Maritime training, particularly transport and logistics, is the newest area of course development for the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC).

Twenty-five educators from 13 countries took part in VUSSC’s seventh International Training and Materials Development Workshop. The three-week “boot camp” was hosted by the National University of Samoa, Le Papaigalagala from 23 November to 11 December 2009.

The participants, representing maritime regulatory and training bodies in small states in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the South Pacific, were immersed in hands-on training in information and communication technology (ICT) skills, particularly those related to course materials development. Course development is now continuing online.

Welcoming the participants, the Vice Chancellor and President of the National University of Samoa, Professor Le’apai Tu’u’a ‘Iloa Asofou So’o, spoke about VUSSC’s role in capacity building:

“At the completion of this boot camp as for six others which have been held already, each of you will have contributed and acquired content knowledge for the identified maritime course and ICT skills for any course development and access to online resources. When you return to your respective countries, institutions and ministries, you will also be required to share these skills and knowledge with others so that the capacity building continues to take place. This “multiplier effect”, made possible by the continued sharing of knowledge and skills, is crucial to the capacity building mission of the VUSSC as a consortium of existing universities and other post-secondary institutions working together with their ministries of education.

The Samoa workshop was run by a group of team leaders selected from participating countries and coordinated by the Samoa Team Leader, Mr. Leitu-fia Fatu Lafoai of the School of Maritime Training, and Mr. John Lesperance, COL Education Specialist, VUSSC.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 2
Four main Themes

1) Social Justice
   - Access to Justice: Life, Liberty & Livelihood
   - Scaling up Quality Education for All
   - Education and Employment of Persons with Disabilities
   - Assistive and Affordable Technologies

2) Community Development
   - Community based Learning and Outreach
   - Open Education Resources: Models to Choose, Adopt and Adapt
   - Innovative Pathways to Knowledge Society

3) Skills Development
   - Skills Development for National Development
   - Global Development Discourses; North-South Dialogues
   - Regional Co-operation: Who can benefit from whom?

4) Formal Education
   - Revamping Teacher Education
   - Open Schooling

PCF6 in India

Forum Co-chairs are Sir John Daniel, President and CEO of COL, and Professor V.N. Rajasekharan Pillai, Vice-Chancellor of IGNOU.

The conference website, providing complete details about the programme, registration and accommodation, is wwwpcf6.com.

Call for Nominations: Excellence in Distance Education Awards

COL is seeking submissions for its 2009-2010 Excellence in Distance Education Awards. These awards, which will be presented at the Sixth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning in Kochi, India in November 2010, recognise excellence in four categories: the overall institutional level, the development of learning materials, a lifetime's work as an educator and student accomplishment. The deadline for submissions is 30 April 2010.

www.col.org/edea

Souvenir DVDs from COL’s Fifth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (London, 2008) are available from COL. These were produced by Nexus Strategic Partnerships as a part of their media support at PCF5. The video DVD includes interviews with keynote speakers and other prominent personalities that were in attendance as well as a short narrated compilation of “Highlights”. Please contact COL at info@col.org to request copies. The DVD content is also available on YouTube, indexed through COL’s website at www.col.org/videos.

VUSSC courses are already available in the areas of tourism, life skills, professional development for education, disaster management, fisheries and construction. Development of these course materials was initiated at previous workshops in Mauritius (2006), Samoa (2007), Singapore (2007), Trinidad & Tobago (2007), Seychelles (2008) and The Bahamas (2008). Courses are freely available to anyone for download, adaptation and use from the VUSSC website (www.vussc.org).

Workshop participants completed a new transport and logistics course by the conclusion of the session. Once finalised, the advanced certificate course will be offered by the National University of Samoa. The course is aligned with VUSSC’s Transnational Qualifications Framework, a system of accreditation for VUSSC courses that facilitates the movement of courses and learners among states. As such, the course will undergo a rigorous process of quality assurance in Samoa.

VUSSC is a network initiated by, and built on the support of, ministers of education of developing small states of the Commonwealth. Led by a Management Committee comprised of representatives from small states in all regions of the Commonwealth, VUSSC is committed to the collaborative development of open content resources for education, training and capacity building and the use of ICT to broaden access to education.

www.vussc.org
COL AT CHOGM 2009

A new Commonwealth member state and climate change topped the agenda at the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM) in Port of Spain, Trinidad & Tobago in November 2009.

Heads of Government agreed on a strong declaration on Climate Change: “The latest scientific evidence indicates that in order to avoid dangerous climate change that is likely to have catastrophic impacts we must find solutions using all available means,” the Port of Spain Climate Change Consensus states. “We must act now.” Heads of Government also welcomed Rwanda as the Commonwealth’s 54th member (see sidebar).

In his presentation to Commonwealth Foreign Ministers prior to CHOGM, COL President Sir John Daniel outlined COL’s Three-Year Plan, 2009-2012 and explained COL’s responsiveness to themes emerging from past CHOGMs. Each Foreign Minister received a summary of COL’s activities in their region. Following Sir John’s presentation, representatives from a number of governments praised COL’s work in their country.

At the conclusion of CHOGM, Heads of Government released a Communiqué that touched on many issues related to education including:

- Reaffirming their commitment to achieving the Millennium Development Goals of reaching universal primary education and gender parity by 2015.
- Calling on all Commonwealth countries to commit further resources to basic education, including actively supporting the replenishment of the Education for All Fast Track Initiative.
- Emphasising the need for all children to have equity of access to quality education, regardless of geographical location, resources, gender, ethnicity and ability, in order to equip them to interact effectively in the global community.
- Pointing out the particular importance of the work and potential of the Commonwealth of Learning with emphasis on additional inter-governmental support to advance its programmes and the creation of strategic partnerships by COL.

The Communiqué also expressed satisfaction that the number of countries making voluntary contributions to COL’s budget had increased to 41 and encouraged other member governments to also consider doing so. They expressed particular appreciation for the work of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC), and encouraged the Commonwealth Secretariat to assist COL in securing new funding to continue and expand the programme in terms of capacity building in the use of information and communication technology (ICT) in education, and the development and delivery of courses.

