



Pages That Feel Like Home

James Rhem, Executive Editor

Perhaps you teach on a campus where the new has already rubbed off the Web and its wonders. Perhaps where you work faculty do not feel grumbling skepticism about the value of all the glamorous technological innovations whose praises are trumpeted everywhere today. If you do, you are lucky, for you are already finding the support necessary to use these resources to transform and improve the teaching profession. Currently—sadly—such cyberCamelots remain few and far between.

Hundreds of homepages describe the programs and calendars of teaching and learning centers at schools across the country, but most of these web sites feel very parochial despite their global presence. Faculty interested in teaching who make cybervisits to these sites from the other side of the country will rightly wonder what all the hoopla is about. Generally they act as billboards and calendars advertising what's going on on that campus. They're a standing invitation to faculty to come to the teaching center. A few sites I've visited—in the course of visiting dozens on teaching and learning—stand out as models of what web sites of real interest to college teachers might look like.

The “New Tools” Site

For the faculty member who's begun to explore the Web and is beginning to wonder how its power might be used to teach differently or more effectively, the site called “New Tools for Faculty” at the University of Pennsylvania (<http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/jod/teachdemo/>) offers a wealth of support and information. You'll find there a hypertext essay by faculty member Jim O'Donnell, a classicist who demonstrates—through some thoughtful writing together with some elegant links to well-chosen examples—how worldwide connections to other people and to a vast array of information resources can transform *and improve* teaching. O'Donnell has felt or heard most of the doubts and objections to the new technologies one hears from faculty, and has worked his way through them mentally and in his own teaching practice. In 1994 he taught Augustine and Boethius in online seminars that reached out not only to on-campus students but to off-campus auditors from Hong Kong to Istanbul.

“What I would emphasize most strongly,” he writes, “is that adding this networked community to the discussion has sharply increased the quality of the course for students here at Penn.” With global resources at his command, O'Donnell has pursued large ambitions in his teaching. His aim has been “to reinvent the European research seminar in the humanities on its original

terms, with the advantage that a much wider audience than would ever fit in a seminar room can begin to listen and learn from the experience."

Faculty will feel at home reading O'Donnell's materials; he combines not the glitz of the new, but the best of the new with the best of the old.

In a world blinded by the wonders of technology, O'Donnell understands the wisdom of it: "Tools as powerful as networked computers are going to transform human

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communication. This transformation will bring with it both loss and gain. Every revolution in communication has both added to the power and range of what is communicated, and taken away some of the intimacy. Writing began the long, slow disestablishment of the face-to-face community of people who all knew each other, and every communication technique introduced since then has furthered that process. . . .

"I regard this future phlegmatically. My calm and my concomitant venturesomeness are owed to my professional standing as a classicist and medievalist. My dissertation two decades ago was about a sixth century A.D. statesman and monk who helped create the new intellectual order of Latin Christendom through ingenious application of the technology of the codex book. We've been here before, and we'll be here again. It is as exciting to live through the changes we face as it would have been to live through the introduction of print 500 years ago."

English and Beyond

The hidden bonus waiting within the New Tools site is its links to the University of Pennsylvania's English Department web site (<http://www.english.upenn.edu/>).

O'Donnell praises these colleagues for "pushing the envelope" in their use of the Web. On this site, the local stuff doesn't seem provincial. You'll find examples of courses being offered or supported online, but they rise above the usual billboarding boredom. They don't look like the usual fare; they look like courses faculty would want to learn more about and use as models on their own campuses.

Beyond the local material, the site offers truly valuable links to bibliographical and research resources around the world. If you have not seen what can actually be done to harvest intellectual riches via the Internet and winnow them into effective teaching and research resources, visit these pages and be inspired. If you are in history or music or math or science, don't be fooled into thinking such a site has nothing to offer you merely because an English department maintains it. The engineers of these web pages understand the interconnectedness of knowledge and how the Web can enhance our understanding of it. For example, with a few mouse clicks you can find yourself looking at a site at Columbia University devoted to the study of Tyburn Tree and the whole phenomenon of executions in early modern Britain. It's a site maintained by cultural historians and experts in popular art and social psychology. Another link takes you to Dalhousie University in Nova Scotia and a site devoted to the South Sea Bubble, the first great stock market crash which took place in England in 1720. The riches on this site alone ought to convince even the most skeptical faculty member that—in the right hands—the Web can be a serious research and teaching tool, as well as being somehow fun.

