

# The Distance

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## Making an E-portfolio Decision: Engaging the College Community

Don Watts and Cindy Teghtmeyer

Educators, students, and artists have used portfolios for a variety of applications such as assessing student teachers, displaying the quality of their creations, and showing development and accomplishment of work to clients.

At Mount Royal College (MRC), a number of programs use or have used hard copy portfolios within their program curricula. With the growing use of electronic portfolios (e-portfolios) in post-secondary education, some MRC faculty were interested in investigating how e-portfolios might support student learning, but not committed enough to implement an ongoing initiative. The College formed an e-portfolio Interest Group (the Group) with representation from faculty, information systems, support staff, career services, and learning skills for the purpose of conducting an e-portfolio feasibility study. This group was the beginning of the process to engage the College community in a decision-making process.

The Group noted the assessment and learning outcomes needs of curricula at the College and identified how e-portfolios might provide support. They also determined the issues that could influence the success of an e-portfolio initiative along with possible solutions. The bottom-line question: would an e-portfolio initiative be in the best interest of the College and if so, what is a plan for future direction? major questions arose:

—————>> continued on page 10 >>

### About the Authors

**Don Watts, BA, MA, AGDDE**  
As the Curriculum Development Coordinator at Mount Royal College, in the Academic Development Centre, Don coordinates the development and implementation of College-wide initiatives related to outcomes-based curricula, assessment plans, and e-portfolios. He works closely with academic

departments to facilitate the planning, development, and implementation of curriculum and program renewal.

**Cindy Teghtmeyer**  
Cindy has 21 years in the Information Technology field with 15 years experience in post-secondary education and Banner. In her role with Mount Royal College, Cindy

facilitates/manages the research, assessment, implementation and support of software packages and tools. Cindy believes development of strong vendor/client relationships opens the doors for open communication and collaboration that will enable improved product and services for Mount Royal College clients, faculty and staff.

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**Editor's Message**

**Camille Jensen**

Welcome to 2006! This Winter Issue launches our first themed newsletter on e-portfolios ... and a jam-packed issue it is. We've got seven feature articles supporting our e-portfolio theme alone, along with regular articles, updates, announcements and the latest on Interface 2006...plus a Sidethought too.

There is surely to be something of interest to you.

I quickly realized on my first read of this collection, there are several ways one could spell the single word for electronic portfolios. E-portfolios haven't made it to the Canadian Oxford Dictionary or Merriam-Webster yet. Wikipedia uses the techno-savvy capitalized P: ePortfolio. 'E' hyphen Portfolio (E-Portfolio) at the start of a sentence looks a bit strange. Starting a headline with a small 'e' (ePortfolio) hurts my eyes. What to do? Both dictionaries have opted to notate e-mail with a hyphen. So, in an effort toward consistency, and against my personal preference, I opted to spell e-portfolio with the hyphen and not capitalize the 'p'. Either I've got too much time on my hands or all this writing in my graduate courses is spilling into my work life!

You may notice a few subtle tweaks to this issue beyond the themed approach. Take a moment to glance at the ads on pages 17 and 21. I'm calling for book, website and blog reviews along with your impressions of 'cheap' and 'easy' learning technologies.

Angela Kress, trusty layout artist, and I have decided to try a new font on for size. If you look closely we've selected something rounder and hopefully easier to read for those of you printing or receiving a hard copy. Can you guess the new font? Send your font guesses, 300 word reviews and Sidethoughts anytime to me at [camille.adeta@shaw.ca](mailto:camille.adeta@shaw.ca).

Ciao,

Camille

**About this Publication**

The Distance is published three times a year by the Alberta Distance Education & Training Association as a service to its members.

We welcome your comments and suggestions. Send comments by email to the Editor, Camille Jensen ([camille.adeta@shaw.ca](mailto:camille.adeta@shaw.ca)) or by regular mail:

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Individual members may participate in all discussions, have one vote on all issues and hold office.

Annual Individual Membership: \$40.00

**Student Members:**

Student members may participate in all discussions but do not have a vote and cannot hold office.

Annual Student Membership: \$15.00

**For more information:**  
[www.adeta.org](http://www.adeta.org)

# President's Message

Sandi Barber

I am privileged to have such a talented and dedicated bunch working on the ADETA board. This fall, we continued to work on important initiatives that began in the 2004-2005 academic year. We met in Red Deer for a day of planning in August and have been following up with monthly board meetings since then. Here's what we have been up to since the fall.



Sandi on the Edmonton Queen at Interface 2005

- The Fall Workshop "On Track for Online!" was held at NorQuest College this year and was tailored to eCampus and online course development. We are pleased to report 38 new members joined ADETA when they registered for the workshop!
- Interface 2006 will be held at the University of Lethbridge from May 10-12. The theme this year is "Alberta's Renaissance." For more information about the conference, visit <http://interface2006.uleth.ca>
- ADETA will be entering into an agreement with eCampus Alberta in order to collaborate on professional development opportunities for both memberships. Watch for updates on our website soon.
- We are evaluating the use of PLONE as our website solution. The move to this open source web development tool will allow us to implement the Strategic Direction plan of offering Communities of Practice to our members.
- We have formalized important ADETA relationships with contracts for services in the areas of newsletter editing, layout, and website maintenance.
- Our newly formed membership sub-committee is working on consolidating our membership lists. This work is in preparation for our new website development.
- Another new sub-committee is exploring the possibility of new member awards to be presented at Interface this year.
- Our online PD events are very popular due to the interesting and timely topics.
- The results of the survey conducted last year will be sent to members in January 2006. Here are a few highlights:
  - ADETA members are a busy lot, with 35% belonging to other professional organizations.
  - Over half of the respondents consider themselves instructional designers, project managers (33%), and/or teachers (31%).
  - ADETA members are seasoned professionals with 82% of respondents in their profession for over six years.
  - Forty-four percent of all respondents live in southern Alberta (including Calgary), 47% live in northern Alberta (including Edmonton), 4% in central Alberta, and 4% out-of-province.
  - Respondents rated the following services as important to very important:
    - Interface annual conference (75%)
    - Online PD opportunities (72%)
    - Networking opportunities (70%)
    - *The Distance* newsletter (57%)
    - The listserv (53%)
  - Most members indicated that ADETA's current mandate is appropriate and that the Board is doing good work.

Watch for the full report complete with recommendations to be distributed via the listserv in the New Year. I look forward to completing the initiatives listed above before year's end. And as always, I welcome your input and comments. To reach me, you can call 780.417.8417 or e-mail me at [sandib@nait.ca](mailto:sandib@nait.ca).

In addition to my ADETA responsibilities, I will be working with the Board for Habitat for Humanity Women's Build occurring in Edmonton this spring. Habitat for Humanity Women's Build projects promote the involvement of women in the construction of Habitat houses. We will be building a two-storey duplex between April and June 2006 in Edmonton. To find out more about this build or others and get involved, please contact either me or the Habitat office at:

<http://edmontonhfh.org>

phone (780) 479-3566 | email: [habitat@edmontonhfh.org](mailto:habitat@edmontonhfh.org)

**ADETA Announcements****ADETA 2006 Research Award**

Ingrid Stammer

As practicing distance educators and trainers, many ADETA members have contributions to make to our understanding of this field. In order to support and encourage research and reflection on practice, ADETA has established an annual award for the best research project completed by one of its members. The award includes of a free registration to Interface and publication of an article based on the research in this newsletter.

The criteria for the selection of the winning submission are:

- Relevance to ADETA members.
- Quality and rigor of the research design and implementation.
- Impact of the results on the theory or the practice of distance education.

The Research Award Selection Committee is chaired by the past-president of ADETA. To be considered for the award, applicants must be current ADETA members.

The purpose of the Research Award is to recognize and publicize research conducted by ADETA members which makes a contribution to our understanding of distance teaching or training and learning. Besides scholarly or theoretical submissions, the award is intended for projects that systematically examine or evaluate practices of our members. The project should be documented in such a way that the results and findings are accessible to ADETA members and other interested groups. For this reason, longer works (major papers, theses, dissertations, project reports, etc.) must be summarized, in a maximum of 3000 words, before submission for consideration by the Research Award Selection Committee. If the research is already published online, the URL should be provided. A synopsis of the winning work will be printed in the ADETA newsletter, based on the summary provided. (The work's author is responsible for obtaining copyright clearance for ADETA's use of the material, if necessary.)

The deadline for submissions is April 30 annually. Nominations for the Research Award must be made by an ADETA member other than the author of the nominated work. Submissions may be forwarded by mail, or email to Ingrid Stammer, Past-President.

**E-mail:** [ingrid\\_stammer@cpr.ca](mailto:ingrid_stammer@cpr.ca)  
**Phone:** 403.319.7245  
**Address:** Suite 600  
401 – 9 Avenue SW  
Calgary, Alberta  
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**On Track for Online:  
Fall Workshop Wrap-up**

Kim Arsenault

The ADETA Fall Workshop held at NorQuest College on October 21, 2005, was themed **On Track for Online**. The crowd of over 70 participants and a dozen presenters brought energy and talent to the day's proceedings. In partnership with eCampus Alberta we highlighted an eCampus Stream for eCampus faculty and offered incentives for registration and ADETA membership – the backpacks were a hot item! We can now brag about the best Fall Workshop attendance in some time! Sandi Barber, ADETA President, opened the workshop and welcomed participants.