COMMONWEALTH WELCOMES RWANDA

Heads of Government endorsed Rwanda’s formal application and welcomed the Eastern African country and its President, HE Mr. Paul Kagame, as its 54th member at CHOGM 2009. This followed years of democracy building in Rwanda and consultations with the Commonwealth.

“Commonwealth’s decision to welcome Rwanda was a collective act of goodwill, and of affirmation,” said Commonwealth Secretary-General Kamalesh Sharma in a statement to the Rwanda Parliament delivered in Kigali last month.

“It was recognition of the hills which you have climbed, and a commitment to climb further with you. Your achievements in building a new and democratic Rwanda are instructive. Your progress in coming to terms with the legacy of conflict carries a lesson far and wide,” said Mr. Sharma, referring to the many challenges Rwanda has overcome since the 1994 genocide.

COL also welcomes Rwanda into Commonwealth membership and looks forward to working with its leaders.
COL launches blog

COL’s new blog is encouraging interaction, discussion and knowledge sharing on issues related to education for development. The blog explores areas such as e-learning, gender, educational technology, livelihoods, best practices, news and book reviews. COL’s Educational Specialists will also contribute podcasts to help expand dialogue on relevant issues.

www.col.org/blog

CLOSER TIES WITH USP

COL and The University of the South Pacific (USP) have signed a formal collaboration agreement. In the Commonwealth South Pacific, USP is the primary provider of off-campus tertiary education and employs distance education methods to reach learners throughout the region. COL has always worked closely with USP. The new Memorandum of Understanding formalises and adds structure to the long-standing relationship.

www.colwiki.org/SLDEIC

HONORARY COL ADVISORS NAMED

COL has created a network of eminent open and distance learning (ODL) professionals from across the Commonwealth to act as Honorary COL Advisors. The Advisors will be a valuable resource for consultations about COL’s future plans and for Member States seeking advice on ODL.

COL is pleased to announce that the following have accepted the honorary role:

• Professor Dato’ Dr. Ansary Ahmed, President/CEO, Asia e University, Malaysia
• Mr. Desmond Bermingham, Visiting Fellow, Center for Global Development, Washington, DC
• Dr. Caroline Seelig, CEO, The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand
• Professor Hazel Simmons-McDonald, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Open Campus, The University of the West Indies, Barbados
• Mr. Rod Tyrer, Lead Adviser, Organisational Development Direct, UK
• Ms. Ruby Vaa, Acting Campus Director, Alafua Campus, The University of the South Pacific
• Ms. Jenny Williams, Consultant, New Zealand

• Professor Veronica McKay, CEO, Kha Ri Gude Literacy Campaign, South Africa
• Professor Dr. Abdul Mannan, Executive Director, UPNG Open College, University of Papua New Guinea
• Professor Tolly S.A. Mbwette, Vice-Chancellor, The Open University of Tanzania
• Professor Ajaga Nji, Ph.D, Université de Dschang, Cameroon
• Dr. Kondapalli Rama, Education Quality Assurance Officer, United Nations Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA), Jordan
• Dr. Caroline Seelig, CEO, The Open Polytechnic of New Zealand
• Professor Hazel Simmons-McDonald, Pro Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Open Campus, The University of the West Indies, Barbados
• Mr. Rod Tyrer, Lead Adviser, Organisational Development Direct, UK
• Ms. Ruby Vaa, Acting Campus Director, Alafua Campus, The University of the South Pacific
• Ms. Jenny Williams, Consultant, New Zealand

www.col.org/SLDEIC

LRIF THE LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS: SRI LANKA

COL’s Life-long Learning for Farmers (L3 Farmers) is expanding in Sri Lanka. By bringing together farmers, a local university, banks and information and communication technology (ICT) providers, the L3 Farmers programme is helping farmers develop improved methods for mushroom cultivation.

Members of the Ekamuthu mushroom growers’ society in the Kamburupitiya area in southern Sri Lanka are working with local educational institutions to learn modern agro-technologies that will increase production in their mushroom farming. Computer facilities are being provided by the University of Ruhuna and the Vidatha Centre. The Sanasa Development Bank is providing credit to farmers on a collective basis. Future plans include expanding marketing efforts beyond the local community, providing lessons to mushroom farmers by mobile phones and developing value-added mushroom products.

Launched in the Tamil Nadu region of India in 2004, L3 Farmers is being adapted for use in Jamaica, Kenya, Papua New Guinea, Sri Lanka and Uganda.

www.col.org/L3Farmers

LIFE-LONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS: SRI LANKA
SUPPORTING THE GROWTH OF OPEN SCHOOLS

Like many developing countries, Tanzania and Zambia are seeing growing demand for secondary education as a result of the expansion of Universal Primary Education. In Tanzania, only 29 percent of primary school leavers are enrolled in lower secondary studies and a scant 1.5 percent are enrolled at the senior secondary level. This huge and largely unmet demand for secondary education, coupled with an increasing need for adult and non-formal education, has resulted in increased interest in open schooling from both government and private providers.

COL is helping the Government of Tanzania by drafting guidelines to support the growth of open schooling in the country. “Guidelines for the Establishment and Management of Open Schools” clarify the legal requirements for establishing and registering open schools in Tanzania. These guidelines, which were developed at a stakeholders meeting in November 2009, will encourage uniformity in curricula, delivery modalities and assessment in open schools, which will improve public confidence in Open Schooling as a cost-effective means of providing quality education for all.

COL also commissioned an assessment of the Zambia College of Distance Education (ZACODE). The study provided the Ministry of Education with recommendations on how to re-design the operations of the college to make it a more accessible and effective open school that can meet the growing demand for secondary education.

