be working while studying. The importance of accumulating credits and flexibility in learning was stressed.
- 3) The need to take education to the people. The exciting methodologies and work being done in this regard in the hinterland and outlying villages of British Columbia by the North Island College was an eye opener to many participants.
- 4) Technical and vocational education can be delivered by flexible and cooperative approaches between Institutions and Industry in the learning process.
- 5) The development of the Open Polytechnic system in the U.K. is an exciting new direction and the possibility of overseas links needs to be explored.
- 6) The experience of open & distance learning techniques – in particular Australia, Canada and New Zealand could provide useful guidelines and resources for the countries moving in this direction.
- 7) The dichotomy between technical and vocational education was noted and the overall objectives of educating and training persons for work and employment as functional and socially interactive individuals was stressed."

Mr. R. Horoi (Solomon Islands College of Higher Education)

"There were three outstanding features of the Conference:

1. The participants, the resource personnel, and COL staff at the Conference have become a family of professionals working together in the name of distance education. There is an attempt to forge a genuine understanding and recognition of the need to share the skills, knowledge and technology available from other people and to adapt and adopt accordingly. There is no need to re-invent the wheel.
2. The conference was "engineered" by consultation, collaboration, compromise and group decision rather than by the executive staff of COL. Their presence, however, added an extra dimension to the success of the conference, and provided an important element of critical analysis and support.
3. COL has an important task ahead to demonstrate to the Commonwealth countries that while all distance education is not of superior quality, it is not second best either. Quality, through distance education, can be achieved, even within the technical and vocational arena where practical and hands-on skills require the face to face delivery mode as they say.

I enjoyed the Conference because there was much gained through the exchange of ideas and by listening to people who have had extensive experience in distance education.

In the Solomon Islands, we have a population of over 300,000 scattered over hundreds of kilometres of ocean. It is an island country with over 65% of its population living in a subsistence economy, rurally based and away from the urban centres. The people of the Solomons belong to a multilingual society with between 80-100 different languages, but 75% of speakers of any one language are illiterate. Women in particular are amongst the most disadvantaged. I believe there is much potential for distance education in a country like the Solomons.

In a development arising directly from the Hong Kong conference, COL is assisting Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) to link up with the New Zealand Open Polytechnic in the training of technical tutors through the distance delivery mode. We are grateful to COL for this help and it is hoped that future initiatives will be enhanced through this linkage."

Photo: Ian Cameron



Flexible learning packages are being designed and continue to be monitored for quality and effectiveness.

Mr. W. Mbizvo (Department of Curriculum Development and National Examinations, Zimbabwe)

"Zimbabwe suffers from a critical shortage of technical instructors. Accordingly, strategies and concrete plans have been worked out in order to facilitate a 2 year in-service training programme in Pedagogy for those instructors who are usually engaged solely as technicians or engineers. Thanks to the COL Conference, as head of the Curriculum Research and Development Unit in the Ministry of Higher Education, let me hasten to say that it has now been possible to design a programme whose process is partly covered through distance learning, thus avoiding disrupting the normal teaching activities of our instructors. The programme started in January 1991, exactly 2 months after the Hong-Kong conference, and was launched at Gweru Technical College. Flexible learning packages are being designed and continue to be monitored for quality and effectiveness so as to equip the instructors with skills and knowledge geared to achieve defined levels of technical pedagogical performance and cognitive aspects of managing a technical learning system.

For Zimbabwe, the Conference was an eye opener. I was able to examine success stories and experiences of other countries, such as the British Columbia Institute of Technology's Open-Learning System, the U.K.'s Open College approach, the Caribbean experiences etc. and immediately adopted concrete linkages with individuals directly handling or using distance learning materials. Zimbabwe realises its tremendous potential for further development of distance education programmes and should take advantage of its effective and efficient postal service system in order to strengthen the newly launched Diploma in Vocational and Technical Education at Gweru Technical College. This will ultimately redress the acute shortage of instructors within its colleges."

Miss Sheila Innes (The Open College, UK)

"Above all else the Conference introduced delegates to a wealth of quality distance learning materials constituting, subject to negotiations on costs and copyright, an invaluable resource. Multi-media materials are difficult, costly and time-consuming to produce. There is little point in reinventing wheels where wheels of proven quality already exist. COL hopes to develop, as part of its regular Newsletter, a bulletin on new projects Commonwealth-wide that could be adapted and used by others.

Among new materials, the Open College (UK) course in Accountancy, based on the professional examination syllabus of the Chartered Association of Certified Accountants, attracted much attention. It is a new concept in open learning, enabling students to study a module or chunk at a time, gradually building towards a full qualification, or simply plugging a gap in a manager's financial knowledge with no examination in view.