Tricia Donovan, of eCampus Alberta, spoke briefly about the exciting possibilities ahead for eCampus and the changing roles and responsibilities of teaching online. Full of good tidings, muffins, and coffee, the participants set out for the labs and classrooms for the morning's concurrent sessions. Pattie Mascaro from Mount Royal College presented a session on *WebQuests* in two parts. Jim Zimmer, also of Mount Royal College, led a session on *The Seven Principles of Good Practice in Undergraduate Education*, based on the work of Chickering and Gamson. Ken McKee of the Northern Alberta Institute of Technology led a session on the elements of good design for online courses using minimalist

theory to enhance student learning. Sheila Whitmore presented the eCampus online rubric developed by Lakeland College.

Participants enjoyed lunch and networking then resumed the day back at the main reception room for the plenary "Showcase". Three presentations addressed the benefits and processes of developing interactive courses and skillfully demonstrated some of the elements developed within these projects. Our thanks to

- Bob Lekivetz and Peter McIntosh of Norquest College for *Video Labs for Chemistry and Physics*,
- Susan Ward-Cornish & Barry Ritson of NAIT for *Boom Truck Online*,
- Frank Walton of Lethbridge Community College for PreCalculus Math.

Before sending the tired but happy participants on their way home, Sandi Barber concluded the day with another round of door prizes. While the day centered on the sessions and speakers, opportunities for networking and collaboration were plentiful, and the volume of chatter and laughter in the main reception room indicated a high level of enthusiasm and enjoyment by everyone. The ADETA Board would like to take this opportunity to once again thank participants, speakers and presenters for making the annual ADETA Fall Workshop an event to be remembered. A very special thank you goes to Norquest College for providing technical support and facilities that were outstanding. See you next year!

## ADETA Board Nominations & Elections

Ingrid Stammer

It is never too early to start thinking about succession planning. In 2006 the ADETA Board of Directors will be seeking nominations for the positions of President and two board members. The President will be elected to a one-year term, while the board members are elected to a two-year term. Two ADETA members may submit the nomination of a member, with a biographical sketch to the Nomination and Elections Committee. Candidates must be members in good standing of the association, and must be nominated by members in good standing. Elections will be held at the Annual General Meeting during Interface 2006.

Consider nominating an energetic and enthusiastic ADETA member, or standing yourself. The experience is challenging and rewarding.

Nominations for the Board of Directors may be sent to the Nominating and Elections Committee.

**ADETA - Nominating and Elections Committee 2006**  
**Box 47022, 62 Edmonton Center**  
**Edmonton, Alberta T5J 4N1**

## Public Relations Committee Update

Brigitte Lépine

The Public Relations Committee's four main projects have kept the group quite busy since June as summarized below.

### New Member Package

We developed a new membership package and it is now finally complete. The member orientation package is done. It is located at [www.adeta.org/board.htm](http://www.adeta.org/board.htm) and select New Member Orientation Package. If you have any comments please send them to Brigitte Lépine at [blepine@bbwebmedia.com](mailto:blepine@bbwebmedia.com).

### Newsletter

From the membership survey we learned our membership find the newsletter beneficial. There has been much discussion among the Board about how we could improve the newsletter. We have lots of ideas, and will implement improvements over the next several issues starting with themed newsletters. Complementary copies of *The Distance* go the Learning Ministry as well as Presidents and Vice-Presidents of Alberta universities and colleges. We have recently embarked on a much-needed update of the complimentary list. If you know of someone who should be considered for the complimentary list, or would like to suggest a theme for upcoming issues, please send your ideas to the Editor at [camille.adeta@shaw.ca](mailto:camille.adeta@shaw.ca).

### Website

We are into the groundwork for a new website and exploring the features of Plone ([plone.org](http://plone.org)) as a content management system. A Plone based website will better service and manage our membership and to provide an opportunity to create a community of practice. We will be seeking members for a website committee soon. Watch the ADETA listserv for a call for committee members.

## Online PD Highlights for Fall 2005

Pattie Mascaro

In November, we were pleased to host two online PD sessions on topics of great interest to ADETA members.

On November 3, 2005, D'Arcy Norman, from the University of Calgary discussed how one of the latest technology trends, podcasting, is being used in Higher Education in his presentation Podcasting in Education. D'Arcy gave us some examples of how some post-secondary institutions are using podcasts, showed us how to create our own podcasts, and addressed the future of podcasts given the recent release of the video iPod in late 2005.

Later in November, Karen Andrews from Alberta Education, and Trevor Woods from the University of Lethbridge, gave us the latest news about the Alberta Videoconferencing Scene. They discussed recent research projects and showed the newest additions to the VCAlberta.ca website (a remarkable resource for those involved in all aspects of videoconferencing.)

You access the archives of these sessions by going to:  
[www.adeta.org/pd/archive.htm](http://www.adeta.org/pd/archive.htm).

In December, we opened our Second Annual Holiday Open House. The ADETA Holiday Open House is an online showcase of recent web simulations, interactivities, and virtual realities created by those on the Alberta Education scene. The Open House continues until the end of January. For more information, see the note in Current and Upcoming Online PD Events for 2006.

## Current and Upcoming Online PD Events for 2006

ADETA Holiday Open House (asynchronous event)

Begin the New Year with a visit to the ADETA Holiday Open House. Please visit the showcase site at the URL below. Each entry has a URL that will allow you to view that showcase item. Join the holiday conversation by posting comments for the Open House participants.

Please visit the showcase site at the URL below. Each entry has a URL that will allow you to view that showcase item. Join the holiday conversation by posting comments for the Open House participants.

<http://elgg.net/adetaholiday/weblog>

Only ADETA Members can vote for the favourite showcase item. The voting site and password were distributed to ADETA members via the ADETA listserv.

**Friday January 27 – 12pm to 1pm MT**

Join Norman Vaughan of the University of Calgary and Jim Zimmer from Mount Royal College as they discuss approaches to Faculty Professional Development for Instructors delivering Blended Learning Courses. Registration opens on January 6, 2006.

To register online, please go to:

[www.sporg.com/pom/registration?cmd=event\\_info&event\\_id=36961](http://www.sporg.com/pom/registration?cmd=event_info&event_id=36961)

**Other Upcoming events for 2006**

Stay posted to the ADETA website and ADETA listserv as we announce dates and open registration for other Monthly PD sessions for 2006.

### Converging Minds: Tools for Innovative Solutions

April 25 – 26, Vancouver, BC

Join researchers, visionaries, network experts, and government leaders at Canada's largest advanced networks conference on April 25-26, 2006 at the SFU Harbor Centre in Vancouver, BC. Netera Alliance is partnering with BCNET and WestGrid to host Converging Minds: Tools for Innovative Solutions.

Participants from across Canada and the United States will exchange ideas about high-bandwidth networks and advanced applications for enabling innovation in research and education. For more information, visit:

[www.bc.net/news\\_events\\_publications/bcnet\\_advanced\\_networks](http://www.bc.net/news_events_publications/bcnet_advanced_networks)



## Women Build 2006 Building Homes and Hope

Edmonton's first Women Build is underway. With a ground breaking ceremony slated for April 11, this Habitat for Humanity construction project is being spearheaded by a wonderful group of community-spirited women who have already been busy securing sponsorship support, procuring materials for the build, developing support for the build among women of influence and inspiration in Edmonton, recruiting volunteers to swing the hammers, and training the volunteers.

The Canadian Women Build Program, established in 2003, was set up to promote involvement and leadership roles for women in the construction of Habitat for Humanity homes. These projects demonstrate the positive difference women can make when they come together to do something non-traditional. Women with no background in the trades will be working alongside construction professionals to build the Edmonton home, but, of course, this build – like all Habitat for Humanity builds – is about so much more than construction – it's about building hope for families.

A traditional role for women in our society has been as builders of hearth and home – we create spaces in which our families can feel safe and can thrive. With Women Build, building a home takes on a new significance, as we actually build the house that can become the home for a family to realize its hopes and dreams.

ADETA board member Sandi Barber is a Women Build board member in the pivotal role of training volunteers. "It's critical that any woman who volunteers to participate in building be safe and well-trained," explains Sandi. "Not only do we have a commitment to



running a safe site, we know that the build is so much more enjoyable and efficient if the training is effective." Working with her NAIT colleagues in the trades and construction areas, Sandi has been getting phenomenal support for this unique building project. "From Dr. Shaw and everyone I've approached, there has been great excitement about helping to make this first Edmonton Women Build a great success."

The project aims to be complete within eight weeks of ground breaking and promises to be fun as well as meaningful. Anyone interested in volunteering for this build should contact:  
**Women Build at 780.479. 3566.**

**INTERFACE 2006 Alberta's Renaissance****Interface 2006****May 10 - 12th, 2006**

University of Lethbridge

Interface 2006 will be held at the University of Lethbridge, in Lethbridge, Alberta from May 10th to the 12th. The format will be similar to previous years with the first day being a series of workshops followed by two days of keynote and conference presentations.

The theme of this year's conference is Alberta's Renaissance. The theme makes reference to the completion of Alberta's SuperNet high-speed network, and the ushering in of new training possibilities in even the most remote locations in the province. SuperNet is now complete and operational in thousands of facilities in 429 communities across Alberta, making the province more connected than ever before.

Conference sessions will focus on rich media possibilities, videoconferencing, as well as traditional hypertext-based training solutions. Two keynote presentations will be given and an additional forty-eight concurrent sessions will be offered to attendees.

The conference web site is now live at <http://interface2006.uleth.ca> with information about the Lethbridge area, accommodations and keynote sessions. A call for proposals for our conference sessions will be issued shortly and available online.

Registration prices for Interface 2006 remain unchanged from previous years.