“Guidelines for the Establishment and Management of Open Schools” and the ZACODE assessment are available on the COL website. www.col.org/OpenSchooling

OPEN SCHOOLS ASSOCIATION LAUNCHED

A group of open schooling and distance education practitioners formally launched the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association (COMOSA) at a meeting organised by COL in New Delhi, India in November 2009. COMOSA’s mission is to support the efforts of open and distance learning (ODL) institutions to co-ordinate, co-operate and collaborate in the development, promotion and introduction of innovative, high quality, relevant, equitable, gender-sensitive and cost-effective education for sustainable development.

“We believe COMOSA has a role to play as an advocate for distance education at the school level,” said Mrs. Frances Ferreira, COL Education Specialist, Open Schooling. “And by bringing together open schooling practitioners from around the Commonwealth, we will be able to build consensus and share information about best practices.”

A Constitution was adopted at the November meeting and an interim executive was appointed consisting of:

- Dr. Sitansu S. Jena (National Institute of Open Schooling, India): Chairperson
- Ms. Fancy Amey (Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning): Vice-Chairperson
- Ms. Lystra Sampson-Ovid (National Open School of Trinidad & Tobago): Secretary
- Professor Desh Bandhu Gupta (J&K State Open School, India): Treasurer

India’s National Institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) is providing support for COMOSA in the form of office space and one staff member. Participants at the inaugural meeting agreed that the next steps would include developing a COMOSA website and issuing an invitation to all open schools to join the association.

COMOSA’s first annual general meeting will be held prior to COL’s Sixth Pan Commonwealth Forum of Open Learning (PCF6) in Kochi (Kerala), India in November 2010, in conjunction with a pre-conference open schooling meeting hosted by NIOS.

OERS FOR OPEN SCHOOLS

Teams from six Commonwealth countries are completing work on new open educational resources (OERs) for open schools. The educators from Botswana, Lesotho, Namibia, Seychelles, Trinidad & Tobago and Zambia are developing learning materials for 20 subjects at the secondary level as part of a two-year partnership between COL and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation, which is providing funding. The print materials are largely completed; the next step is converting them to online formats.

In addition to creating an extensive set of OERs, this initiative has built capacity in online materials development. Ms. Izan Klazen, a teacher at a rural secondary school in Namibia who developed course materials in English as a Second Language for the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL), shares her thoughts about this experience:

The biggest thing I learned from this project was to be willing to learn and to let people teach me. At the first workshop, I felt nervous and intimidated because I did not know anything about computers. By the second week of the workshop, I wanted to leave, but later on I felt more at ease due to the constant motivation from my two friends, Miems and Imogene. Thereafter I was determined to improve my skills. Now I have almost completed my International Computer Driver’s License.

I have already used some of the OERs in my teaching, and I’m sure I will use my computer skills in my class. I’m very grateful to NAMCOL for providing me with the opportunity to be part of this project.

www.col.org/OpenSchooling
LIVES: MOBILE PHONES FOR LEARNING

The University of British Columbia’s Networks and Internet Computing (NIC) Lab in Vancouver, Canada is working in partnership with COL to develop a system that delivers learning via mobile phones. Learning Through Interactive Voice Educational Systems (LIVES) is an educational software system that offers audio lessons to multiple users over mobile telephone networks. This innovative system takes advantage of a recent phenomenon in developing countries: the rise of mobile phone networks and high mobile phone adoption rate.

LIVES offers two-way communication, flexibility and anywhere-anytime learning:

Learners specify when they are available to receive phone calls.

When a call is received, the learner has the option to listen to a pre-recorded lesson, request a call at another time or not listen.

After listening to the lesson, the learner has the option of listening again, responding to a multiple choice quiz by keying in numbers or letters, or ending the call. The quiz format reinforces the learning and provides feedback to the organisation about the effectiveness of the lesson and learner engagement.

After the quiz, the learner can provide feedback or listen to a lesson again.

LIVES makes effective use of auditory learning to reach illiterate learners. Rather than creating a new communications channel, LIVES uses existing mobile infrastructure, which is readily available even in remote areas of developing countries. Aside from acquiring a mobile phone, the learner does not incur any costs. The system uses cost-effective Voice over IP (VoIP) technology, open source software and special arrangements with mobile network providers.

Learners can listen when and where they choose – an important advantage of ODL. Whether it’s a farmer in the field, a fisher on a boat or a small business owner working from their home, people can choose which audio lessons they hear and do so at their convenience.

“LIVES is a practical and effective mobile learning system that has great potential to affect the livelihoods of millions of people,” explained Dr. Son T. Vuong, Principal Investigator with the NIC Research Team. “It is highly motivating to my team to develop a system that can help lift people out of poverty. We believe it has limitless possible applications.”

While LIVES currently uses a “push” model of learning, where learning is delivered to the student, it can easily implement a “pull” model, where students call in and choose the lectures they wish to hear.

Having completed beta testing, the NIC lab plans to initiate field testing with farmers involved in COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers programme in India. With the ability to reach large numbers of learners, LIVES offers the potential of vastly increasing access to education.

http://lives.cs.ubc.ca

LIVES

ODL FOR LEGISLATIVE DRAFTING

Canada’s largest open university, Athabasca University, officially launched its Graduate Diploma in Legislative Drafting programme at the Alberta Legislative Assembly in November 2009. Based on materials created by COL, the programme at Athabasca University uses ODL to improve learners’ ability to plan and write laws, by-laws and policies. While the programme may at first seem to be primarily of interest to lawyers, it is also open to non-lawyers in public and private sectors who are concerned with policy development and analysis. The Legislative Drafting programme is also offered at Indira Gandhi National Open University in India, the National Open University of Nigeria and the University of the South Pacific, where 12 COL scholars successfully completed the programme in 2009.

www.athabascau.ca/gdld

COL has introduced a new ODL course to build capacity among information technology (IT) managers in working with open source software. The focus of the 19-module course is real life, hands-on solutions for IT professionals. It will be of benefit for new users of the Linux operating system and learners preparing for other certifications. The course will help IT managers set up and run common Linux-based application services such as mail gateways, Internet gateways, web services and IT security services. “Linux for IT Managers” is freely available on COL’s website and the VUSSC website.

www.col.org/coursematerials
www.vussc.org
COMMONWEALTH EXECUTIVE MBA PROGRAMME GRADUATES

Learners in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean celebrated their graduation from the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration (CEMBA) and Master of Public Administration (CEMPA) programme in 2009. The graduates completed their studies at Kwame Nkrumah University of Science and Technology (Ghana), the Open University of Sri Lanka and the University College of the Caribbean (Jamaica).