Much time was given over to devising practical down-to-earth modes of collaboration between one or two (certainly few rather than many) partners that could make a real difference to the range and quality of distance education on offer to their students. A Caribbean presentation looked at the harmonization of courses at the College of Arts, Sciences and Technology in Jamaica to allow entry by other islands in order to share resources. This imaginative, cost-efficient initiative required the development of a common core curriculum. Progress has been rapid. There was agreement that initially micro rather than macro projects should be COL's focus, because they are achievable. The emphasis throughout was on partnerships and on networking.

Many of the smaller states and countries do not have the financial, human and physical resources to extend their educational provision into new subject areas. An international service through COL would help identify suitable materials, negotiate terms of use and facilitate acquisition, together with advice on use and support, for institutions wishing to start distance education or to extend their range. In time the service might commission materials to fill gaps. Such a service needs to be low cost in order to be of use to smaller states and countries...

The Hong Kong meeting was a remarkable and stimulating experience - an explosion of knowledge, expertise and ideas that must now be translated into prac-





A significant shift of emphasis now makes vocational education a major priority.

tical action before the impetus fades. If, through the many personal contacts established, and through COL's enabling role in organizing further seminars or workshops, the momentum of Hong Kong can be sustained, this Conference will have given birth to a significant new movement. Open and distance learning, previously perceived by many as second or third best, for use only in a crisis, is emerging as the only affordable means of training millions of individuals through its modular, relevant and above all, client-centered approach. At its conception, COL was to have focused mainly on higher education; the long-term vision is to see huge numbers of learners at a distance, right across the Commonwealth, becoming independent (but not isolated) through their learning."

The Namibian Institute of Technology

Arandis – the name itself rhymes with "oasis" – is a small town which lies in the Namib Desert, some 30 kilometres to the west of Windhoek (the capital city of

Namibia), and 60 kilometres from the Atlantic coast. A new and exciting development is taking place at Arandis that will make a considerable impact on the technical and vocational education and training of Namibians. It is the site of the proposed Namibian Institute of Technology (NIT).

The Institute, currently under construction, will open its doors to the first batch of students in January 1992. An independence gift to Namibia by Rossing Uranium Limited, the Institute is aimed at equipping Namibians with technical and managerial skills that will enable them to take up positions within the mining and engineering industries. These positions are presently dominated by non-Namibians.

With the achievement of independence in March 1990, Namibia faces the challenge of placing its citizens into positions of leadership and responsibility in all fields of the economy. The mining industry is crucial since it accounts for about 85% of Namibia's exports, and there is a pressing demand for experienced technical and managerial local staff at both high and middle levels. The Namibian Institute of Technology will help in meeting this demand.

DISTANCE EDUCATION PROGRAMME

A unique feature of the Institute will be the introduction of a distance education programme in selected courses that will be integrated with the regular face-to-face teaching and practical training. This way, the Institute's facilities will cater for far larger numbers of students than can be accommodated at any given time. The immediate catchment area for the Institute will be the Swakopmund and Walvis Bay areas but students will be drawn from all other parts of the Republic.

The Institute has started to collect samples of distance education materials in technical and vocational subjects in order to determine how they may be used, with the necessary modifications, in conjunction with the regular face-to-face teaching. The Commonwealth of Learning is assisting in the acquisition and development of such materials to enable the Institute to launch the programme without delay. When fully developed, this programme could constitute a good model for the integration of conventional technical education with the distance education system to widen access and maximise the use of available facilities and expertise.

MANAGEMENT OF THE INSTITUTE

NIT will be managed by a Director, appointed by the Board of Governors, who will be responsible to the Board for academic, administrative and financial management of the Institute. A high-powered Board has been established to formulate and guide the policy of the Institute. It comprises 3 members from the Rossing Uranium Limited, 3 members from the private sector, and nominees from the Ministries of Mines and Energy, and Education and Culture.

As the economy of Namibia continues to grow and expand, it is becoming apparent that there is an urgent demand for trained artisans, technicians, engineers, supervisors and managers in the mining, metallurgy, geology and engineering fields. The NIT, with the active encouragement and support of COL, hopes to meet these demands and develop as a centre of excellence in technical and vocational education.