Early bird price	\$225 (up to February 28th)
Regular price	\$275 (after February 28th)
Student rate	\$165 (available to all current students with valid student ID at check-in)
Daily rate	\$165 (for single-day attendance)
Workshop	\$85

Any questions or requests for additional information should be directed to:

**Jonathan Lane, CRDC**  
**University of Lethbridge**  
 403.394.3924  
[lanej0@uleth.ca](mailto:lanej0@uleth.ca)

**Interface 2006: Call for Proposals****May 10 - 12th, 2006**

University of Lethbridge

ADETA and the Interface 2006 Planning Committee invite you to submit proposals for Interface 2006: Alberta's Renaissance. Please submit proposals for the following:

**Interactive Presentation**

Presentation of a paper, or project, including overview and discussion, followed by audience interaction. (60 minutes)

**Panel Discussion**

Up to five individuals expresses opinions and discusses an issue, with the audience interacting by asking questions, raising arguments, and sharing relevant experiences. (60 minutes)

**Pre-conference Workshops**

Each workshop offers a presentation of an interactive session that offers the audience new skills. The presenter is expected to introduce the workshop, lead participants through activities, and interact with the audience throughout the presentation. These May 10th pre-conference workshops will be scheduled as half-day blocks.

**Proposal Format**

1. Proposed Title - Make the title descriptive of the content.
2. Presentation Objectives (50 - 60 words)
3. Presentation's relation to conference strand (see below) 90 - 100 words.
4. Presentation - Plan for organization and delivery of the presentation. (50 - 60 words)

**INTERFACE 2006 Alberta's Renaissance**

5. Contact Information, Presenter and Co-presenters - Include for each person: name, organization, address, e-mail address, phone number, fax number
6. Presenter(s) Biography (50 -100 words)
7. Media to be used in presentation / AV equipment required
8. Presentation Strands: To Be Announced, check the website at <http://interface2006.uleth.ca/proposals.cfm>.

**Submission due date:**  
**January 31st, 2006.**

Please send your completed document to:

Jonathan Lane

E-mail: [lanej0@uleth.ca](mailto:lanej0@uleth.ca)

Address:

**Curriculum Re-Development Centre**  
**University of Lethbridge**  
**4401 University Drive West**  
**Lethargies, AB T1K 3M4**

### Selection Criteria

All proposals will be reviewed by the program committee with consideration of the following:

- Objectives: a clear statement of purpose
- Strands: presentation is consistent with identified conference strands
- Content: focus on new or innovative knowledge and ideas
- Presentation Plan: format and technique; interaction with audience

### Notification

Those selected as presenters will be notified no later than February 28th 2006. NOTE: presenters will be invited to submit their paper or presentation (e.g. PowerPoint slides) by March 31st 2006 for inclusion in a publication of Conference Proceedings.

## Bates and Pychyl Keynote Interface 2006



We have confirmed Dr. Tony Bates as our first keynote speaker. Dr. Bates is President and CEO of Tony Bates Associates Ltd., a firm specializing in the development of e-learning and distance education solutions. He is also part-time chair of research into e-learning at the Open University of Catalonia and on the Academic Advisory Board for Volkswagen Auto Uni, based in Germany (for more information please see

Dr. Bates' personal web site at [www.tonybates.ca](http://www.tonybates.ca)).

Dr. Tim Pychyl has been confirmed as our second keynote speaker. Dr. Pychyl is the graduate chair in the Department of Psychology at Carlton University. He is the recipient of four teaching awards, including a 3M Teaching Fellowship. Dr. Pychyl is active in faculty and curriculum activities, his most recent project being a pan-Canadian web site focused on helping faculty with their teaching ([www.facultydevelopment.ca](http://www.facultydevelopment.ca)).



## Interface 2006: Alberta's Renaissance

**May 10 - 12, 2006**  
**University of Lethbridge**

### Important dates

Call for Proposals: January 31<sup>st</sup>  
Presentation Notification: February 28<sup>th</sup>  
Early Bird Registration: February 28<sup>th</sup>  
Pre-Conference Workshops: May 10<sup>th</sup>  
Conference

For details, visit  
<http://interface2006.uleth.ca>



*Interface '06*  
Alberta's Renaissance

## Feature Articles

>> cover story continued >>

1. How are other institutions of higher education using e-portfolios?
2. What are the implications if the College implements an e-portfolio initiative?
3. What is the level of interest at the College around e-portfolios?
4. What do we have to consider at the College to ensure that an e-portfolio initiative is successful?
5. What technology standards should be used to evaluate e-portfolio products?
6. What resources are required to support an e-portfolio initiative?

These questions became the focus of the e-portfolio initiative feasibility study. Following are the processes applied and the results to date.

### Purposes of the Feasibility Study

The specific purposes of the e-portfolio feasibility study were to:

- Identify what academic areas want to accomplish around student learning and how can an e-portfolio support the goals,
- Answer questions about student workload related to learning about and maintaining an e-portfolio,
- Identify the impact of an e-portfolio initiative on teaching and learning in the classroom,
- Identify the resources and support required for a College-wide initiative,
- Identify issues and barriers to be addressed (e.g. program diversity).

### Benefits of an E-portfolio for Students

The Group identified that e-portfolios would benefit students by acting as:

- An avenue to assess and track student accomplishments, set learning goals, and build self-confidence,
- A showcase of student learning to market academic areas,
- A process for students to conduct reflective thinking and self-assessment on their learning and its application,
- An avenue to prepare students for self-marketing and job searching,
- A chance to enhance student computer skills,
- A support for program and curriculum feedback and ongoing curriculum renewal.

### Student Survey Findings

Four different groups of students were surveyed on their perception of e-portfolios. One-quarter of the students were designing their own electronic portfolios, one-quarter were using MSWord files to document and display their learning, one-quarter of the students were using hard-copy portfolios, and one-quarter were not using portfolios.

The majority of students viewed e-portfolios as an opportunity to demonstrate the quality, scope and focus of their work to their instructors and potential employers. An e-portfolio was seen as providing flexibility of use, ease of storing files, versatility of presenting in a variety of circumstances, and an opportunity to display one's abilities and experiences. All students saw it as a tool to increase communication and contact with instructors through feedback and reflective activities. Students were concerned about the time to learn the required computer skills and to develop and maintain the portfolio. They noted that instructors needed to deliberately focus on the use of portfolios in course assignments if they want students to use them successfully.

Those students with experience with e-portfolios or hard-copy portfolios and/or confident in their computer skills were optimistic about the value of an e-portfolio to their learning and as a tool for gaining employment and benefiting their careers. Students with limited or no experience with computers and/or portfolios were skeptical about the value of maintaining an e-portfolio and using it for gaining employment. Some were concerned that maintaining an e-portfolio would not be of value during their studies if their potential field of employment had limited use of computers.

### What the Group Determined

A portfolio helps document and assess student performance and evaluating a portfolio encourages students to integrate learning and to demonstrate specific competencies e.g. critical thinking. In effect, they collect, document, reflect, and present on artifacts of their choice of learning to a variety of audiences (University of Washington, 2003).

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## Feature Articles

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At the heart of successful portfolios is reflective thinking. It integrates prior and new learning by helping students analyze and assess their experiences, learning, and work. Mandernach (2003) reports that portfolios imply that students' choose their best work to display based on knowledgeable reflections about their own work done over a period of time. What turns data into evidence of learning is reflection about the meaning of the materials selected (Cambridge, Kahn, Tompkins, & Yancey; 2001). The e-portfolio can be easily redesigned for presenting to different audiences. It provides the ease of storing, arranging, and displaying evidence of skills and knowledge acquired in educational experiences, independent learning, and contribution to one's profession.

### Other Institutions Using E-portfolios?

A number of institutions across North America have implemented e-portfolios initiatives. The Group reviewed 32 institutions including five institutions in Western Canada of which three Alberta institutions; Bow Valley College, Norquest College, and SAIT were interviewed.

### E-portfolio Specifications

The Group developed specifications to use for reviewing and selecting an e-portfolio technology: general requirements, instructional design and pedagogical soundness, organizing content, user flexibility, technical soundness, interface/navigation criteria, instructor use criteria, presentation criteria, and support. The specifications could be weighted for priority and considered for compliance by the Group reviewing vendor submissions. Over 100 specific criteria were identified. A more condensed checklist was developed by Challis (2005).

The Group reviewed a number of e-portfolio approaches for use at MRC. They included purchasing add-on, securing an application service provider (ASP), developing an in-house product, leasing another institution's system, and open-source portfolios. After investigating the options, the group recommended that the College consider either an ASP or a Purchase Add-on product.

An ASP would be a private organization contracted by the College to provide College users access to its e-portfolio system for an annual fee per user. The

ASP approach offered several benefits: it required no purchase of technical equipment or services, thus it reduced internal labour needs and costs; there was access to updated e-portfolio software; there were no collection of user fees; and the e-portfolio format was consistent. The limitations of an ASP included: students would carry user costs, a budget was needed for training, and there were possible limitations to adapting the e-portfolio to local program needs.

Purchasing an add-on e-portfolio product would ensure compatibility with the College's Learning Management System and the e-portfolio package. It would provide customer support over a system and defer user service fees to the College's budget. The limitations were that the College would incur upfront purchase costs, ongoing yearly fees, and costs associated with future upgrades. Due to capital and program priorities, the Group recommended that the College focus on selecting an ASP product that would meet the stated educational goals, technical specifications, and general guidelines.

### Resources Required

The Group identified the following resources as being critical to the success of the initiative:

- A project administrator;
- Access to current College resources such as student technical assistance;
- Technical assistance available through the Help Desk;
- Access to ADC resources such as technology consulting, curriculum and assessment support, professional development resources;
- Access to Media Production Services for video and audio services;
- A computer lab area for student and faculty support;
- Training for faculty and students;
- Technical support for any software and hardware infrastructure.