Developed originally by COL in partnership with four open universities, the CEMBA/CEMPA programme offers working professionals the opportunity to study part-time through open and distance learning. The programme is offered by partner universities throughout the Commonwealth. Courses feature relevant local learning materials and case studies, and cover subjects ranging from managing information and public systems to development planning and quality assurance.

www.col.org/cemba

DEVELOPING CAPACITY IN RADIO SCRIPTWRITING IN AFRICA

A radio scriptwriting competition on smallholder farmer innovation held by Farm Radio International in partnership with COL attracted 82 entries from 20 countries in Sub-Saharan Africa. A two-month eLearning course on radio scriptwriting prior to the competition drew 126 participants from radio stations and agriculture groups across Africa.

Farm Radio International announced 15 winners from seven countries in the scriptwriting competition in January 2010. The first prize winner, Mr. John Cheburet with The Organic Farmer magazine and radio show on the Kenya Broadcasting Corporation, impressed the international panel of judges with his script about an innovative Kenyan farmer who uses sawdust to lengthen the storage period of Irish potatoes. Mr. Cheburet’s prize is a study visit to the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO) in Rome, Italy. The other winning scripts featured subjects ranging from sack farming and hanging gardens technology to improved methods of composting.

The online scriptwriting course enabled wider participation in the scriptwriting competition and better quality scripts, according to Ms. Blythe McKay, Development Communication Coordinator with Farm Radio International.

“I was very impressed with the high level of interest shown in the online training course by radio broadcasters from countries across Africa,” she said. “More and more broadcasters are accessing the Internet and are keen to participate in training opportunities. Several of the participants indicated that they were using what they learned in their daily work and to train their peers.”

Farm Radio International will mail the 15 winning scripts to 500 radio organisations in Africa. The radio stations will have the opportunity to adapt and translate the farmer innovation stories before airing them, ensuring that the programmes are shared with a wide audience of farmers across the continent.

The scriptwriting competition was run in collaboration with FAO, the Donner Foundation, the Canadian International Development Agency (CIDA), Inter Press Service (IPS) Africa, the Technical Centre for Agricultural and Rural Cooperation (CTA), UNESCO and the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC).

Farm Radio International and COL plan to collaborate on a radio scriptwriting competition focused on community health this year. Meanwhile, COL is seeking other organisations looking to partner in activities that build capacity in media and community-based learning in developing countries of the Commonwealth. Contact Mr. Ian Pringle, COL Education Specialist, Media at ipringle@col.org for more information.
Developing countries in the Commonwealth are firmly committed to the attainment of the Education for All and Millennium Development Goals by 2015, particularly the goal of providing access to primary education to all children. Attaining these goals depends in large part on the availability of an adequate supply of well trained and highly motivated teachers and the provision of more opportunities for continuing professional development for primary and secondary school teachers.

Although significant levels of success have been recorded in expanding school enrolments and enhancing teacher supply since the endorsement of the Dakar Framework for Action in 2000 by these countries, many challenges need to be addressed.

INADEQUATE ACCESS TO EDUCATION

Despite recent progress, none of the Commonwealth developing countries has yet attained full Universal Primary Education. The Net Enrolment Ratio (NER) – the percentage of children in a country’s population enrolled in school – ranges from 60-90 percent. For example, India’s NER is 89 percent, South Africa 86 percent, Nigeria 64 percent, Ghana 73 percent and the Gambia 67 percent, according to UNESCO’s EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010. These figures indicate that there are millions of school age children who need to be provided access to basic education and for whom teachers have to be trained and recruited.

INSUFFICIENT SUPPLY OF TEACHERS

There are serious shortfalls in teacher supply that need to be addressed if Universal Primary Education is to be attained by 2015. It is projected that the stock of teachers for Sub-Saharan Africa must rise from 2.6 million in 2007 to 3.7 million in 2015, an increase of almost 50 percent, according to Projecting the Global Demand for Teachers (2009) from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics. Some specific country examples: Bangladesh needs to increase its number of teachers from 365,000 (in 2007) to 509,000, Kenya from 147,000 to 227,000, Malawi from 44,000 to 80,000, Nigeria from 580,000 to 704,000 and Uganda from 132,000 to 228,000.

The shortfall in teacher supply is described as a crisis by many, including teacher education expert Professor/ Bob Moon (see “Time for Radical Change in Teacher Education”, page 10).

HUGE NEED FOR TEACHER RECRUITMENT

Equally challenging is the issue of teacher recruitment. For instance, to attain Universal Primary Education, countries in Sub-Saharan Africa must recruit almost as many teachers in the next eight years as are currently teaching now. Looking at just one country, Nigeria, UNESCO projects that with the growing demand for education, population growth and attrition of current teachers, the country must recruit almost one million teachers by 2015.

LIMITED CAPACITY FOR TEACHER TRAINING

Some countries have made remarkable efforts to close the teacher gap. Yet these rates are still not sufficient to achieve Universal Primary Education by 2015. And expanding teaching forces require expanded teacher training. Existing conventional teacher training institutions lack the capacity to address these shortfalls in teacher supply, prompting the need to explore other alternatives, such as open and distance learning (ODL), for teacher education.

DISPARITIES IN PUPIL-TEACHER RATIOS

The Pupil-Teacher Ratio (PTR) looks rather impressive with many countries having a PTR of 40:1 or less than 40, the EFA Global Monitoring Report 2010 finds. However, these impressive national averages hide a lot of disparities particularly rural-urban disparities in teacher supply. For example in Malawi’s rural schools, the average PTR was 77:1, compared with 44:1 in urban schools.
Indeed, the ratio of pupils to trained teachers is 200:1 in some rural schools. And while the average PTR in developed countries is 14:1, in Sub-Saharan Africa, it is 44:1. These numbers reveal huge shortfalls in teacher supply for rural schools in many countries.

