Teaching and Learning at a Distance: What It Takes to Effectively Design, Deliver, and Evaluate Programs

A Book Review
by Margarete Epstein

Cyrs' volume on distance teaching and learning focuses on critical issues that enhance the distance learning experience. Distance learning itself has been practiced for many years. The emergence of advanced telecommunications that enable real-time and off-time interactions (such as listservs, email, and videoconferencing) between individuals who are at extreme distances has made the option of distance learning more feasible for many educators.

Although the technology can easily take center stage when considering using distance learning, it is advised by experienced distance education designers to consider the many other equally important issues surrounding this form of teaching. Some of these are:

☞ *Use visual representation of material as often as possible.*
   Most distance learning involves the opportunity for visuals such as pictures, graphs, and charts. These representations of the subject can be a powerful aid to getting concepts across to the learner. Cyrs recommends that you step through your print materials and think about them visually. Perhaps information about a chronology of events can be shown as a timetable with pictures representing activities or people, for example.

☞ *Use student centered instruction.*
   Make instruction organized, planned and clear. Get to know your students as much as possible and their reasons for taking the course. Provide means for students to learn about each other and support their interaction as a valuable resource for learning. Make the learning as active as possible, relying on students' participation to enhance engaged learning rather than passive learning. Give timely feedback so that students know where they stand in the class and they know they can turn to you with questions and concerns.

☞ *Keep communication in general above and beyond course specific issues open. It is a critical factor in successful distance education course completion.*
   Issues about how the distance education course is structured and how to handle technical difficulties are prime concerns for learners. Administrative issues regarding finances, grades, and future coursework all need to be addressed. Having clear objectives for the course and student expectations for fulfilling the requirements of the course can mean the difference between student retention and completion, and student dropout. Showing interest in distance students as a special population and going out of one's way to include them in the culture of the main institution helps distance students feel more a part of the system and that the institution is committed to them.

These are just a few of the helpful chapters in Cyrs' book. Other subjects include evaluation of distance courseware, various types of distance technology (low level and advanced technologies), and copyright issues. The lines between conventional face-to-face teaching and learning and distance modes are blurring as more courses are being created with distance technologies. Whether you are taking professional development courses online or your students are taking advantage of web-based learning or GED on TV, having a broader understanding of the issues involved in distance learning helps when deciding to venture into such new waters.

Cyrs, T. E. (Ed.). (1997). Teaching and learning at a distance: What it takes to effecitvely design, deliver, and evaluate programs (New Directions for Teaching and Learning, 71). San Francisco: Jossey-Bass. 125 pages. ISBN 0787998842.

This book can be ordered for $22.00 plus shipping and handling from Jossey Bass: (888) 378-2537. It can also be borrowed from the OLRC. Please use the request form found in this newsletter.

Are you guilty of…?

by Kimberly S. McCoy

Are you guilty of visiting a web site, seeing something of interest, and printing, copying, and distributing the information? If so, you have more than likely violated the copyright law. According to the copyright law, an individual has to obtain permission from the owner of the "original works" if he or she is interested in copying, altering, and/or distributing information collected from the Internet.

The United States Library of Congress Copyright Office (June 1998) has stated, "Copyright protects original works of authorship that are fixed in a tangible form of expression." To illustrate, an on-line web page document is considered a tangible form of expression. Original works dealing with the Internet include graphics, text, video, animation, sound and email messages and are therefore copyrighted materials. Types of material that would not be considered "original work" of expression on-line are blank forms, short phrases, names, titles, facts and ideas. (See public domain.)

Permission to use copyrighted materials
Many individuals mistakenly believe that it is only necessary to obtain permission if the copyright symbol appears on the material. This was true until the revision of the 1989 copyright law, which states that it is not necessary to indicate a copyright symbol, and/or statement on "original works" in order for it to protected by copyright law. As soon as "original work" is created it is protected by copyright law. *Assume that any online document is copyrighted unless it expressly says that it is not copyrighted or may be freely distributed.*

When obtaining permission to use copyrighted material it is necessary to contact the owner of the copyrighted works. The owner of the copyrighted material is the only person who can give you permission to use the work. Be aware that the author/creator of the copyrighted works, webmaster or network administrator of the web page/site may or may not be the owner. For example, in the event, the creator of the "original works" decides to transfer ownership, then the author/creator no longer owns the copyright.