George Mason's IDO

To see how an instructional development office can move beyond parochial limits and serve its

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4041 North Central #700
Phoenix, Arizona 85012
Phone: 1-800-279-6799

The National Teaching & Learning Forum

is published six times during the academic year by The Oryx Press in conjunction with James Rhem & Associates, Inc. – October, December, February, March, May, September. One-year individual subscription: \$39.

Second class postage paid at Phoenix, AZ.

Postmaster: Send change of address to:

The National Teaching & Learning Forum
4041 North Central #700
Phoenix, Arizona 85012

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(Phone: 1-800-279-6799)

<http://www.nttf.com>
October

Editor's Note

I confess to some irritation about the Web. Thick magazines come into the house boasting all the wonderful things it can do, will do, and is doing. When I log on, I find site after site either too busy to visit or too boring to revisit. And I've tied up the phone line a long time to get there. A second phone line? Like many faculty, I resent the press to spend more and more for computer equipment simply to be ready to take advantage of the promise of a life enhanced well beyond the word processing, e-mail, spreadsheet, and desktop publishing advantages I enjoy already.

But then, in the months leading up to this issue, I had some moments on the World Wide Web that let me experience how it might actually live up to its educational promise.

First I discovered the "New Tools" site at the University of Pennsylvania with its intellectually stimulating essays by Jim O'Donnell. That led me on to the remarkable homepage of the Penn English department and the vast list of resource links maintained there.

One mouse click opened a menu listing English literature by period. I clicked on my area, the Eighteenth Century. There, another menu offered links to material on mathematics, art, music, and so on. Having started my college career in music, I clicked on music. There I found research sites on Bach, Mozart, Beethoven and others. I clicked on Bach, and at that site I found I could search his complete works by BWV number, title, key, instrumentation, year of composition — anything I could think of. As a test, I picked a remote key for eighteenth century composers (but a favorite key of mine), F# minor. Instantly I found that in addition to the preludes and fugues in Book I and II of the Well-Tempered Clavier, Bach wrote a Toccata (BWV 910) in that key in 1709. A few additional clicks and I had downloaded a MIDI file of that piece and was listening to it (all nine minutes of it) while clicking on in search of other music, pictures and databases related to topics of interest.

As I listened to the music and found the Web responding to my own mind, my own interests and imagination, I thought I could see how it could transform some aspects of teaching. It didn't give me my curiosity and direction, but it served them well.

Ed Nuhfer's report on attitudes toward technology among Colorado faculty confirms that others are also eager to harness these new powers in their teaching as well. (Nuhfer's full, detailed survey report is available for inspection on the *NTLF* web site: <http://www.ntlf.com>.)

The present issue begins, not with talk of computers, however, but with **Al McLeod's** article on discovering and facilitating deep learning states. When I asked Al if he'd seen the reports in *NTLF* (V5N1) on twenty-five years of research along these very lines carried out in England, Sweden, Canada and Australia, he confessed he had not and was not aware of that research. It's amazing how many paths to a grove of insights exist in the forest of human experience. McLeod's piece offers an invigorating complement to my earlier reports on that research. Al's is the longest single piece ever published in *NTLF*, but because what he is talking about is so exciting and encouraging, I think you will find it reads quickly.

Finally, we all know that daily life imposes low-tech routines which seem far removed from playing out patterns of deep cognition. What could seem more homely and dreary than taking attendance? **Steve Rose** acknowledges the drudgery, but reports that he's found a way to turn a once-onerous routine to his students' advantage. He's made it a learning experience filled with 'teachable moments.' And he's done it with the humblest of technologies — the venerable 3 x 5 index card.

— James Rhem

faculty even more effectively by doing so, visit the web site created by the instructional development office at George Mason University (<http://www.ido.gmu.edu/>). Here, in addition to listings of software, resources, workshops, training and so on available to faculty through the office, you'll find a rotating showcase of faculty interviews focusing on how actual faculty are using computer and Internet resources to enhance their teaching. Currently, the space features an interview with Barbara Wood, a biologist leading students in an environmental monitoring project as part of their coursework. Wood discusses all the little logistical matters like the around-the-clock access e-mail provides and how this form of communication often draws out shy students. However, she's moved beyond a focus on these little blessings, and has her eye on larger gains for students and for teaching: "I am not using the computer to enhance understanding of course material itself, but as a way of putting [students'] work in a context that is realistic. By saving their field data and findings, they can communicate the results to others and learn to cooperate both horizontally (i.e., between various groups now) and vertically (i.e., over time with other students and teachers for many years to come)."