UNQUALIFIED TEACHERS
A significant proportion of teachers in many countries are untrained or unqualified. For example, only 49 percent of teachers in Ghana are trained/qualified, 51 percent in Nigeria, and 75 percent in the Caribbean. This has far-reaching implications for the quality of tuition provided in schools. It is suggestive of the dire need for upgrading courses for these teachers. ODL strategies can and should be used to upgrade in-service teachers on the job without taking them away from their schools or disrupting their duties as teachers.

INADEQUATE CONTINUING PROFESSIONAL DEVELOPMENT
In almost all of these countries, there are very few (if any) opportunities for continuing professional development for primary and secondary school teachers. Given the dynamic nature of knowledge and skills and the changing learning needs of children in primary and secondary schools, this has had a negative effect on teachers’ performance and effectiveness. In many countries, a clear policy on in-service training is yet to be articulated.

HARNESSING ODL FOR TEACHER TRAINING
There is widespread agreement that shortfalls in teacher supply cannot be addressed through conventional face-to-face training. Almost all Commonwealth countries have recognised this and are investing in ODL for teacher training.

COL is playing an important role by helping developing countries to build the capacity of their teacher training systems so that they adequately address the shortfalls in teacher supply and also enhance teachers’ quality, performance and effectiveness. Working in partnership with teacher training institutions, governments and other international agencies, COL is currently spearheading several major teacher education initiatives:

OERS FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING (PAN-COMMONWEALTH)
COL is working with educational institutions throughout the Commonwealth to develop open educational resources (OERs) in multimedia and traditional text formats to support school-based training for teachers working in the upper basic education sector. These resources will be freely available for use and adaptation.

“GREEN TEACHER” PROGRAMME (INDIA)
Green Teacher is a one-year Diploma in Environmental Education for teachers and educators developed by India’s Centre for Environment Education in partnership with COL. Offered through distance mode, this continuing learning course teaches in-service teachers how to increase learning about environmental issues.

CHILD-FRIENDLY SCHOOLS (10 COMMONWEALTH COUNTRIES)
Through a two-year partnership with the United Nations Children’s Fund (UNICEF), COL is promoting quality in education through the “Child-Friendly Schools” model. Working with partner institutions and Ministries of Education in 10 countries, COL is developing “train the trainer” workshops that introduce Child-Friendly Schools to teacher training institutions and teacher resource centres.

DISSEMINATION OF TESSA OERS (UGANDA AND ZAMBIA)
Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) is a consortium of 18 organisations, including COL, that are collaborating to develop extensive multilingual open education resources (OERs) for teacher training. COL and TESSA have formed an additional partnership to promote the dissemination and use of TESSA resources by primary school teachers and teacher educators in Uganda and Zambia, to ensure the effective use of these teacher training resources.

TRAINING FOR HEAD TEACHERS AND PRINCIPALS (WEST AFRICA)
COL is working with Memorial University (Newfoundland & Labrador, Canada) to provide training to improve the professional skills and effectiveness of head teachers and principals in the Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. Using print, audio and video training materials provided, these educators will, in turn, train other head teachers and principals in their countries.

NATIONAL TEACHERS’ INSTITUTE, NIGERIA

For more than 30 years, Nigeria’s National Teachers’ Institute (NTI) has been working to increase the skills and knowledge of teachers in the country. NTI is the world’s only ODL institution dedicated exclusively to teacher training. It currently trains more than 80,000 teachers annually. In addition, NTI provides re-training for some 140,000 teachers each year through its Millennium Development Goals programme.

With a Net Enrolment Ratio of 64 per cent, Nigeria has a school-age population of more than 24 million students and about 580,000 teachers, according to the Projecting the Global Demand for Teachers report by UNESCO. Ensuring these teachers are qualified and effective is one of Nigeria’s primary education challenges.

NTI’s focus is providing in-service training to primary and secondary school teachers. This includes upgrading under-qualified teachers, as well as ongoing professional development. The use of ODL enables teachers to remain in their jobs while they upgrade their qualifications. The ability to pursue “anywhere, anytime” learning is particularly appealing to women, who make up more than 60 percent of NTI’s enrolment.

NTI’s courses – which span all categories of teacher training – are largely print-based, supplemented by videos and radio programmes broadcast on NTI’s own station, Teachers’ Radio. COL recently signed an agreement to support the development of 24 new radio programmes that will help teachers upgrade their teaching skills in Math and Science. Learner support is provided by course tutors who work out of NTI’s more than 800 study centres nationwide.

Despite challenges in harnessing the potential of information and communication technology, NTI remains focused on meeting Nigeria’s urgent need for quality teacher training.

www.ntinigeria.org

CONTINUED ON PAGE 10
TIME FOR RADICAL CHANGE IN TEACHER EDUCATION

By Professor Bob Moon

In many parts of the world, the supply, retention, education and training of teachers is verging on crisis. This is true almost everywhere. In the USA, around half of all high school subjects are taught by non-specialists (in Mathematics and Science the figures are even higher). California has had to introduce special programmes for unqualified elementary teachers. In the developing world, the crisis is more acute. In Sub-Saharan Africa, it is estimated that around half of all primary, basic education teachers are unqualified or significantly underqualified. Thousands of schools are staffed by volunteer, contract teachers. The situation is so desperate that some countries have made teaching an alternative to military service. The description “teacher” now has a very wide meaning.

The crisis around the supply and retention of teachers is complex, equally so their training. But one thing is clear: there is absolutely no way the “bricks and mortar” institutions of teacher training created in the last century will be adequate for 21st century needs. In making that assertion, let me be very clear on one point. I am not suggesting there is no place for campus institutions. I am merely making the mathematical observation that the training needs of new and existing teachers far outstrip the capacity of existing institutions.