### Managing the E-portfolio Pilot Initiative

The MRC e-portfolio initiative would be program-based with the e-portfolio experiences and activities embedded within program courses. The programs involved would use the e-portfolio on an ongoing basis across the curriculum as a developmental tool progressively introduced over

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the length of the program. Program faculty would be responsible for implementing the initiative including establishing the application of the e-portfolio, setting expectations, assessing student performance, and participating in evaluating the initiative. A project administrator and a project team would be appointed to oversee the development, implementation, and evaluation of the initiative College-wide.

Other critical managing and administrative factors identified include:

- Implementing the initiative in selected College programs over a 2-3 year period,
- Establishing evaluation criteria in advance of implementing the initiative,
- Building assessment points into the initiative to assess progress and to make adjustments as required.

Additional questions related to managing the initiative included:

- Who would coordinate the development, budget, implementation, and evaluation of the e-portfolio initiative across the College?
- What would be the impact of the initiative on the workloads of faculty and students?
- Who would manage or coordinate the initiative within an academic area? If there is additional workload, how will it be recognized?
- What contact and relationship should there be with other College areas that support academic programs?
- What would be the long term impact of using e-portfolios on learning and assessment, teaching, budget, personnel needs, technical needs, and how would this be accounted for in budget and planning processes?

### Challenges

Implementing an initiative as complex as e-portfolios is not without its challenges. The Group identified six challenges:

1. Would the College culture support instructors and students to openly discuss student work?
2. What FOIP policies would impact assessing student work and evaluating the initiative?
3. What access would students have to their e-portfolios after graduation or drop-out? What would be the life cycle of the e-portfolio?

4. How open are members of the entire College community to sharing assignments and assessment standards, and with whom?
5. How compatible would an e-portfolio be with the pedagogy of MRC programs?
6. Would the climate of the College be receptive to an additional technology initiative?

The e-portfolio initiative would also face a number of constraints. Cambridge, Kahn, Tompkins, & Yancey (2001) reported that at Hartwick College, the ability to fully expand to full implementation of e-portfolios across the college was limited by the availability of resources, class sizes, and each instructor's time, priorities, and technical proficiency. It was identified that MRC would face similar constraints along with technology support for faculty and students; project coordination; lead-time for training faculty; and ongoing limited funding for sustaining the e-portfolio initiative.

### E-portfolio Implementation Planning Questions

The Group recommended that before a program considers introducing e-portfolios into the curriculum, faculty would need to address the following questions:

1. What would be the focus of the student portfolio: e.g. showcasing work, assessment of student learning outcomes?
2. What kinds of learning do faculty want the portfolio to assess?
3. What forms of assessment do faculty want portfolios to accommodate?
4. What courses would be identified from which students would submit artifacts?
5. When in the year would the work be assessed?
6. Who would assess the work?
7. In which course(s) would the e-portfolio be administered as part of the course curriculum and assessed?
8. Who would coordinate the initiative across program curriculum or across multiple course sections?
9. What reviewer responses would appear in the portfolio, if any?
10. Would students have the opportunity to reflect in their portfolio? Who would read the reflections?
11. Would the portfolio be assessed or would only the work displayed in the portfolio be assessed, or both?

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12. What level of technical application would be expected of students? Would students use or create templates or construct their own portfolios using programming language?

### Usability Review

In the final stage of the feasibility study, the Group implemented a usability review of two final e-portfolio products. A group of twenty College employees and students participated in a workshop on both e-portfolio products. They are currently experimenting with each product and using a fourteen-item survey matrix as a tool to report their responses. A second group of technology experts are conducting a more in-depth usability study applying the fourteen-item survey matrix and the Electronic Portfolio Initiatives: A Flashlight Guide to Planning and Formative Evaluation (2005).

### Conclusion

At the end of January 2006, the results of the feasibility study and the usability review will be used to select a single e-portfolio product on a trial basis. The initiative will include an annual evaluation of the effectiveness of the e-portfolio product and its support of the intended learning goals.

The feasibility study approach allowed the College to conduct a thorough review of the potential contributions that e-portfolios could make to enhance student learning. It engaged a large number of personnel in the review process, and assessed the value-added contributions of e-portfolios. ❏

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## Scrapbooking, Camping, and E-portfolios

Sandi Barber

I could never quite get into the scrapbooking craze. The idea of spending countless hours cutting and pasting little pieces of paper into beautiful works of art doesn't appeal to me. However, offer me an electronic tool for the purpose of "scrapbooking" my professional work and I'm hooked! At the very basic level, that is what e-portfolios are - virtual scrapbooks - the collection, reflection, and celebration of one's work or achievements.

A traditional definition:

**port-fo-lio**: the securities held by an investor: a set of pictures (as drawings or photographs) either bound in book form or loose in a folder (Merriam-Webster Online).<sup>1</sup>

The "e" definition:

**e-portfolio** is a portfolio based on using electronic media and services. (Wikipedia)<sup>2</sup>

While the above definition of an e-portfolio is a start, it doesn't tell the entire story. A more comprehensive definition might include other descriptors like an electronic storytelling tool, a virtual laboratory, or a public celebration of one's lifetime learning. I like the metaphor of an electronic campfire. I can relate to sitting around a crackling fire on a cool summer's night, the Rocky Mountains as a backdrop. Stories and talk of past adventures, mishaps, and fun times abound.<sup>3</sup> Storytelling lasts only as long as the campfire does. Eportfolios offer us the chance to keep the campfire going, to continue and share long after the night is over.

Besides storytelling, there are many other ways to incorporate e-portfolios for learning.

Dr. Helen Barrett<sup>4</sup> notes that e-portfolios can be categorized into five levels:

- Level 1 - Scrapbook
- Level 2 - Curriculum Vitae
- Level 3 - Curriculum Collaboration Between Student and Faculty
- Level 4 - Mentoring Leading to Mastery
- Level 5 - Authentic Evidence as the Authoritative Evidence for Assessment, Evaluation, and Reporting

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An e-portfolio can be individual-centered (Levels 1-2) or institution-centered (Level 3-5). Either way, it can be used to help learners demonstrate their abilities. Blogging is another valuable tool used for the storytelling aspects of educational e-portfolios. For more on e-portfolios and blogging, please refer to Diane Clark's article in this issue.

What level are you at? Have you already used e-portfolios in your educational practice? Do you use an electronic portfolio as an authentic assessment for your learners or as a professional reflective developmental journal? If you haven't already, I encourage you to explore the possibilities of this technology. Join the campfire! Make it your mission this year to convert your coffee table scrapbook to an online chronicle of your accomplishments!

Regardless of your progress with using e-portfolios, we hope you find our e-portfolios articles in *The Distance* informative. ☒

### E-portfolio Resources

Dr. Helen Barrett: [electronicportfolios.org](http://www.electronicportfolios.org)  
<http://www.electronicportfolios.org>

elearnspace everything elearning: eportfolios  
<http://www.elearnspace.org/Articles/eportfolios.htm>

A Guide to the Development of Professional Portfolios in the Faculty of Education  
<http://www.mcli.dist.maricopa.edu/dd/eportfolio02/resources.php>

eradc: ePortfolio Research and Development Community  
<http://eradc.org/index.php>

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- <sup>3</sup> <http://electronicportfolios.com/metaphors.html#story>
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## E-portfolios: More than the tool of the day!

Michael Hotrum

How do we reflect on our creations? How do we share what we create? How do we let people know what we create? At one time we painted on the cave walls, wore placards down the street, mailed resumes, held art shows, created journals, or carried portfolios. Now we can do it all electronically. The greatest fad of late – Electronic portfolio (e-portfolio) – is stirring up higher education. Students, faculty, and staff are posting reflections, learning, and assessments.

What do e-portfolios do for us? How often have you been through a course, done some great work, and then were never able to find it? Or perhaps you'd like to take the time to make changes and tweaks to make them better, or adapt them for a different audience. This is a tool for student-centered learning where students can store, document, reflect, reassess, and edit their artifacts over time, at their own pace, and carry them over from their academic world into their personal world and on into the work world.

*Definition: An e-portfolio is a highly personalized, customizable, web-based information management system, which allows students to demonstrate individual and collaborative growth, achievement, and learning over time.*

E-portfolios support the growth of a student throughout their academic career. They give students the opportunity to reflect upon their social and academic growth and get a head start on the development of work search tools. It places the student in the center of their learning and development.

### Functions of e-Portfolios:

**It's a storage system** allowing the dynamic access and control of student generated artifacts including resumes, media files, professional documents, and more.

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**It's an Information management system** that allows the students to learn and demonstrate information management skills through the creation, collection, selection, evaluation, maintenance, and accessing of data artifacts.

**It's a connection system.** Some e-portfolios are designed to link to various units within the larger educational community. Through managing and storing information students can be connected to various units within the larger educational community.

**It's a communication tool.** Students can create various public web pages to display artifacts localized for specific consumption. They can learn how to repurpose their private content for very specialized public consumption. They can control access to these public spaces making them available to specific audiences, like friends or family, or larger audiences, like professional or volunteer associations. From one private source of information, a variety of very specific "itches" can be made attuned to different audiences. It's not all a one-way street either. Students can solicit and receive comments and feedback in response to their postings.

**It's an historical tool,** documenting a student's developmental voyage through the education system. Through progressive assessments and skill requirements cross referenced to course or curriculum objectives, a history of a student's progress and advancement can be identified.

**It's a community tool,** keeping students and faculty in touch with each other and building a sense of community that can live beyond the end of a course, of the school year, or of the program.