Continuing Professional Education

LEGAL AND LAW-RELATED CONTINUING EDUCATION, AND PUBLIC ADMINISTRATION

Directory

Arrangements were finalised in January for the compilation of a directory of continuing and professional education; the first available in the Commonwealth in this major area. The Directory will be published in November. Part of the project design concerns the identification of appropriate means to make the publication an on-going activity. The Commonwealth of Learning's investment is oriented towards the development of the appropriate systems, and it is expected that private-sector finance will be available for both the initial publication and the updating processes. The need for a comprehensive current directory was identified at a workshop convened in 1990 by the Commonwealth Legal Education Association, in association with the Commonwealth Law Conference in Auckland.

The Commonwealth of Learning consultations subsequent to the Workshop have indicated that the majority of Commonwealth countries require continuing education and training programmes not only for lawyers (and associated professional groups), but also for various law-related occupations (police, correctional services, legislative services, and public administration, for example).

The Directory will identify groups and institutions which are active in these areas of professional and occupational training, and will provide a source of information on current programmes and related teaching materials.

Judicial Education

Discussions undertaken with several groups concerned with judicial education, have pointed to the need for development in such education in various parts of the Commonwealth. COL is continuing these discussions and is assessing how distance education methodologies might be used in the development process.

HEALTH SCIENCES

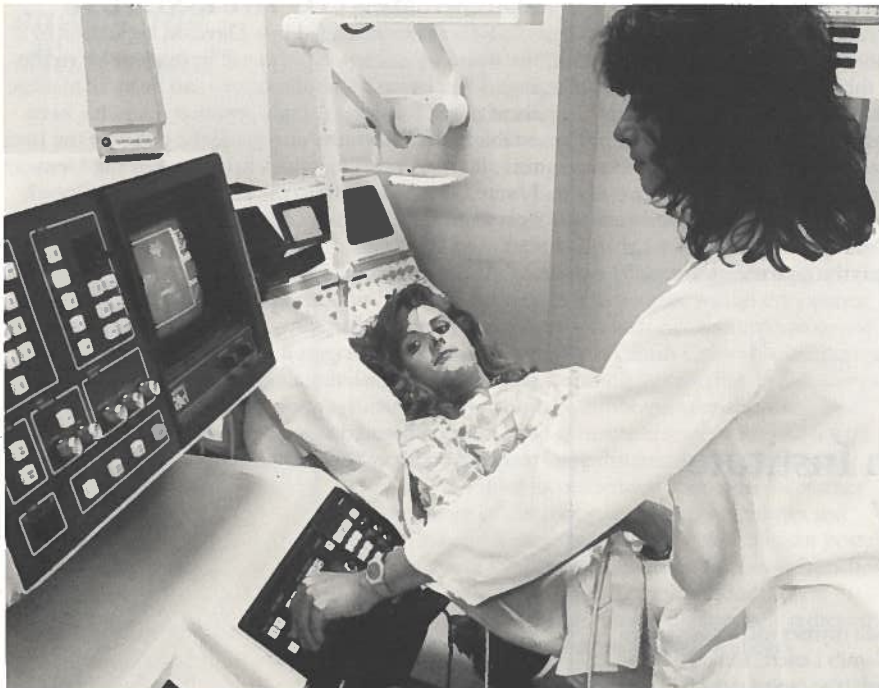
In November, 1990, a group was convened at the COL Headquarters in Vancouver to discuss and advise on the development of an appropriate Health Sciences Programme within the terms of the Memorandum of Understanding which established the Agency. It has been abundantly clear in all of the initial consultations with Commonwealth governments that health professionals are a priority group for the development of human resources.

Among a wide range of examples, attention was focused on the work of the Wellcome Institute in using high-quality printed materials for the continuing education of district medical officers, particularly in African countries. Such materials could have a wider applicability, not only in continuing education but also for use, in certain contexts, for clinical teaching. In a totally different context, but addressing the same generic problem, the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners has developed a clinical assessment programme which is supported by computer and telecommunication technologies. Memorial University, Newfoundland, Canada, has developed an extensive province-wide system of medical continuing education using a teleconference system, and trials have been made to link this and similar Canadian systems to medical schools in East Africa. Meanwhile, four medical schools in East Africa have themselves developed a cooperative network for sharing clinical expertise. The university system in Sri Lanka is investigating appropriate ways in which distance education may be useful in developing some aspects of national medical (and related) training, and in India investigations are being undertaken to develop systems which will be able to extend continuing education to over a quarter of a million primary health care operatives.

Areas of development are by no means confined to medical continuing education. Throughout the Commonwealth, education and post-basic training for the nursing profession is a priority concern, and constraints in health care systems are often directly related to a lack of training opportunities in medical technology.