It follows therefore that new models of training will be needed. And for teachers, this means that their upgrading and continuing professional needs must be met by school-based programmes. It also means the urgent necessity of a radical shift in policy to embrace a significantly more diversified framework for education and training.

Yet this policy shift is so slow in coming. In country after country, particularly in Sub-Saharan Africa, the vast majority of resources are going to campus, residential training programmes extending for up to three or four years, whilst unqualified teachers flood into the classrooms and existing teachers have little or no opportunities for professional development. Successive UNESCO Education for All Monitoring Reports have commented critically on such an imbalance.

The logic of this situation points to the systematic development of school-based programmes using a variety of open and distance teaching and learning methodologies. And this we are beginning to see. CalState’s Teach in California is a response to the crisis in elementary schools. The U.K. Open University’s flexible postgraduate teacher training programme offers opportunities for mature entrant mathematicians, scientists and modern linguists to train as teachers. The Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) programme (in which COL, under the energetic leadership of Dr. Abdurrahman Umar, is playing a key role) seeks to ambitiously harness international co-operation around open educational resources to provide a high level support system across the continent. UNESCO and the World Bank are recognising the need. The latter has recently published a handbook for the myriad of new course developers (http://tinyurl.com/ODLforTeacherEdAfrica).

Despite these initiatives, more needs to be done. I suggest six key strategies:

- Fully integrate school-based, distance approaches into national training policies: not “bolt-on projects” to deal with crises but fully integrated strategic thinking.
- Establishing a new, practical, classroom focused, curriculum for upgrading courses, and for continuing professional development: the biggest problems for distance education courses is when planners try to replicate the organisation of campus-based credit courses.
- Adapt more formative portfolio assessment systems giving primacy to classroom practice: the dead hand of timed examinations still weighs heavily on many programmes.
- Model costs in programme design in advance of implementation: problems of sustainability almost always arise when this is not done.
- Plan for the progressive adaptation of information and communication technology (ICT), especially mobile technologies: too many distance programmes continue to ignore the potential of this.
- Use media, especially radio, to make training more interesting and stimulating: too much teacher education, quite frankly, is plain boring.

Education and training should be an entitlement for all teachers at all stages of their careers. The research evidence shows that when this entitlement is honoured, learners achieve more and schools improve. Sir John Daniel in his new book, Mega-Schools, Technology and Teachers: Achieving Education for All makes many similar points. We all need to turn up the advocacy volume control.

Professor Bob Moon is Professor of Education at The Open University (UK) and founding Director of the Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA) programme.
A FRESH PERSPECTIVE
REFLECTIONS ON A LIFELONG LEARNING FOR FARMERS
STUDY TOUR IN INDIA

By Lydia Meister

My colleague, COL Education Specialist, Dr. K. Balasubramanian (Bala), conducted a study tour in December 2009 of the Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3 Farmers) initiative in Tamil Nadu, South India. The districts of Theni, Madurai and Dindigul gave birth to L3 Farmers; it is now being implemented by COL’s partners, the Centre for Environment Education (CEE) and Maharashtra Animal & Fishery Sciences University (MAFSU) in the states of Gujarat and Maharashtra respectively. Both CEE and MAFSU are recent entrants to L3 Farmers, Bala wanted to share with them the L3 Farmers experience in Tamil Nadu, so they could broaden their understanding of the programme.

For the last couple of years, I have wanted to visit some of COL’s field sites to gain a better understanding of what we do. As I planned to be on vacation in India, my boss, Professor Asha Kanwar, suggested I join the study tour as part of my professional development. And what an amazing experience it was! The first two days were spent visiting village communities involved in L3 Farmers; the third day was a workshop of L3 Farmers stakeholders to build partnerships and discuss the sharing of resources.

Without a doubt, the highlight of the tour was being welcomed by the incredibly warm and kind people I met in the villages. They are the heart and soul of L3 Farmers. The villagers told stories of their struggles and success that revealed their ingenuity, tenacity, resilience and desire to improve their lives for them and their children. I sensed their pride when they told me their son or daughter was going to school; I suspect that for many of them this was their greatest measure of success. Listening to their stories reminded me of how similar people are the world over. Often when we travel we expect people to be different; yet my experiences tell me that places and cultural norms may be different, but the wants and desires of people are very much the same.

One thing that surprised me was how much arable land I saw and the richness of the produce available in the market. I had this notion that because of India’s large population, there would be very little arable farmland, yet I discovered the exact opposite to be true. The region around Theni is beautiful with its rice paddies, sugar cane, corn and coconut fields to name a few. I loved wandering through the market in Theni trying to figure out what fruit or vegetable I was looking at!

I discovered that some of the farmers are more high tech than I am. One of the villages we visited had established a goat rearing enterprise. The goat herders, who were largely illiterate, were able to use their mobile phones as a learning tool. I found this to be remarkable, particularly as I am a Luddite and do not own or use a mobile phone! I was astounded by the quality of the learning materials developed by the various village groups. The materials were available in both print-based and CD-ROM format, and were designed to respond to the needs of the farmers in their region. It reminded me that learning and development is a reciprocal relationship.

Much of my work consists of supervising the flow of information. Participating in the L3 Farmers study tour reminded me that behind the reports, the logframes, the meetings and the reporting mechanisms COL has in place to monitor its work are people. COL exists to serve people, whether these people belong to a government ministry, an institution, a non-governmental organisation (NGO) or a self-help group. The nature of my work will not change, but my experience put faces to the words, which in itself is more rewarding. I feel honoured and humbled to have had this experience, and will cherish it for a long time to come.

Ms. Lydia Meister has worked for COL in several roles since 2002. She currently assists the Vice President in administering the programme-related matters of her portfolio and the Education Specialist, Higher Education in overseeing COL’s involvement with the Commonwealth Executive MBA and MPA (CEMBA/CEMPA) programmes.

COL President Sir John Daniel received an Honorary Doctorate of Education from the Open University of Malaysia at its convocation in November 2009.