Public Domain
It is legal to copy a piece of material from the Internet if it is considered to be in the public domain. Materials that are considered to be in the public domain include:
- Materials whose copyright has expired
- Copyright works created and copyrighted under the Copyright Act of 1909 or 1976 that does not carry the necessary copyright notice on the work
- Materials created prior to the revision of the 1989 copyright law if the "owner" of the copyrighted works did not renew the copyright
- Original "non-copyrightable" ideas, facts, titles, names, short phrases and blank forms
- Federal documents published by government agencies such as laws, regulations, statutes, etc.
- Information willfully placed in the public domain

Fair Use
According to the fair use component of the copyright law, it is legal to use a **small portion** of copyrighted material for educational purpose such as teaching materials, media projects and/or research documents and non-educational purposes such as a discussion piece or comment section. Right now it is not clear as to how much someone is allowed to use when dealing with resources on the Internet. When other mediums of copyrighted material are used for educational purposes a certain amount of information can be used under the copyright law. For instance, someone in the education arena can use 10% or 3 minutes (smallest of the two) of a motion media without obtaining permission from the copyright owner. If an educator or student would like to use copyrighted text material, only 10% or 1000 words (smallest of the two) can be used.

OLRC's Policy

The OLRC's policy is to obtain permission from sites that do not grant permission on their web page. To date, we have never been denied permission to use any of these works. Additionally, when a web site provides automatic permission to use their materials, we generally send an email informing the owner of the work that we are using the materials.

The Internet contains a wide variety of resources, and copyright laws protect large portions of those resources. Remember, if you are considering copying, altering and/or distributing any information from the Internet, play it safe and always request permission if it's not clearly granted on the web site. Don't risk the chance of violating the copyright laws; if found guilty you could be looking into some hefty legal fees in addition to monetary fines.

For Additional Information on Cyberspace & Copyright issues:

¨ United States Copyright Office: The Library of Congress. (1998). Copyright General Information and Publications. **<lcweb.loc.gov/copyright/>**

¨ Task Force for Responsibility and Freedom on the Internet. (1995). Netsurfer's Simple Guide to Copyright. **<www.scientology.org/trfn/netsurfer.html>**

¨ Institute for Learning Technologies. (1998). The ILT Guide to Copyright. **<www.ilt.columbia.edu/projects/copyright/index.html>**

¨ Michael M. Lean, Queensland University of Technology. (1996). Copyright and the World Wide Web. **<www.scu.edu.au/sponsored/ausweb/ausweb95/papers/future/lean/>**

¨ Brad Templeton. 10 Myths about Copyright explained. **<www.templetons.com/brad/copymyths.html>**

¨ Benedict O'Mahoney. (1995-98). The Copyright Website. **<www.benedict.com/>**

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Looking for Lesson Plans?
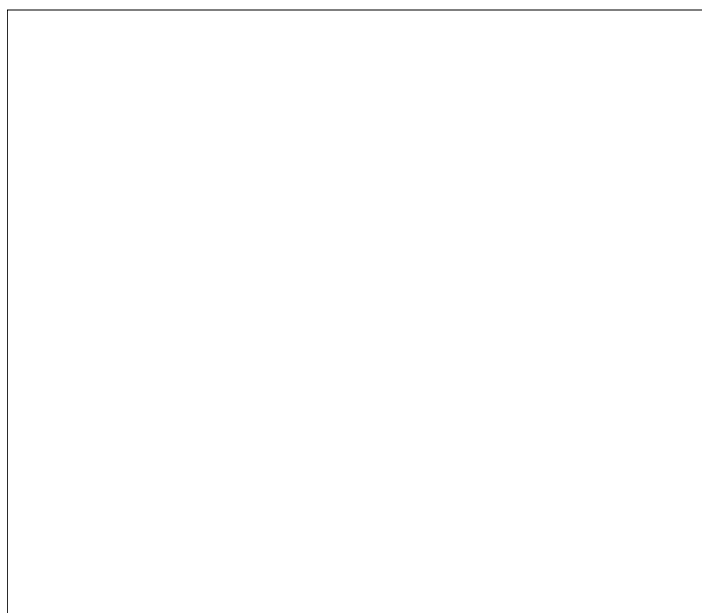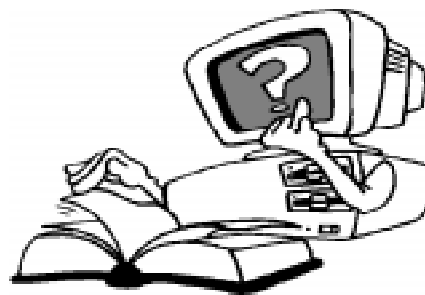
☞ **Educate The Children-Lesson Plans and Resources for Children from 7-11** contains numerous lesson plans as well as teaching aids dealing with English, Mathematics, Science, Geography, Religion, Art, History, Assessment, and Languages. You can access these resources by going to their web page at **<wkweb4.cableinet.co.uk/sixtynine/educate/>**.