Five broad lines of Commonwealth of Learning activity were indicated by the discussions:

- (i) The development of an information-transfer system in the health sciences which enables institutions or groups to be put in contact with others who have pioneered particular developments;
- (ii) The compilation of a resource bank of materials, through the identification of appropriate co-operating agencies, to facilitate national and regional systems of health sciences education;
- (iii) Assistance with the development, and the extension, of systems which provide current information to health professionals, and means by which they are able to assess and extend their current competence;
- (iv) The creation of Commonwealth links which utilise telecommunications for the development and extension of appropriate networks for the delivery of continuing education for health professionals;
- (v) The institution of systems which provide viable post-experience education, enabling health professionals to gain access to further training while remaining in-post, rather than travelling overseas.



COL in Action

COL Fellowships Programme

The Commonwealth of Learning, in cooperation with the Government of British Columbia, has for the last two years run a very successful Fellowship Programme. Under this Programme, ten educators from developing countries have been brought each year to British Columbia to study the educational institutions involved in distance education and to discuss with professional colleagues methods and techniques they might use upon return to their home countries.

The ten educators awarded COL Fellowships to visit British Columbia in September, 1990, were Mr. E. Chowdhury, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Education, Bangladesh; Mr. M. Owen, Chief Audio Visual Aid Officer, Ministry of Education and Culture, Barbados; Mr. T. Magetse, Ministry of Education, Botswana; Dr. Y. Bojang, The Gambia College, The Gambia; Mr. K. Narayanan, Registrar, Indira Gandhi National Open University, India; Mrs. T. Chilambe, Senior Education Officer, Ministry of Education and Culture, Malawi; Dr. M. Akintayo, University of Ibadan, Nigeria; Prof. J. Syed, Dean of Social Sciences and Humanities, Allama Iqbal Open University, Pakistan; Mr. J. Kwesiga, Makerere University, Uganda and Dr. A. Kakanda, Head of Education Broadcasting Services, Ministry of General Education, Youth and Sports, Zambia.

The British Columbia Government expanded its support of the Programme this year with an additional dimension aimed at increasing the opportunities for British Columbia personnel to gain experience in international education and as a means of establishing or strengthening linkages between educational institutions in developing countries and British Columbia. Under the new scheme, The Commonwealth of Learning, in cooperation with the Government of British Columbia, awarded eight Fellowships to British Columbia educators. The educators are expected to spend approximately one month in selected developing countries providing advice and guidance in various aspects of distance education.

Mr. James Bizzocchi from Capilano College will go to Pakistan to advise on the use of audio-visual aids and other technologies in distance education. While in Asia, Mr. Bizzocchi will also travel to Sri Lanka to do a needs analysis in the audio-visual field for the Open University there.

Mr. Keith Dunbar, Manager of the Centre for Curriculum and Professional Development at Camosun College lent his expertise to the Course Development Unit within the Extension Services at the University of the South Pacific, where his assistance was of particular value in the instructional design of distance education materials.

Mr. Norbert Hartig of NorthWest Community College built on a professional relationship started two years ago with a visiting Fellow from the University of Zimbabwe. Dr. Meshack Matshazi, who was among the first COL Fellows, visited Northwest Community College.

Since then Mr. Hartig and Dr. Matshazi have been in regular correspondence and now Mr. Hartig travels to Zimbabwe to work with Dr. Matshazi and others at the University in the area of development and delivery of distance education courses.

Dr. Allan Markin, Centre Director at the Penticton Campus of Okanagan College visited the College of Education and External Studies at the University of Nairobi. While there, Dr. Markin helped to design a system of student support services using audio-teleconferencing and other technologies.

The Gambia College is in the process of developing a distance education programme. Mr. Robert Pollard from the British Columbia Institute of Technology went to The Gambia to assist them with suggestions and advice on the infrastructure to be established for this purpose, as well as to gather data on which to base informed decisions regarding the use of technologies for distance education.

Mr. Tom Roulstone, an instructor at Northern Lights College in Fort St. John visited Tonga in the South Pacific region. Mr. Roulstone provided guidance and advice to personnel at the Ministry of Education regarding the development and implementation of a distance education unit.

The University of Swaziland is expanding its distance offerings and requested help with the development of courses in the area of small business. Ms. Alice Wong from Vancouver Community College has had considerable experience in this field and her Fellowship took her to Swaziland to provide assistance with course development in this area.

Dr. Colin Yerbury, Director of the Centre for Distance Education at Simon Fraser University, visited several countries in the Caribbean on his Fellowship. Dr. Yerbury drew on his extensive experience and knowledge to provide suggestions for instructional design and development of print materials used for distance education throughout the region served by the University of the West Indies.