E-portfolios can be excellent tools for community building, reflection, learning, and recording, but consider these basic points when developing an e-portfolio strategy and seeking e-portfolio tools:

- Be aware of licensing issues and limitations of proprietary e-portfolio systems
- E-portfolios are the students' property. Students should control access.
- What happens to the e-portfolio when students graduate?

- It is a personal tool. Don't weigh it down with institutional requirements, assessment, and job searching
- Use e-portfolios as assessment for learning, not of learning. See <http://electronicportfolios.org/digistory/epstory.html>

### Recommended: The Free tool!

Elgg is a learning landscape with the goal of connecting learners, instructors, and resources creating communities of learning. Elgg lets you set up a personal presence online and then use it to interact with others. Create your own weblog, journal, store of files like photos and Word documents, create communities, establish social networks, and manage your online content. Use Elgg to enhance reflective thought, your development, your resource base, and you decide who to share these with. Available at <http://elgg.net> ☒

### Examples

<http://webdbdev.ucs.ed.ac.uk/eucebs/portfolios/index.cfm?lang=EN>

### Additional Resources

[www.campus-technology.com/article.asp?id=6984](http://www.campus-technology.com/article.asp?id=6984)  
Overview of the use of e-portfolios in higher education institutions. Lists the benefits and drawbacks concluding with a succinct summary of future predictions.

### [www.osportfolio.org/](http://www.osportfolio.org/)

The Open Source Portfolio Initiative (OSPI) is a community of individuals and organizations collaborating on the development of the leading non-proprietary, open source electronic portfolio software available.

Atwell, Graham: Recognising Learning: Educational and pedagogic issues in e-Portfolios available at <http://elgg.net/gattwell/weblog/2613.html>

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## New Technology Gives BC Graduates a Career Edge

Ken McDonald



The toughest challenge facing students trying to land their first job is limited work experience.

MyWorks online portfolio gives BC graduates the advantage they need to showcase their educational experience and future career potential. Rather than just submit a resume, students can now present their portfolio electronically to potential employers.

MyWorks provides students with all the necessary tools to develop a dynamic online portfolio. MyWorks has all of the built-in functions and features needed by students and teachers to plan, create, manage, and evaluate portfolio content. Students can instantly create content using a variety of file formats including text, graphics, audio, and video. They can interactively obtain feedback from teachers and peers as their portfolio develops, as well as, track their own working progress.

Teachers also benefit from the time saving grading and reporting features. MyWorks' reporting capabilities allow teachers to generate reports for either individual students or an entire class. Reports can be viewed via the web, and can also be forwarded to students and parents by e-mail.

Built using IBM's proven QuickPlace technology, MyWorks provides the security and features to allow students to communicate and collaborate with their teachers and advisors to build a successful e-portfolio.

MyWorks was developed by Collaborative Learning Network Inc (CLN). CLN is an IBM Business Partner specializing in technology solutions that enable people to communicate, collaborate, learn, and access services via the Internet. Our mission is to provide a comprehensive system of user-friendly, tightly integrated Web applications and services that help people become more productive, responsive, innovative, and competent.

MyWorks e-portfolio has been adopted by 4 school districts in British Columbia: Vancouver School Board, Burnaby School district, Maple Ridge School District, and Nechako Lakes School District.

If you are interesting in learning more about MyWorks e-portfolio, please visit [www.myworks.ca](http://www.myworks.ca) or contact us at [myworks@co-learn.net](mailto:myworks@co-learn.net) and find out how you can get a MyWorks e-portfolio and a live demonstration. ☒

## NorQuest College E-portfolio Pilot Project

Cheryl Whitelaw

The Centre for Innovation and Development (CID) at NorQuest College began a pilot project this fall to evaluate the value and feasibility of e-portfolios for our students. For the pilot, four programs with approximately 75 students will explore using e-portfolios. The participating programs are the Press and Bindery program, the Transitions to Trades and Technical Careers program, the Hybrid Practical Nurse program, and the Aboriginal Policing and Security program. Additionally, two service units will be participating in the pilot. Educational Technologies, the department that provides computer support for students and Student Employment Careers Services, the department that provides support to students to develop resumes, to find work placements, and to find jobs following graduation will play active roles in the pilot.

Students participating in the pilot will be given a one year license and will be free to use their e-portfolio as they like. We felt it was important to integrate e-portfolio use into at least one specific program component and to link it to available support services. At NorQuest College, students have a high level of support services available to them. From personal support services, financial aid, educational support services, such as learner assessments or assistive technologies, and career planning and job search services. Students can access a wide variety of resources and services to help them successfully complete their academic and career goals.

Philosophically, we envision the e-portfolio as a student-owned resource to support academic and career planning, job search and learner reflection and growth. We realize, however, that our pilot project must also explore the student support models including student support services and linkages to program activities needed for our students to successfully use this resource as part of their NorQuest experience.

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Given the number of barriers many of our students must overcome to succeed in their academic and career goals, the pilot project will include a focus on reducing potential barriers to creating and using an e-portfolio.

The approach to incorporate an e-portfolio component varies depending on the learning outcomes and assessment activities for each program. Working with an instructional designer, each instructor assessed the learning outcomes that are supported by an e-portfolio activity and ways to adapt existing curriculum to integrate the creation of an e-portfolio. Program implementation plans will be refined following e-portfolio software training in January. Following a review of software by a team, we selected Chalk and Wire for the pilot project. Our primary criteria for selection were user-friendliness for students and ease of generating customized layouts and assessment templates.

For the Hybrid Practical Nurse program, there is a need for graduates to produce an annual competency profile for review by the College of Licensed Practical Nurses. Within the pilot, this program will start development of the e-portfolio in the first semester of the two-year program so the student will have, upon graduation, documented their work in the program to provide a baseline set of evidence for their competency profile. For the Press and Bindery program, the e-portfolio will provide a way to document and display student work to help students secure employment following the program and to practice computer skills that are part of the program learning outcomes.

The Transitions to Trades and Technical Careers program will use the e-portfolio to assist English as a Second language students in preparing for work placements and finding jobs upon graduation. The program includes a focused set of employment preparation activities which will be adapted to include e-portfolios.

The Aboriginal Policing and Security program will investigate the interest of their students to use e-portfolios to assist with job search and to practice documentation of completed work, an essential skill in policing and security.

The project will be evaluated to include student, instructor, and staff feedback on the creation and use of the e-portfolio and the support services provided to students during the pilot. CID will also host an e-portfolio showcase in fall 2006 to share project results. Students and faculty will be asked to share a version of their e-portfolios created during the pilot.

The potential value of e-portfolios for our students is the motivation for the pilot project. Students with international credentials seeking re-credentialing in English and employment in Canada, students that need to demonstrate evidence of their abilities for potential employers and professional associations, students working with NorQuest staff to assess prior learning and plan academic and career paths can all potentially benefit from using an e-portfolio to document and reflect on their learning experiences and to share evidence of their work.

Our students come to NorQuest College with a wide range of computer and literacy competencies: nearly half have dependants (46%) and many work one or more part-time jobs or full-time jobs while studying. The question of the feasibility of creating an e-portfolio for our students needs to be addressed in terms of the impact on workload, on the total cost of their post-secondary education, and the potential barriers to completing an e-portfolio. These factors need to be assessed in relation to student and instructor perceptions of value and the feasibility of providing appropriate student support services. Final project results will be available in fall 2006. ❖

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### E-portfolio Primer

Debbie Bateman and Doug Engh

#### What is an e-portfolio?

An e-portfolio is a collection of artifacts and reflections used to show a person's growth over time. Although the most common use of e-portfolios is for employment, they may also be used to show coursework and academic progress. A variety of materials can be organized in an e-portfolio, such as web pages, text files, spreadsheets, video clips, interactive multi-media files, and graphics.

E-portfolios have many advantages over traditional paper portfolios. They can store a larger volume of artifacts. They can present information in audio, visual or interactive format. Plus, e-portfolios rely heavily on self-reflection, which helps ensure that the significance of the artifacts is adequately understood, both by the person who created the e-portfolio and those who view it.

More than a collection of web pages, most e-portfolio systems used today provide sophisticated file management, access control, and security settings. Students can control who will be able to view their e-portfolio and provide feedback. Instructors can use student e-portfolios to provide feedback, assess academic progress, and monitor learning outcomes.

#### Types of E-portfolios

Basically, there are three types of e-portfolios:

- A *learning e-portfolio* tells a digital story of a student's academic progress by presenting artifacts, reflections, feedback, and improvement plans.
- An *assessment e-portfolio* shows a student's competencies, skills, and experience related to specific learning outcomes.
- A *presentational e-portfolio* demonstrates career goals, educational background, work experience, and skills to potential employers.

#### Benefits to Students

E-portfolios enable students to:

- take responsibility for their own learning
- receive feedback from fellow learners and their instructor
- reflect on what they've learned
- connect theory, assignments, and fieldwork
- integrate experiences that might otherwise be overlooked, such as volunteer work and extracurricular activities
- build transferable technology and communication skills
- show a potential employer why they should be hired

#### Benefits to Instructors

E-portfolios enable instructors to:

- build on student interests and motivation
- increase the information retention of their students
- review coursework more efficiently
- provide developmental feedback and assessment to students
- offer better informed career advice to students

#### Benefits to institutions as a Whole

E-portfolios benefit educational institutions by:

- enhancing ability to track program outcomes
- focusing academic theory on practical application
- making it easier for graduates to obtain employment

#### Creating an E-portfolio

There are four main steps in creating an e-portfolio:

1. Collect any information that you think may be relevant. For example, you may want to include:
  - a welcome page about who you are
  - a statement of your career or educational objectives
  - assignments and other work samples
  - a list of your core skills and abilities
  - your work history
  - a list of your volunteer and extracurricular activities
  - a resume or curriculum vitae
  - letters of reference
2. Select the most relevant artifacts for the purpose of your portfolio.
3. Reflect on why the artifacts you chose are relevant. Add these reflections to your e-portfolio.
4. Present your artifacts and reflections using appropriate e-portfolio software. ☒

#### Additional Resources

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## Feature Articles

## University of Calgary's Master of Teaching Launches E-portfolio Project

HsingChi A. Wang, Jo Towers, Hans Smits, Susan Crichton, Pat Tarr, Jim Field, & Gail Kopp

The Master of Teaching (MT) Program in the Faculty of Education of the University of Calgary is a post-degree teacher preparation program that is grounded in the principles of learner-focused, field-oriented, and inquiry-based teaching and learning. In Fall 2005, a pilot project, "Strengthening Inquiry and Assessment through Technology: The Use of e-Portfolios in Teacher Education," was initiated to explore the question of how we might best document and assess inquiry-based learning using technology, particularly in relation to field experience sites.