☞ **Teachers.net Lesson Bank** at **<www.teachers.net/lessons/>** contains over 400 lesson plans and curriculum development ideas. This site is a great resource base for educators who are interested in sharing ideas as well as obtaining information about a particular subject matter. To illustrate, educators can post, submit, request, search and/or browse this web site in order to obtain additional information regarding a particular lesson they might be interested in.

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Midwest Regional Technology Hub 1998 Ohio Local Program Projects

The 1998 Midwest Regional Technology Hub Local Program Project is supported through the National Institute for Literacy and the Ohio Literacy Resource Center. Each year technology mini-grants are given to local programs in each of the regional Midwest states to create or investigate new ways to use the Internet within their programs.

The purpose of the grant last year was to increase the amount of quality locally produced materials online. The five selected programs in Ohio were:

- CORC Private Industry Council, Inc. (Coshocton)
- Cincinnati Public Schools
- Ravenna City Schools EVEN START
- Painesville ABLE
- Steubenville City Schools ABLE

Each of the program participants worked hard to provide local materials that they felt would add to adult basic literacy materials on the Internet. The topics chosen ranged from family literacy, to individual writing lessons, to integrated curriculum geography lessons. Each program submitted materials in text and digital form to be converted to a web-based format by staff at the OLRC. Once online, these projects will enable the whole adult literacy community to benefit from literacy professionals here in Ohio. Thanks to all of you for your hard work!

Look for the link to these projects on our "What's New" page (URL below) and test-drive our Ohio project materials for your classroom. Don't forget to email us with feedback! **<http://literacy.kent.edu/Oasis/Whatsnew/new.html>**

For more information, contact Margarete Epstein at x-20 or mepstein@literacy.kent.edu

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Summer Institute for Literacy & Technology

Kimberly McCoy and Margarete Epstein, two OLRC technology assistants, attended the 1998 Summer Institute for Literacy and Technology. The Center for Literacy at Dawson College in Montreal, and Georgia Tech Lifelong Learning Network coordinated this conference which attracted attendees from Canada, the United States, England, and Angola. The focus of the conference was examining technology issues in light of opportunities and challenges for adult literacy and education. A couple of the highlights of the conference that may be of interest and use to those in the field are:

- an overview of the Canadian National Literacy Secretariat (NLS) an organization similar to our National Institute For Literacy(NIFL). This presentation included information on the National Adult Literacy Dabtabase (NALD) site **<http://www.nald.ca/index.htm>** which has some rich resources for ABLE practitioners, students, and administrators.
- a presentation on PIN - Parents Information Network, the United Kingdom's national independent organization that is specifically focused on helping families with new technology. Their web site is **<www.pin-parents.com>**. This organization offers parents the ability to evaluate, purchase and integrate new technology in order to learn more about computers and help their children.

Individuals representing all levels of literacy involvement, from student to national literacy organization representatives discussed the challenges of integrating technology into the literacy field. Technology access for diverse populations, use of assistive technology for the learning disabled, and changes in the workforce to more advanced uses of technology were all topics of discussion. However, technology holds much promise as well, especially in the area of connecting people and providing support to those involved in the literacy field.

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