The eight Fellowships have been awarded from more than forty-five applications from nineteen British Columbia educational institutions. The awards were determined on the basis of professional matches between potential fellows and needs identified by the hosting institutions, and the selection process was carried out by a committee composed of British Columbia educators, Ministry personnel and COL staff.

COL is currently carrying out discussions with representatives of the Government of Ontario regarding the implementation of a Fellowship Programme in that Province. The objective of the Programme will be to familiarise distance educators from developing countries with the infrastructures in place in Ontario institutions for the delivery of distance education courseware. It is hoped that this Programme will be launched later in the year.

Other countries, provinces and states will be encouraged to sponsor COL Fellows in the future. The feedback received so far indicates that the Fellowship Programme is a positive step towards increasing the awareness of educational challenges facing less-developed countries today, as well as an effective method of establishing linkages between institutions in developed and developing countries.

Conferences, meetings, symposia

CASTME 91 Biennial Conference – U.B.C., April 15–19, 1991

The Commonwealth Association of Science, Technology and Mathematics Educators. (CASTME) held its 1991 conference at the University of British Columbia in Vancouver. The conference was jointly sponsored by The Commonwealth of Learning.

"The main focus for CASTME's meeting was embodied in the theme of 'Quality in Science, Technology and Mathematics Education.' It is an important and timely topic. Everywhere attempts are currently being made to raise the level of teaching above that of the rote learning of yesteryear.

"The current aim is to get learners to think, to understand, and to apply their knowledge intelligently. It is vitally important in every community, so that this change-over should work, should work well, and should be seen to be working well by parents, families and social leaders. Quality is essential for every community for ensuring that the children do learn to think-through, clarify, and apply, the knowledge they learn at school or college."

Dr. Dennis Irvine who delivered a Keynote Lecture on 'Distance Learning in Science, Technology and Mathematics with special reference to The Commonwealth of Learning,' was Chairman of the Local Programme Committee, and contributed significantly to the overall success of the Conference. It is clear that CASTME must grow and develop, and the inauguration of Regional Branches was one of the major outcomes of the Conference.

Other speakers at the Conference included Dr. Andrew Salisbury (Chairman of the CASTME Council), Mr. John Elfick (UNESCO), Mr. Kabir Shaikh (Department of Education, Ealing), Mr. Dennis Chisman (CASTME Council Member), Mr. Bryan Wilson (CASTME Council Member), Ms. June George (Faculty of Education, University of the West Indies, Trinidad), and Dr. Winston King (Faculty of Education, University of the West Indies, Barbados).

Calendar

Preparations are fully under way for the following meetings in which COL is involved:

Canadian Distance Educators Meeting

Convened by COL.
Laurentian University, Sudbury, Ontario
July 8/9, 1991

Commonwealth Pharmaceutical Association

Hamilton, Ontario
August 25 - 30, 1991

COL Board of Governors Meeting

Vancouver, Canada
August 29/30, 1991

Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting

Harare, Zimbabwe
October 16 - 22, 1991

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The Commonwealth of Learning welcomes your letters and contributions. We reserve the right to edit material.

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COMLEARN



Working in the Regions

Asia

INDIA

Negotiations continue in India for the establishment of a national institution to train distance educators. Meanwhile, a mobile training team is being established with COL assistance. Dr. N. Rubidge, Director, Colleges and International Education, Ministry of Advanced Education, Training and Technology (British Columbia) visited India in January in this connection and plans are underway for the first four members of the mobile team to embark on an orientation programme.

In January, COL published two books jointly with the Association of Indian Universities. One is a Directory of Women's Studies Programmes in India, and the other is the first volume of a Directory of Distance Education Institutions in South Asian Commonwealth countries. The first volume covers India; the second will cover Pakistan and Sri Lanka.

India's Ministry of Personnel, Public Grievances and Pensions in cooperation with COL recently organised a workshop on using distance education techniques for training public service employees. Professor John Chick of the University of New England served as a consultant.

In December, 1990, The Honourable Flora MacDonald had consultations with a number of groups concerned with education for women in India and proposals resulting from these meetings are being followed up.

In the same month, IGNOU hosted the first COL/Asian regional training workshop, the theme of which was course development. The resource persons at this workshop were Professor O.S. Dewal, Principal, Regional College of Education, Ajmer, Professor B.N. Koul, Director, School of Education, IGNOU, and Ms. Janet Jenkins of COL. Representatives of institutions in Pakistan, Sri Lanka and Maldives as well as India attended the workshop.

PAKISTAN

Professor G. Ram Reddy visited Pakistan to consult with officials of the Ministry of Education and Allama Iqbal Open University. A programme to be supported by COL has now been agreed.