The overarching purpose of the initiative is to "make visible and intentional those principles on which the MT Program was founded in such a way that all participants (preservice teachers, partner teachers, and faculty) can deepen their collective understanding and engage in on-going deliberations about what constitutes meaningful inquiry-based teaching and learning. The vehicle for demonstrating learning will be electronic portfolios" (Smits, Wang, Towers, Crichton, Field & Tarr, 2005, p112).

This project is a direct response to the call from Recommendation 65 of Alberta's Commission on Learning (2003, p. 110), which states that teacher preparation programs should conduct research into conditions and practices that prepare pre-service teachers to integrate technology effectively into teaching and learning.

Through the E-portfolio Project we wish to explore ways in which pre-service teacher-created e-portfolios can be used to (1) document how inquiry lives in practice, and (2) help university instructors and practitioners in the field assess the knowledge, skills, and attributes of pre-service teachers who are participating in an inquiry-based teacher preparation program.

Five schools in Calgary are partnering with us in this pilot project. The curriculum for the e-portfolio students is the same as for the students who are not involved in the project. What distinguishes the e-portfolio students is that they work with the E-portfolio Project members in their field seminars and partner teachers from the five Calgary schools to engage in a process of designing appropriate technological tools for documenting and

assessing inquiry-based teaching and learning (for detailed information of the structure, please refer to Smits et al, 2005). As these tools are developed and refined, additional cohorts of MT students will be invited to create e-portfolios documenting their inquiry-based learning. It is expected that within two years all students in the MT Program will be involved.

Assessments administered for university-based courses and field experiences in traditional teacher preparation programs often fail to consider three key elements of learning professional practice:

- 1) the process of how one learns and what constitutes the experience of learning;
- 2) the necessary detours through texts and the questioning of the "self" that accompanies the development of self-understanding; and
- 3) the ability to understand substantive (e.g., subject) knowledge in relation to pedagogy (or perhaps more accurately, to understand what has to be taught inseparably from how one might teach it – or how students might learn it).

Assessment via the e-portfolio aims to address these three critical elements of learning professional practice.

The ultimate objective of this project is to encourage forms of learning, knowledge, and assessment that lead to understanding. Consistent with Alberta Learning's (2004) focus on inquiry-based teaching and learning, the construction of e-portfolios will engage pre-service teachers in "assessing the process as well as the product" (p. 73) of their inquiry into learning to teach. Additionally, as we explore the possibilities of assessing inquiry-based learning through the use of technology, we wish to strengthen our ability to formatively assess pre-service teachers' learning in the MT Program, and enrich the discourse among faculty in the MT Program, pre-service teachers, and classroom teachers around inquiry-based teaching and learning and around 'teaching for understanding with technology' (Wiske, Franz, & Breit, 2005). ❖

### References:

- Alberta's Commission on Learning. (2003). *Every child learns, every child succeeds: Report and recommendations*. Edmonton, AB: Alberta Learning.
- Alberta Learning. (2004). *Focus on inquiry: A teacher's guide to implementing inquiry-based learning*. Edmonton, AB: Alberta Learning Teaching Resources Branch.
- Smits, H., Wang, H.A., Towers, J., Crichton, S., Field, J., & Tarr, P. (2005). "Deepening understanding of inquiry teaching and learning with e-Portfolios in a teacher preparation program." *Canadian Journal of Learning and Technology*, 31(3), 111-119.
- Wiske, M.S., Franz, K. R., & Breit, L. (2005). *Teaching for understanding with technology*. San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

## Articles

## Practical Blended Learning Courtesy Dr. Curtis Bonk

Bill Fricker

NAIT along with McGraw Hill Ryerson hosted renowned blended learning expert Dr. Curtis Bonk of Indiana University on November 25th at NAIT in Edmonton. Dr. Bonk's presentations were lively: complete with theatrics, costume, and millions and millions of dollars!

The event was uniquely sponsored by McGraw Hill Ryerson, the NAIT Academic Staff Association (NASA) and NAIT. Curtis Bonk provided a session directed to NASA. All presenters have graciously allowed us to record their sessions and archive them for webcast viewing (see below). Our 150+ participants were represented by guests to NAIT (75) and NAIT staff (75).

Curtis Bonk was able to address over 40 case histories of blended learning as he accepted our challenge to provide practical blended learning tips and techniques. We wanted all in attendance to be able to take at least one tip or technique that they could use immediately.

For more information about Curtis, please see his web sites at

- [php.indiana.edu/~cjbok](http://php.indiana.edu/~cjbok)
- [www.publicationshare.com](http://www.publicationshare.com)
- [www.courseshare.com](http://www.courseshare.com)
- [www.flexiblelearning.net.au/nw2004/person/curtisB.htm](http://www.flexiblelearning.net.au/nw2004/person/curtisB.htm)

Dr. Bonk was joined by several stellar presenters including...

- Elements of good graphic design, Steve Balenovic, NAIT
- Video game play: implications for teachers, students and parents, Jayne Gackenbach, Grant MacEwan College
- NAIT DATE (Distance Apprenticeship Training and Education), Bill Fricker, NAIT
- Teaching and learning resources to enhance your in-house faculty development workshops/sessions, Adam Caron, The Institute for the Advancement of Teaching in Higher Education
- Classroom performance system: engaging students in the classroom, Todd Nickle, Mount Royal College
- Technology integration in non-traditional classroom settings: how one program made it happen, Alison Wynne, NAIT – School of Hospitality
- Managing the mix: supporting students through learning outcomes and hybrid learning, Erwin Ens and Cheryl Whitelaw, NorQuest College
- Distance education in remote aboriginal communities, Bill McMullen, NAIT
- Is social software a killer app. for higher education?, Terry Anderson, Athabasca University

If you missed us live, you can catch us on webcast – Logon at:

[stream.nait.ab.ca/BlendedLearning](http://stream.nait.ab.ca/BlendedLearning)

**Password: blended**

At the time of writing this note, we have the keynote address archived and over the next two or three weeks will add many of the nine concurrent sessions which also were part of our very successful one-day conference. ☒

## What's All This Blogging About Anyway?

Diane Clark

You may be wondering, "What is a blog?" A blog is an online journal that has a focus or theme. Similar to newspaper columns or editorials, most blogs promote some type of agenda, product, or service. In order for a blog to be successful it must have a balance between the author's agenda and the needs of the reader. The author expects the audience to contribute to the blog by adding comments, articles or links.

A blog can be integrated into curriculum. In fact, incorporating a blog in classes or online courses has several benefits.

1. Learners participate in a non-threatening environment.
2. Students are involved in building a body of knowledge, both professional and personal. Learners can share their research, ideas, or articles.
3. Blogs provide asynchronous and collaborative activity that supports learners' need for reflection. The result is that learning is encouraged through reflection.
4. Blogs can foster collaboration and teamwork with other students. For many of us learning is most effective when it is presented as a social activity. A well designed blog can be a meeting place for both faculty and students. Blogs can be the vehicle for developing skills needed in the work world such as effective communication, team building, and applying skills and knowledge to new situations.

## Articles

One drawback of using blog in the classroom is the issue of student privacy; do students sign on anonymously or not? Anonymous logins would be problematic if you intend to use a blog as a means of assessing learning or give marks for class contribution.

Remember that an effective blog is a conversation and not a monologue.

For more info about blogging, check out these resources:

- Stephen's Web - [www.downes.ca](http://www.downes.ca)
- Edublogs - [www.edublogs.org](http://www.edublogs.org)
- Oravec, J. (2003) Blending by blogging: weblogs in blended learning initiatives. *Journal of Educational Media*, 28, 2-3.

For more info about getting started with blogging, go to

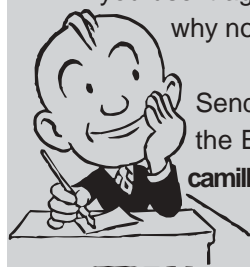
- Blogger - [www.blogger.com/start](http://www.blogger.com/start)
- WordPress - [www.wordpress.com](http://www.wordpress.com) ☒

### Books, Websites, Blogs and More!

Have you encountered a new book, website or blog related to educational technology? We want to hear your first or lingering impressions!

Tell us in 300 words or less:

- The name of the resource
- Where to find this new resource
- What you like
- What you don't like
- Will you use it again? Why or why not?



Send your ideas to the Editor at [camille.adeta@shaw.ca](mailto:camille.adeta@shaw.ca)

## Mavericks: Pioneers on a New Electronic Frontier

Denise McTighe



The door to the museum opens up on the computer screen to the online exhibit. The visitor navigates through the artifacts, perusing Alberta's history through an in-depth virtual tour of our province's legacy and influential historical figures – the Mavericks. The visitor can click her way to intimate contact of rare artifacts and detailed observations of the historical moments that have brought the province to the forefront of a new era.