Many sites have pages of links to other pages. Often these other pages are boring and redundant and not worth a faculty member's time. The "Cool Links" page at George Mason isn't like that. Its links offer an intellectual and social adventure to the cyberscholar. A few lines of annotation preview each link so that you have a better idea of what you're getting into if you decide to click on.

Northwestern's Searle Center

The Searle Center for Teaching Excellence (<http://www.nwu.edu/scfte/index.html/>) maintains a web site featuring faculty essays from its newsletter, "The Class Act," that I'd be proud to publish in *The National Teaching and Learning Forum*. Up now, "The Story of Crazy AI and the Moon" by William Anthony of the

German department has a lot to say about teaching, and says it with intelligent humor. A bit parochial in that, like the homepages of most instructional development programs, it seems bent on drawing faculty into the center, this one does a better job than most in portraying the value and vitality of the Searle Center's programs.

Visit Hong Kong

The Hong Kong site listed first on David Way's list (<http://hednet.polyu.edu.hk>) offers a huge number of links to teaching and learning resources of all kinds. Called "Electronic Educational Development Centre" and maintained by Hong Kong Polytechnic University, it contains material in six broad categories: teaching and learning, educational research, higher education management, Internet services, and categories called "general items" and "education items." The teaching and learning area holds a number of text files on various topics as well as links to special interest collections. Under "Concept Mapping," for example, one finds an impressive list of links to U.S. sites where discussion of concept mapping and concept mapping software may be downloaded. The "Problem-Based Learning" link does the same.

Another link takes you to a demonstration of a Web teaching page and invites you to make an appointment to come in and design your own page. (Coming in could prove expensive since the office is in China.)

But, while the site offers great variety, the quality of the offerings is uneven, and there are no annotative hints to warn cybertravellers whether they're about to enter a "greasy spoon" or a family restaurant featuring the kind of homepage cooking that fully satisfies. Some clicks take you to offbeat commercial vendors hawk-ing software designed to improve your life planning or expand your consciousness. Others present you with copies of long, official reports. You can get to AskERIC through this page, but you don't need to go to Hong Kong to do that: It's at Syracuse, after all.

Not quite the Victoria Station of college teaching, the Hong Kong site tries to move in that direction by offering something for everyone and every intellectual budget. It's a laudable goal in many ways, but I found visiting this site a lot like shopping for capers at K-Mart.

For Now

The society and conventions of the Web haven't yet become fully established—that's its glory and its shame. You can find yourself in a bad neighborhood easily. On the other hand, even when they lack the compelling sophistication of the University of Pennsylvania's site, all the sites reviewed here have enough interesting material on them to make a visit worthwhile.

RESOURCES

Some Teaching Web Sites

Web sites proliferate at an amazing rate. There are so many all over the world that finding the good ones—ones worth visiting repeatedly—isn't easy. Faculty (and especially faculty developers) have been trying to help each other with the task. Below, you'll find a short list of sites related to teaching that David Way, director of instructional support at Cornell University, has checked out and found useful.

Web novices will quickly discover such free search services as Yahoo, Alta Vista, Lycos and others. These powerful Boolean search engines can help users locate the information they want. A search on "teaching centers," for example, will turn up many of the addresses Way gives.

Way's List

University of Hong Kong:
<http://hednet.polyu.edu.hk>
The National Teaching & Learning Forum: <http://www.ntlf.com/>

Cornell Office of Instructional Support:
<http://www.sas.cornell.edu/OIS/>
(under construction but with additional links)

Center for Teaching Excellence, Iowa State U.: <http://teach.admin.iastate.edu/CTE/>

Instructional Development and Technology Sites Worldwide:

<http://is.dal.ca/~oidt/ids.html>

Cornell Ed. Technology Center
Ed. Resources on the Web:

<http://lrc.cit.cornell.edu/InstWWW/EducRes.html>

Berkeley Compendium of Suggestions for Teaching with Excellence:
<http://osr4.berkeley.edu/ttips/ttips.menu.html>

National Institute on Post Secondary Education: <http://www.ed.gov/offices/OERI/PLLI/>

Boston College Center for International Higher Education:
http://www.bc.edu/bc_org/avp/soe/cihe/Center.html

University of Michigan Center for Research on Learning and Teaching:

<http://www.umich.edu/~crltmich/>

Columbia University Teachers'

College WWW Server:

<http://www.tc.columbia.edu/>

University of Washington Center for Instructional Development and Research:

<http://weber.u.washington.edu/~cidrweb/cidr.html>

Kansas State University Center for Faculty Evaluation and Development:
<http://calvin.ksu.edu/dce/maincntr/index.html>

University of Iowa Center for Teaching: <http://lime.weeb.u.iowa.edu/~centeach/>

University of North Carolina Center for Faculty Development:
<http://www.cs.unca.edu/cfd/>

Higher Education Development International:

<http://www.abo.fi/hied/>

Bemidji State University. Center for Professional Development:
<http://bsuweb.bemidji.msus.edu/~cpd/centerPage.html>

Queen's University at Kingston Instructional Development Center:
<http://www.queensu.ca/idc/>

International Consortium of Educational Development:
<http://www.abo.fi/hied/iced.htm>

University of Minnesota Faculty & TA Enrichment Program:
<http://www.tc.umn.edu/nlhome/g011/t-enrich/>

Dalhousie University Office of Instructional Development and Technology:
<http://is.dal.ca/~oidt/oidt.html>

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RESEARCH WATCH

Colorado Faculty and Technology

What do faculty think about the new technologies rampant in American culture? What are their attitudes toward computers and the Internet and the Web? Last year the Colorado University System surveyed all four of its campuses with a 100-item questionnaire. Despite the different missions of each campus, the survey found strong similarities in faculty attitudes and aspirations concerning the place of technology in their teaching and professional lives.

The survey highlighted

- what technology faculty now use,
- what they would like to use,
- what they'd like to have the technology help them accomplish,
- how they'd like to receive training in using new technology,
- and what obstacles they see to achieving their goals.

Typing Not Showing

According to a summary report prepared by Ed Nuhfer of the Denver campus (available in full on

Faculty aren't afraid of technology, but they'd like training to be painless and not take much time.

the NTLF web site - www.ntlf.com), Colorado University use of technology appears somewhat greater than the national average. Over 80% of CU classes use some form of technology. Generally it's the word processing used in preparing class materials, but e-mail and use of the World Wide Web are coming on strong.

Currently, CU faculty use multimedia software and CD-ROM materials least of the available innovations. Faculty who use audiovisual aids still use traditional, easy-to-prepare overheads and the like (82%) as compared with the newer, computer-projected slides (16%). But 60% of faculty surveyed would like to learn more about presentation software, a level of interest matched only by their desire to learn more about getting information via the Web.

Painless Learning Sought

As Nuhfer points out, talk of the Web and multimedia dominates the popular notion of what computers can bring to the classroom, but many faculty still find themselves struggling to learn the software on the one hand, and teaching in rooms ill-equipped to handle the new technology on the other. Most faculty are self-taught in computers and software. For support and training, most CU faculty would like to see a technology office established (75%). When it comes to training, they'd much rather have intensive summer sessions, one- or two-day training seminars, or departmental workshops rather than regular courses spread out over a semester. In short, faculty aren't afraid of technology—only 6% admitted they were—but they'd like training to be painless and not take much time.

Aspirations for Students

What faculty want technology to do for their teaching hasn't changed much from what good teachers have always wanted from new tools: They want students to know the information systems of their disciplines (and recognize that these are rapidly changing)—70%, want to promote active learning in their students

(something which the interactivity required of computer technology can enhance)—73% , and want students to think critically in assessing and making use of these new information sources—72%. They also want students to feel satisfied with their learning experiences—something the frustrations of new technologies threaten at times (cf. Ginny Elasser and Barbara Hollywood on student frustrations in learning CAD in *The National Teaching and Learning Forum* 5/5, p. 8). They're also very interested in having students learn how to reach out to experts in their field via the Web, and, while they lag behind in mastering presentation technology, 60% want their students to develop these skills in presenting their ideas.

Comment

Having students develop "appropriate social skills for networks" ranks last among the aspirations faculty have for their students in using the new technology. For anyone who's been "flamed," or experienced any of the thousand forms of time-consuming and draining misunderstanding that cyberflesh is heir to, this ranking seems oddly naive. But, in fairness, it wasn't all that low—52%. In time, everyone will learn the social dangers of cyberspace, and perhaps that lesson will serve to re-enforce what we know about the importance of social networks in learning in general.

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