Sir John also received the Frank H. Klassen award of the International Council for Education for Teaching (ICET) for his “leadership and scholarly contributions in teacher education”. He delivered a keynote address entitled ‘How do we recruit and train 10 million teachers? at ICET’s World Assembly in Muscat, Oman on 14 December 2009.

Professor Tat Meng Wong has been appointed Vice-Chancellor and Chief Executive Officer of Wawasan Open University. Formerly Deputy Vice Chancellor (Academic) of WOU, Professor Wong succeeds Tan Sri Dato’ Emeritus Professor Gajaraj Dhanarajan, who had been WOU’s founding Vice Chancellor and CEO since leaving his position as COL’s President and CEO in 2004.

SIR JOHN DANIEL WITH OPEN UNIVERSITY OF MALAYSIA CHANCELLOR, YABHG TUN JEANNE ABDULLAH AT THE NOVEMBER 2009 CONVOCATION
MEGA-SCHOOLS, TECHNOLOGY AND TEACHERS:
ACHIEVING EDUCATION FOR ALL

By John S. Daniel, COL President and CEO

Education for All (EFA) has been a top priority for governments and intergovernmental development agencies for the last 20 years. The principal focus of the global EFA movement has been providing quality universal primary education (UPE) for all children by 2015.

COL President Sir John Daniel’s new book, Mega-Schools, Technology and Teachers: Achieving Education for All, addresses the new challenges created by the UPE campaign. This book advocates new approaches for providing access to secondary education for today’s rapidly growing population of children and young adults. In particular, it examines:

- The creation and expansion of Mega-Schools, which combine distance learning and community support and have a proven track record of increasing access at scale.
- How to prepare the 10 million new teachers that are required to achieve Education for All by 2015 by focusing on classroom-based in-service training.
- Strategies for using technology to scale up distance education cost-effectively.
- The creation of a 21st century educational ecosystem that integrates open schooling and teacher education with communities and their school systems.
- Successful examples of open schools and teacher education programmes operating at scale around the world.

www.routledge.com/books/Mega-Schools-Technology-and-Teachers-isbn9780415872058

MULTIMEDIA FOR OPEN SCHOOLS
Implementing a Multimedia Content Development Strategy in Open Schooling: The Experience of the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL)

In 2009, the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) introduced 16 video lessons in Accounting, English, Mathematics and Physical Science. The videos, which were made available on national television, in learning centres across Namibia, at NAMCOL bookshops and online through the NAMCOL and COL websites, were developed through a multimedia capacity building programme supported by COL. This manual recounts NAMCOL’s experiences in developing these multimedia learning materials. It will help guide open schools and other educational institutions as they develop their own strategic plans for integrating multimedia learning materials.

www.col.org/OpenSchooling

EFA GLOBAL MONITORING REPORT 2010
The 2010 Education for All Global Monitoring Report, released by UNESCO in January 2010, finds that the worldwide financial crisis threatens to deprive millions of children in the world’s poorest countries of an education. The annual Global Monitoring Report, which is developed by an independent team, assesses progress towards the six Education for All goals to which more than 160 countries committed themselves in 2000. The 2010 Report, Reaching the marginalized finds that despite striking advances in education over the past decade, the world is not on track to achieve the goal of universal primary education by 2015.

www.efareport.unesco.org

GOOD PRACTICE IN INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY FOR EDUCATION
Asian Development Bank, 2009

ICT for education is a rapidly evolving and high-priority development area. This guide from the Asian Development Bank stresses the importance of a good practice framework in which ICT for education issues is pursued through three interrelated perspectives: national, education sector and education institution. The guide draws on a range of sources, including the findings of ADB’s studies on ICT for education and ADB’s experience providing project assistance for ICT for education in its developing member countries.


NEW GUIDELINES FOR BROADCASTERS ON USER GENERATED CONTENT & MEDIA AND INFORMATION LITERACY
By Martin Scott

This new publication from the Commonwealth Broadcasting Association and UNESCO provides community radio broadcasters with knowledge and advice about how to produce better user-generated content, as well as improving media and information literacy. The resource provides guidance on how broadcasters can provide programmes that serve both their public duty and commercial needs.

The guidelines can be purchased in book form from the CBA or downloaded for free.
IGNOU CELEBRATES 25 YEARS

Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) celebrated its 25th anniversary in New Delhi on 19 November 2009. Named after India’s late Prime Minister, Mrs. Indira Gandhi, IGNOU meets the needs of learners who are unable to access higher education.

Speaking at the Silver Jubilee celebration, Indian President Mrs. Pratibha Devi Singh Patil quoted Mrs. Gandhi’s vision:

"Communication technology frees the entire concept of education from its previous limit of time and space ... we can reach out to the remotest places and to the best minds that exist. We do not have all of it yet in India, but I sincerely hope that we will have it soon and that this will help our education to be more broad-based and deeper."

Today IGNOU is the largest university in the world, with an enrolment topping 1.4 million students. It offers a wide range of programmes and courses through a vast network of learning centres.

At the Silver Jubilee celebration, President Patil announced the Rajiv Gandhi International Prize for Education and Technology Development, to be awarded annually to an individual or institution that has made significant contributions to educational technology for development in the developing world.

IGNOU is partnering with COL to present the Sixth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF6) from 24-28 November 2010 in Kochi, Kerala, India. www.ignou.ac.in

COL PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE IN CHINESE

China Central Radio & TV University Press has vastly extended COL’s reach by translating six of COL’s training handbooks into Chinese. The publications cover a range of ODL issues including quality assurance, tutoring, creating ODL learning materials and blended eLearning. A division of the State Education Commission, China Central Radio & TV University Press publishes books, teachers’ guides, study guides and other reference books for open and distance education.

www.crtvup.com.cn

AUSTRALIANS EMBRACE E-LEARNING

Australian organisations are using cutting-edge technologies as a key part of their business strategy to revolutionise workplace training and development, saving them time and money and empowering their employees. The Australian Flexible Learning Framework provides support for vocational education and training practitioners and training providers working in e-learning with programmes such as learning through digital media, mobile phones and avatar animation.

http://flexiblelearning.net.au

ENVIRONMENTAL ENGINEERING COURSES

By Dr. T.V. Ramachandra, Indian Institute of Science

Rapid industrialisation of developing countries has led to a shortage of engineering personnel at all levels, including the industrial sector and in infrastructure management. Recognising this need, COL provided five high quality environmental engineering modules (earlier developed by UNESCO-COL) to the Indian Institute of Science. COL and IISc collaborated to revise the modules so that they could be taught as courses through open and distance learning (ODL).