The Mavericks: The Incurable History of Alberta online exhibit, a celebration of Alberta's Centennial, is a collaboration between software developers at the University of Calgary's Learning Commons, and the Glenbow Museum. It highlights historical figures from Alberta, from all socio-economic and cultural backgrounds, in a diversified virtual tour of how Alberta was shaped. Recently created, it represents the potential of what virtual museum tours can offer in the education forum.

The University of Calgary Learning Commons founded in 1997, is a leader in the development and promotion of quality, innovative approaches to teaching and learning. Inventive developers at the Learning Commons help create technological tools that will expand the idea of shared knowledge and open learning into new ideologies of education. Leader in the creation of the Mavericks project, software developer at the learning commons, D'Arcy Norman believes, "Mavericks is an excellent example of how the use of technology can enhance the learning forum and increase possibilities."

The Mavericks project exemplifies how innovative technology can expand the world of education. The online exhibit opens a window to the world of virtual learning and technological integration into our communities and classrooms. It was initially developed using the open source software program Pachyderm 2.0, a consortium that the Learning Commons is a part of, involving other software developers, university library specialists and museum experts, all striving to create unique educational applications using the software.

"Mavericks is symbolic of the environment of this new era of learning: merging art, history, and technology in one joined effort of knowledge and innovation," explains Norman.

Being able to navigate closely through an online exhibit that offers many links and detailed descriptions, the collaborators on the project believe Mavericks can enrich the learning environment for the student and museum enthusiast.

Kirstin Evenden, Manager of New Media Initiatives at the Glenbow, says the software allows easy access to resources for students and teachers, "The exhibit is readily available 24/7 and you can get up close to fragile material: virtually able to see stitches in fabric and written inscriptions not always possible through a physical observation of the artifacts." She believes this project has the ability to expand the learning capacity of students and enhance the public's experience with the museum. "The exhibit brings history alive because of the more in-depth interaction with materials-Mavericks stands for what the potential is in online exhibits in the public and educational forum."

>> story continued >>

## Articles

>> story continued >>

The Calgary Board of Education has included the Mavericks online exhibit as a resource for their grade 4-7 teaching curriculum, utilizing the digital environment to describe Alberta's history to a generation of learners wired to a technological society.

Derek Rakowski, grade five and six teacher at Rosemont elementary school, wrote the online teachers resources linked to the Mavericks website, "Mavericks is another opportunity for inquiry-based learning that promotes the freedom in learning and personal interpretation of history by the students," he explains.

According to the experts at the Learning Commons and in the educational field, the purpose of inquiry-based learning is to allow the student to develop their own ideas and conclusions in a continued effort of intellectual evolution and groundbreaking discovery.

Rakowski believes programs like Mavericks offer open thinking, collaboration, and personal choice on what historical perspectives or figures the students wish to learn more about. He believes this fosters enthusiasm and this type of inquiry-based learning allows the students to go beyond the present level of knowledge to find their own understanding, and maybe even exceed the level of knowledge and achievement offered to them by their educators.

"We are using the Mavericks project to push kids into a new social studies curriculum called historical thinking. It is the same idea as critical or creative thinking. It is teaching them that history is not just dates and times and events. It is actually the process of learning and the process of personal interpretation of the information," explains Rakowski.

According to the creators of Mavericks, it is designed to encourage flexible styles of interaction with the material to promote open thinking and to accommodate differences in learning and teaching styles.

"The children were very excited to be able to zoom in on artifacts and see the little details. They thought that was amazing. They liked having control of what they were doing, they liked being able to explore the material in their own way, and form their own thoughts on the exhibit," expresses Rakowski.

"With Mavericks, students look at artifacts and start to do their own digging rather than me telling them the answers. They do their own thinking."

The virtual environment of this type of historical interaction allows the past to leap forward into the minds of young thinkers: to use as a tool for their own ongoing discovery and individual thought processes with the potential to create their own historical legacies.

Kirstin Evenden says the physical version of the Mavericks exhibit will open in 2007 at the Glenbow connecting the online exhibit with the opportunity to tour the museum traditionally. This, she believes, will enrich the teaching and learning experience.

Rakowski also believes the interaction between the virtual and physical museum will enhance the experience of revisiting Alberta's Mavericks, "The online exhibit will connect them to more historical resources, so when they actually visit Mavericks that experience will be more meaningful because they spent months investigating the material before going there physically."

The Pachyderm software collaboration that D'Arcy Norman and others at the Learning Commons are involved in is

now being utilized by large museums such as the Guggenheim, for state-of-the-art online exhibits. However, according to Norman, software developments like Pachyderm could serve a smaller niche market. Pachyderm could offer small museums the potential to have the same level of impact through their online exhibits as a much more prestigious museum or institution.

The creation of such innovative software programs have increased the inquiry-learning environment and the opportunity for students and people to access historical artifacts and interact with them in their own style and capacity. Together with these developments that helped create the Mavericks exhibit, the learning forum will continue to offer limitless opportunity for idea creation and intellectual curiosity.

As the learner enters the virtual museum to meet the Mavericks of long ago, these interactions with the historical figures promote individual ideas and inquiry. The Mavericks have the potential to carry these students beyond the threshold of the past into a greater future where knowledge and ideas will continue to bring history forward. The ongoing development of technological tools increases learning potential, and as we continue on the path of technological advancement, users of these tools will perhaps themselves one day stand at the threshold of a new frontier – Mavericks themselves in the evolving world of inquiry-based learning and discovery. ☒

To visit Mavericks online exhibit please go to:  
<http://www.glenbow.org/mavericks>  
 To visit the University of Calgary Learning Commons please go to:  
<http://commons.ucalgary.ca>

## Updates

## Athabasca Announces New PLAR Director

Athabasca University (AU), Canada's leading university in prior learning assessment practice among postsecondary institutional settings, has welcomed a new Director to head its PLAR (Prior Learning Assessment and Recognition) centre. Athabasca is also unique among universities in that it has a centralized office – the Centre for Learning Accreditation (CLA) – to champion the PLAR initiative. This infrastructure in itself was recognized at the recent CAPLA conference in Toronto to be essential for an efficient PLAR operation.

Dr. Dianne Conrad relocated to Athabasca in July from the University of New Brunswick where she was an Associate Professor of Adult Education in the Faculty of Education in Fredericton. Dianne brings with her 25 years of experience as an adult and distance educator, administrator, researcher, writer, and teacher. In 1989, Dianne spearheaded the development of a prior learning assessment system for the Certificate in Adult and Continuing Education (CACE) consortium at the University of Alberta and worked throughout the years on prior learning initiatives, including teaching courses on PLAR at UNB as well as assessing portfolios for degree credit in the BED in Adult Education at that institution.

At Athabasca University, the Centre for Learning Accreditation will initiate a multi-phased expansion of current PLAR activity, including recruiting and training new assessors for portfolios, revising assessment instruments and policies, and establishing a mentoring program for PLAR applicants. A new website will be launched in early 2006. As PLAR at AU continues to grow, the CLA will investigate e-portfolios with the intention of finding an appropriate platform for e-portfolio at Athabasca.

Athabasca's intended use of e-portfolios must reflect the University's policy of assessing credit against the framework of learners' studies at the University. That is, AU's use of portfolios for PLAR is program and course specific. AU does not assess learning portfolios generically, nor do we currently assist in or mentor learners toward the building of "life" portfolios, performance portfolios, or other generic types of documents that display general knowledge or accomplishments.

For more information on PLAR at AU, visit the Centre for Learning Accreditation's new website in January 2006 at [priorlearning.athabascau.ca](http://priorlearning.athabascau.ca), or contact Dianne at [dianne@athabascau.ca](mailto:dianne@athabascau.ca).

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- Name of the vendor and website
- Cost
- Strengths
- Weaknesses
- Description of how you've implemented the technology
- Your impressions of the technology

Send your ideas to the Editor at: [camille.adeta@shaw.ca](mailto:camille.adeta@shaw.ca)



## Updates

## Bow Valley College's Canmore Community Learning Centre

Jane Neil

The Community Learning Centre in Canmore brings online and distance education nearer for residents of the Bow Corridor. The Community Learning Centre, with a campus in Canmore and in Banff, offers information and support for those students wanting the freedom to live away from their college or university but who want to be in a learning environment and have personal support to help them be successful with their studies.

Last year Bow Valley College commissioned a Post-Secondary Education Needs Assessment in the Bow Corridor. The research found that many in the Canmore community would like to have a physical college here for reasons of need and diversification of the economy. However, the logistics and financial implications make that an impracticality - there are just not enough potential students wanting to take the same course, at the same time, in the same place especially when Canmore is one of the most expensive places to live and build in the province! But the need for access to post-secondary education exists albeit for a broad range of subjects.

The research looked at online learning and in particular eCampus (as Bow Valley College is a partner) as the solution for access but the research showed that an online program wasn't felt to offer enough for student success. The respondents wanted human interaction whether it is with other students, or for help with study skills, or the technology, etc. They'd like a place to come to that was in a learning environment. It was from this research that the concept of the Canmore Community Learning Centre was born.

Bow Valley College already has a well established satellite campus in both Banff and Canmore through which it offers its office skills training courses, upgrading courses as well as job search/resume writing services, and some continuing education courses. With a slight refocusing for the staff, and with promotion in the community, the satellite campus has become the Community Learning Centre. Students from any institution taking online or distance education courses can use the Centre's services for a monthly fee. There would be no charge to Bow Valley College, eCampus, or partnering institution's students. The Learning Centre's aim is to give all the supports that the student needs to be successful. So far it offers a learning environment with student lounge, three computer labs with high-speed broadband access, technical support in the form of a real person, education counselors to help with study skills etc, and video conferencing coming in the spring.