BANGLADESH

Professor Reddy will be in Bangladesh from early May to August to advise on the establishment of the new Open University.

Caribbean

THE BAHAMAS

Mr. John Quigley visited The Bahamas for consultation with representatives of the Ministry of Education, The College of The Bahamas and Communication officials about the possibility of establishing a distance education network in The Bahamas to serve the out-islands in particular.

JAMAICA

The teacher training project in Jamaica has been started. In January two consultants conducted training workshops for course developers and tutors. The consultants evaluated material and presented and distributed it to

trainee teachers. A desk-top publishing facility is being provided and a workshop on the planning and management of distance education programmes has also been scheduled.

GUYANA

COL has provided Guyana with audio teleconferencing units which are to be installed in Georgetown and at Linden.

The University of Guyana will also be provided with distance learning materials for pre-university science.

ST. LUCIA

The projected distance education unit at Sir Arthur Lewis Community College has been established and a study centre is being set up at Vieux Fort. Sample materials in a variety of areas have been received by the College.

TRINIDAD

The University of Wye and UWI's Faculty of Agriculture are collaborating on a project for the cooperative delivery of post-graduate distance education programmes. COL provided the initial impetus to enable the project to be developed.

UWI REVIEW

The University of the West Indies (UWI) review is to get underway in May, headed by Mr. W.L. Renwick, former Director General of Education in New Zealand. It is scheduled to be completed by June 1992. Its purpose is to appraise the UWIDITE system and to see how it can be made more effective.

Africa

COL was represented by Professor Peter Kinyanjui at a planning meeting for the second phase of the project, "Programme in Management and Leadership Training". This phase consisted of a five day workshop which took place in Nairobi, Kenya, on May 6-10, 1991 and involved representatives from the cooperating university institutions of Massey, Victoria, Nairobi and IGNOU.

LESOTHO

The second meeting of the Project Advisory Committee of the Distance Learning Association of Southern Africa discussed in detail the on-going activities of the Distance Learning Association (DLA) and received proposals for new activities for the period January - June 1991. The following issues were highlighted during discussions:

- The DLA should give priority to the completion and computerisation of the directory of distance teaching institutions in Southern Africa. The completed directory should be available to COL by June 30, 1991.
- The DLA should make every effort to expand its membership to include other Commonwealth countries in the region.
- Future DLA workshops should aim at producing manuals and handbooks which could be used by individual institutions to train more people in specialised aspects of distance education. Such manuals and handbooks could be made available to other countries of the Commonwealth at their request. This kind of sharing would help to put the DLA on the map with other similar organisations. The next training workshops will be on Records Management and Audio Scriptwriting.

This project is one component of the COL/AIDAB programme in Southern Africa.



ZAMBIA

Following discussions with Professor Mukelabai, Dean of the Faculty of Medicine at the School of Medicine, University of Zambia, and the recommendations made at the Roundtable on Continuing Medical Education, a formal request has been made for assistance from COL to strengthen and extend the present network, and to publish the teaching manual and the Newsletter.

Centre for Continuing Education

COL has held discussions with the staff of the Centre for Continuing Education of the University of Zambia. A need was expressed to establish a nationally integrated distance education structure to coordinate the various institutions and agencies throughout the country. This new structure would help to rationalise the activities and to share the available resources.

ZIMBABWE

Professor Kinyanjui visited the University of Zimbabwe to follow up on the latest developments at the University regarding the establishment of the Distance Education Centre and the training of technical teachers for the Ministry of Higher Education.

Discussions centred on the central administrative and pedagogic arrangements which should be put in place for an effective distance teaching system at the University of Zimbabwe. It was agreed that assistance from COL would be requested particularly with regard to training in course writing and development, course production and delivery and students records and support services.

The Distance Education Centre is expected to start functioning early in 1992 and the first external students will be enrolled in the 1993 Academic Year.

BOTSWANA

Details have been finalised with regard to the proposed evaluation, to be supported by COL, of the Distance Education Unit of the Department of Non-Formal Education. The evaluation exercise will be conducted in May/June 1991 by a team of three persons – two identified by the Department and one by COL to head the team.

NAMIBIA

Professor Peter Kinyanjui attended the Seminar/Workshop on Adult and Distance Education organised by the Namibian Ministry of Education. Participants were drawn from Namibian institutions involved, or likely to be involved, in distance education. They included the Academy of Namibia, Council of Churches of Namibia, the Directorate of Distance Education and Broadcasting, Rossing Foundation and the Vocational Training Centre.