The vision for the Centre is to offer campus services, just as a traditional campus, supporting online learning and distance learning with the only exception being the instructors is elsewhere. To do so will take collaboration and partnerships within the community and between educational institutions. The Canmore Community Learning Centre is there for Bow Corridor residents; bringing support for post-secondary students closer.

For more information contact Jane Neil, Community Access Officer, Community Learning Centre, Bow Valley College - Canmore. phone: 403 678-3125 e-mail: [jneil@bowvalleycollege.ca](mailto:jneil@bowvalleycollege.ca)



## The Latest From Bow Valley College

Moira Fields

Many exciting initiatives are happening at Bow Valley College. Travis Seaman, Acting Learner Support Coordinator, Learning Resources Services has been piloting an exciting new e-portfolio. As Bow Valley College seeks ways to better serve its learners, it looks at integrating new learning tools and processes that address pedagogical and technological aspects of outcomes-based facilitation.

The basis of this facilitation centers on the Learning College Model, which asks the question, "How do you know your actions improve and expand student learning?" In the transition to the Learning College Model, Bow Valley College is reviewing the adoption of web-based learning portfolios into all full-time academic programs to address the question. With e-portfolios, learners can store documents and design portfolios that provide proof of knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes based on formal and informal experiences in prior learning and current program environments. These knowledge, skills, abilities, and attitudes are to be addressed in course content and program and college-wide outcomes, many of which are based on essential and employability skills. Currently, a pilot initiative is underway in the Educational Assistant program to explore several different concepts and issues centered on web-based

## Updates

portfolio development. The pilot was completed in December of 2005 with the final evaluation report to be ready by January 2006.

The Learning Technologies Team at Bow Valley College, led by Russ Wilde, wants to pass on a few new ideas and developments that are happening here in the college and in learning technology generally. The team is looking more at the goals of the team and the college. While it will always be looking for ways to extend the college and make programs accessible to new learners, the team also needs to look at how we use technology within our face-to-face teaching and learning practice. As the team explores ideas together, Russ believes it will develop new ideas for using technology to truly reach our learners, whatever their location or circumstances. The second method to reach college staff is the new Intranet forums. If you haven't heard about the new BVC Intranet yet, we are really excited about the Intranet as it will be a great improvement over Outlook public folders. It has a new area for forums, where members of the college community can post messages and responses on a variety of topics, thus creating virtual discussions.

Watch the excitement as Bow Valley College rolls out e-portfolios, the Intranet, and other new projects.

## NAIT DATE - Distance Education Training and Education

Bill Fricker

To paraphrase a passage from Ephesians,

Good Evening, good evening,  
our students are in their own places with sunshiny faces  
Good evening, good evening

Students in First Period Electrician and First Period Welder apprenticeship training are joining our Edmonton-based instruction from their home communities in Drayton Valley, Edson, Grande Cache, Hinton, and Jasper. Our videoconference link is supplied via Alberta's Supernet and hosted by offices of either the Pembina Educational Consortium or the Yellowhead Region Educational Consortium.

Students receive their theory via videoconference and other arrangements are made for their clearly needed practical skills. Our Welder students will do online quizzes via TLM and will look forward to completing practical welds in our NAIT In-Motion (NIM) trailer. The NIMs are a 55-foot trailer that expands into 1100+ square feet superbly equipped shop space. The Electrician program has opted for two different weekends where we will provide enough equipment for weekend shops.

The design of this project is such that we will evaluate the efficacy of the delivery medium and assess the costs (student, institution, and Apprenticeship office). Students are already confirming they enjoy not having to relocate to take this training. Time off from work in this hot economy would be a double challenge – employee wages and management needs for their day-to-day productivity. The ultimate goal is to see a viable new alternative trades training model that can establish sustainability.

The project is funded by two sources. Alberta Advanced Education through the Apprenticeship and Industry Training (AIT) are providing seat-based funding equivalent to the rate of funding for additional trades students. Alberta Education is providing funding under Phase 2 of their Videoconference Communities of Practice program we are directing to videoconference technology and evaluation. The project is scheduled to conclude in August 2006.

For further information, please visit  
[www.nait.ca/naitdate](http://www.nait.ca/naitdate)  
[www.tradesecrets.org](http://www.tradesecrets.org)  
[www.education.gov.ab.ca](http://www.education.gov.ab.ca)  
[www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca](http://www.advancededucation.gov.ab.ca)



## Updates

# Norquest Launches Portal and Pilot's HealthCare Aid Program

Cheryl Whitelaw

A portal was launched on December 1st for NorQuest staff. The portal provides secure, web-based access for staff at NorQuest campuses, regional learning centres and off-campus. Features included in the initial portal launch are the ability to update personal information and to access information about vacation days, benefits, and attendance. Over time, additional features for staff will become available. Combined with the launch of a Virtual Private Network (VPN) to enable web access to College network folders and internal computing systems through a single sign-on, NorQuest staff will now have greater access to their NorQuest network folder, institutional information, and online services both on and off-campus. A student portal will also be launched in 2006.

The Health Care Aide program completed a pilot offering of a distance program. Seven students from the greater Edmonton region completed the program offered from May to December. Students were provided with program materials including print-based materials, lab kits and online resources in WebCT including lecture recordings using

Elluminate Live, learning activities using Hot Potatoes and Quandary, unit self-tests and a comprehensive calendar of all course activities. Students came to the Edmonton campus for a two-day orientation session at the beginning of the program and for lab days. Based on student feedback through online surveys and a focus group, the next offering will reduce the number of lab dates. Students will now be introduced to basic lab skills independently by using their lab kits and online resources. Clinical placements will be coordinated at the beginning of the program to develop better relationships between students, NorQuest College, and agencies. The next offering will include a cohort in Hinton and Edson, and a cohort in the greater Edmonton region. Future program plans include facilitating access to online program materials for the approximately 225 in-service distance students studying across Alberta to improve the quality of their program.



## Two New Ways to Contribute to The Distance

Have you always wanted to contribute to The Distance, but could not commit to a full article. There are two new and concise ways to contribute...

### It's Cheap! It's Easy!

Have you discovered a learning technology that is cheap and easy to implement?

Tell us in 300 words or less:

- Name of the technology
- Name of the vendor and website
- Cost
- Strengths
- Weaknesses
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- What you like
- What you don't like
- Will you use it again? Why or why not?

Send your ideas to the Editor at  
[camille.adeta@shaw.ca](mailto:camille.adeta@shaw.ca)



# Sidethought

Brad is currently finishing his doctorate in educational technology at the University of Calgary. His current research interests focus on the use of online technologies to facilitate collaboration, primarily for educational purposes (the focus of his doctoral research), and to help match technologies to pedagogies.

Please forward your Sidethoughts for consideration to:  
Camille Jensen, Editor, The Distance  
camille.adeta@shaw.ca

Statements, opinions, points of view, and statements of fiction expressed by the author do not necessarily represent those of the officers or members of ADETA or the author's employer.

## Big is Good, Small Might Be Better

**Brad Johnson**

Sometimes it's good to step back. Here's one of those times ... the question of whether to build or buy educational software used to be fairly simple. There was very little software available and building home-grown software was expensive. Times have changed, and with it the availability of commercially available educational software. Most of it is of high quality and costs have come down especially when considering in terms of numbers of students served (scalability). Reliability and stability is expected and largely delivered from these commercial offerings even when scaled to large numbers. So, on a per-student basis we now have reliable and stable software support for a pretty reasonable cost. At the same time we now have software development tools that have greatly reduced the cost of developing home-grown solutions. We even have open-source software solutions, projects that are carried out by volunteer efforts, offered freely and with full documentation and source code to any and all.

The basic question still remains, although in a modified and refined version. Should we build, buy, or use open-source software to solve or support pedagogical issues? In the past issues of stability and scalability have driven our decisions ... will the solution in question scale to large numbers of students and will it remain stable when large numbers are using it? However, Clay Shirky in his blog posting on situated software [[http://www.shirky.com/writings/situated\\_software.html](http://www.shirky.com/writings/situated_software.html)] has made the argument that, in some cases, it makes more sense to develop situated software, software that is designed for and by a small number of people to solve specific problems. In these cases scalability is no longer a major issue and most of the stability issues associated with large-scale deployment also become non-issues. The idea here is that often solutions to local problems are best solved using local solutions. And, local solutions are not intended to scale past the local population. So, if we need a software solution to a specific pedagogical problem involving perhaps only one course or group of students, then we should think small rather than large.

There are huge potential cost-benefits to such an idea, such that developing situated software solutions may make sense. For example, let's say it takes roughly 10% of a developers time to build an application with the remaining 90% of the time spent making it stable and scalable. If the cost involved in that 90% could be removed then situated software solutions should only take 1/10 of the time and cost to develop. And, of course, if we used open-source software as the starting point (assuming an open-source solution is available) we might be able to cut into the 10% development time (and cost).

There are, of course, problems with a situated approach to selecting and/or developing software for local and specific pedagogical problems. Certainly one of the larger problems is likely that of a place to work! Large-scale solutions are typically installed and maintained in a cost-effective and efficient manner (as they were meant to be) but also typically don't support much in the way of small-scale things such as those in situated software solutions. But perhaps the biggest problem is getting our heads around what situated software solutions means in terms of development and use. How would we go about locating, for example, an open-source solution and then how and where would we put it for our students to use? How do we involve our students in the process and what sort of impact would that have?

So, sometimes big is good but sometimes small is just as good.

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