Professor Kinyanjui gave two presentations on "Planning a distance education programme" and "The role and nature of radio and audio recordings in Distance Education", and was chairperson of one of the sessions.

At the end of the seminar it was proposed and agreed that the Minister of Education and Culture should constitute a Core Planning Group on Distance Education to develop both short and long term plans for distance education in Namibia, ensuring cooperative and coordinated activities on the part of all the agencies involved.

KENYA

Directory of Distance Education in Eastern Africa

A Directory of Distance Education in Eastern Africa which would complement the one under preparation for the Southern African region was discussed with DLA. It has been confirmed that work on the directory will be completed by June 30, 1991.

NIGERIA

Following the visit of the team from COL last year, there is now a much greater awareness and considerable excitement about COL's potential contributions towards Nigeria's distance education activities and to its institutional development.

University of Abuja

Mr. Wali visited the University of Abuja in late February and the Continuing Education and Distance Learning Centre (CEDLC). This Centre has received a full complement of science materials as samples from the Open Learning Agency (OLA).

It was agreed that the University should immediately adopt the OLA science materials which would enable the Centre to start programmes in the basic sciences by July or August. The Centre has requested COL to make these courses available in sufficient numbers. COL has agreed to provide a desk-top publishing system to form part of the proposed Training Centre at the University.

National Teachers' Institute (NTI)

The Institute is willing to participate in the VITA satellite experiment linking it with The Gambia College. This experiment would involve transfer of educational expertise and materials to the College.

The Gambia College has applied to COL to use distance education material (developed by the NTI) for teachers. This would enable it to start its own distance education programme. NTI has agreed to make these courses available. The VITA satellite will be used to facilitate operational and administrative activities of the exchange.

GHANA

The Ghana Ministry of Education is interested in co-operating with COL to develop or improve programmes in teacher education, basic and adult education, technical and vocational education, modern information technologies, services, and continuing professional education.

SIERRA LEONE

Freetown Teacher's College has been identified as the centre for the country's distance education activities and a principal contact point for COL.

A committee has been established to advise the Government on how to start and sustain a workable distance education programme. Upgrading untrained teachers was identified as a major priority.

Pacific

Review of Distance Education at The University of the South Pacific

The Review Team (Mr. W.L. Renwick, Professor St. Clair King, Dr. Doug Shale) completed the Draft Report in November, which was printed in early December for distribution within the University. The Review Team made a series of far-reaching recommendations to the University, which (together with the context of the Report) were discussed at meetings at USP in February. As a result of these meetings, the Draft was finalised as a Commonwealth of Learning Report – the first major evaluation project to be undertaken. Publication of the Report is scheduled for May.

A research project commissioned by COL concerning an analysis of student perceptions about distance education courses offered by USP has been completed, with the results available to the Review Team when it met in Suva. The research was undertaken by staff of the University's Extension Services Division according to guidelines set out by COL.

SOLOMON ISLANDS: Distance Education Network

Meetings were held in Honiara in December to finalise the planning for the establishment of SIDEN (the Solomon Islands Distance Education Network) which will link the national college of higher education, the regional university and provincial learning centres in a delivery network based on teleconference facilities.

The second phase of the COL/AIDAB (Australian International Development Assistance Bureau) Project for the Continuing Education of Primary School Teachers was agreed in December, and work is under way to prepare courses in English and Mathematics. As a part of the process of developing these initial courses, the Solomon Islands College of Higher Education (SICHE) is establishing an Educational Services Centre to take responsibility for coordinating and managing SICHE's distance education programme.

Mr. John Tayless of North Island College visited Honiara in December to establish links between SICHE and the college system in British Columbia, in order to explore ways of expanding technical and vocational education in the Solomon Islands. Further developments are expected throughout 1991 as a result of the initial contacts which were made.

TONGA: Distance Education provisions at the Community Development and Training Centre (CDTC)

Following the successful COL/AIDAB workshop held earlier in 1990, the CDTC has identified its priorities for establishing a distance education facility, and a small fund has been set up within the COL/AIDAB project framework to expedite this development.

VANUATU

AIDAB's ACPAC (AIDAB Centre for Pacific Development and Training) project management staff in Sydney are presently arranging a study tour which will enable Dr. Myriam Voronabaravu, USP's University Centre Director, Vila, to examine course materials available in a variety of Australian institutions concerned with the teaching of English as a second language. The dual (English/French) education system in Vanuatu makes assistance for students entering distance education courses (in English) a priority. The project budget allows for the purchase of suitable materials for adaptation in Vila.

PAPUA NEW GUINEA

Arrangements have been made for appropriate consultative meetings in Papua New Guinea. Project funds have been budgeted to begin initial work in April according to the results of these discussions.

Legal Studies

Further discussions have been undertaken with the Law Faculties of Monash University (Australia), the University of British Columbia, and The University of the South Pacific in an endeavour to develop a framework for the networked teaching of legal studies (at appropriate levels) in the small island countries of the South Pacific.

Southeast Asia

BRUNEI DARUSSALAM: Centre for Professional and Continuing Education

Following the Board meeting in October 1990, agreement was reached with the Ministry of Education, Brunei Darussalam, concerning the establishment of a COL/Brunei Centre for Professional and Continuing Education.

COL appointed Mr. John Tayless, previously Director of Programmes, North Island College, British Columbia, Canada, as the COL Project Coordinator for a two year period from February 1991. Mr. Tayless has considerable experience in the management of education and training, and particularly, distance education systems. North Island College was a pioneer in the development of a network approach to the delivery of its teaching, providing a large number of local-access learning centres for the dispersed population of coastal British Columbia. In the vast Asia-Pacific region, the Brunei Project will pioneer this same approach to the delivery of a range of specialised programmes needed by small Commonwealth countries.

The Commonwealth of Learning is equipping the Brunei Centre for Professional and Continuing Education in a manner which will enable it to take advantage of programme offerings from a range of provider institutions, according to needs identified locally. The incremental development of the Centre and its programmes of study will provide a model for the development of further local-area delivery systems, and for identifying appropriate methods of student support.



Edtech Report

COL Headquarters

COL Headquarters in Vancouver, Canada, will open its computerised training room and its audio-visual teleconferencing facilities in June 1991. These facilities were provided through assistance from the Canadian Department of Communications and will enable COL to be linked with comparably equipped facilities around the world.

Namibia

In response to the Government of Namibia's request for COL's assistance in the establishment of a comprehensive distance education system, including the use of educational broadcasting, a COL specialist conducted on-site discussions with Namibian officials in March, 1991. A "concept document" is now under preparation jointly by COL, the Namibian Ministry of Education and Culture, and the Namibian Broadcasting Corporation.

Jamaica

COL has agreed to provide the Jamaican Ministry of Education with two desktop publishing units to be located in the Ministry's headquarters in Kingston and dedicated to distance education use. An additional computer with a laser printer will be provided to the first of the Ministry's regional offices, in Spanish Town. The equipment will assist Jamaica in the development of teacher training materials to be delivered by distance education.

Brunei Darussalam

COL has begun work with the Government of Brunei, to develop a Centre for Professional and Continuing Education in that country. The centre will have teleconferencing capability to facilitate distance education in Brunei.

Guyana (update)

COL has delivered the first two voice teleconferencing packages to Guyana to assist with the development of distance education in that country.

PACSAT (update)

COL and the Volunteers in Technical Assistance (VITA) have reached agreement on the use of the polar-orbiting packet radio satellite, PACSAT, to provide communications capability to facilitate cooperation in teacher training in West Africa. The satellite is capable of providing low-volume data communications as it passes each ground station.

Women in Development

- Work is about to get underway in India on a Women's Literacy Video Project. Dr. Anita Digbe, Director of the Adult Continuing Education Unit at Jawaharlal Nehru University (JNU), will head a team of women coordinating the project.
- Two videos will be produced over the next six months presenting successful models of literacy for women. When completed, these videos will be used as a teaching resource, as well as a stimulus for other women to emulate the success stories.

South Pacific

Ms. Sherrill Whittington recently undertook a visit to the South Pacific to examine extension programmes for women at The University of the South Pacific (USP). Discussions were held with Dr. Claire Matthewson, Director of Extension Services, regarding a joint research survey on access barriers to women studying by extension, as well as concerning other collaborative efforts. Ms. Whittington also examined various women's training programmes undertaken by the South Pacific Commission and the regional headquarters of the YWCA.

Ms. Whittington proceeded to Rarotonga (Cook Islands) to attend the South Pacific Convention for the Elimination of Discrimination (CEDAW) workshop. During the workshop each country presented a report on the status of women and discussed ways of acceding to the Convention. A meeting was held with representatives of the South Pacific Commonwealth countries, who were briefed about COL and discussed ways in which this institution could meet women's educational and training needs.

Women and the Law

COL has responded to a request from The University of Nairobi's Faculty of Law for course materials on gender issues in the Law. The University is preparing a course on Women and Law to commence in the 1993-94 academic year. Professor Mandee Kline, from the Law Faculty at the University of British Columbia has agreed to supply course outlines and materials to Nairobi.



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