The five courses are:

- Management of municipal solid waste
- Environment management
- Soil and groundwater pollution from agricultural activities
- Air pollution control
- Water and wastewater treatment

These courses, which include relevant real-world examples, provide continuing professional development for practicing engineering professionals in India and developing Commonwealth countries. The ODL format enables in-service engineers to pursue studies without the need to leave the workplace for extended periods. First released in 2006, the courses have been printed in book form by TERI Press, New Delhi and are also available through IISc.

Print version of the courses:
http://bookstore.teriin.org

Indian Institute of Science webpage:
http://wgbis.ces.iisc.ernet.in/energy/DistanceEducationCourses

INTERNET RADIO INTRODUCED IN THE MALDIVES

Working in partnership with COL and the Open University of Malaysia, the Ministry of Education in the Maldives has launched an Internet radio service. iRadio EDC provides a range of educational radio programmes, all available for free over the Internet.

http://iradio.edc.edu.mv

FEBRUARY 2010
COL RIM INTRODUCED TO AFRICAN UNIVERSITIES

The COL Review and Improvement Model (COL RIM) for effective institutional quality audits was introduced to educators from 11 African countries, including the Association of African Universities, in October 2009. The three-day workshop in Abuja, Nigeria, organised in collaboration with the National Open University of Nigeria, outlined the features of COL RIM and included a presentation by the University of Technology, Jamaica, which was the first institution to trial the model.

COL RIM provides higher education institutions with a “do-it-yourself” approach to institutional quality audits. After leading audits of UNISA and the University of Ghana in 2007, COL concluded that the high cost of using external teams would deter many institutions from conducting quality assurance audits. COL developed COL RIM as a more cost-effective approach that focuses on self-assessment and helps institutions improve internal quality assurance, planning and systematic institutional improvement.

The COL RIM package, consisting of a conceptual framework and handbook, is freely available from COL. COL plans to support the efforts of institutions to conduct institutional quality audits using COL RIM. For more information, contact Ms. Ruvani Ameresekere, Programme Assistant at rameresekere@col.org

For more information about COL RIM, see a presentation made by Dr. Willie Clarke-Okah and Sir John Daniel to the International Seminar, Council for Higher Education Accreditation in Washington, DC in January 2010.

www.col.org/speeches

CASE WRITING WORKSHOP IN BANGLADESH

In partnership with the nine institutions licensed to offer the Executive Master of Business Administration (CEMBA) and Master of Public Administration (CEMPA) degrees, COL conducted a five-day case-writing workshop. Twenty-one delegates from open universities in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean attended the workshop at the BRAC Centre for Development Management in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The case study method – which outlines real life situations and lessons learned – is a popular teaching approach in business education. The focus of the workshop was building capacity in writing academically sound case studies. The goal is to create a bank of current, international case studies for use in the CEMBA/CEMPA programmes. Under the leadership of facilitator Professor Adele Thomas from the University of Johannesburg, delegates worked on case study ideas that they brought to the workshop for development and refinement. They committed to continuing to develop materials and share their new skills with colleagues.

Developed initially through a collaboration between COL and four open universities, the CEMBA/CEMPA programmes are designed for part-time study by busy working professionals, in response to the growing demands for post-graduate level education in business and public administration.

www.col.org/cemba
HARNESSING THE POTENTIAL OF MEDIA FOR LEARNING

Media and community development organisations in Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and the Pacific took part in a workshop about educational media programming hosted by COL in partnership with UNESCO in October 2009. Participants from the Caribbean Institute for Media and Communication (Jamaica), the Maraa media collective (India), the Media Training Centre for Health (South Africa), Story Workshop (Malawi) and non-governmental organisations in Kenya and Solomon Islands attended the four-day meeting in Vancouver, Canada.

They began development of a Toolkit for Community Learning Programmes, a resource that will help community groups create non-formal educational programmes using local media and other information and communication technologies. The Toolkit for Community Learning Programmes is currently being used to develop community-based learning programmes focused on health. Once testing is complete, COL will make the toolkit freely available online.

www.wikieducator.org/Community_Media

COL hosted a workshop on copyright and open educational resources (OERs) in Delhi, India in conjunction with the launch of the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association (see page 5) in November 2009. Attending the workshop were 35 people from open schools and allied institutions in Australia, Belize, Botswana, Cameroon, Canada, Ghana, Guyana, India, Lesotho, Mozambique, Namibia, Papua New Guinea, Seychelles, South Africa, the South Pacific, Swaziland and Trinidad & Tobago.

The objective of the workshop was to explain how copyright issues affect OERs and to explore alternative copyright licenses for OERs.

The workshop also benefited from a presentation by Ms. Nirmita Narasimhan, Programme Manager at the Centre for Internet and Society, Bangalore, who spoke about the benefits of OERs for people with a visual disability. As someone with a visual disability herself, Ms. Narasimhan provided a compelling argument about the importance of making OERs “open” to people with disabilities. She also inspired participants to make OERs accessible to learners of all abilities.

A background document explaining issues relating to copyright and OERs is available on COL’s website.

www.col.org/OpenSchooling

UPCOMING EVENTS

E-LEARN 2010
WORLD CONFERENCE ON E-LEARNING IN CORPORATE, GOVERNMENT, HEALTHCARE, & HIGHER EDUCATION
Orlando, Florida
18-22 October 2010
www.oace.org/conf/elearn

SIXTH PAN-COMMONWEALTH FORUM ON OPEN LEARNING (PCF6)
ACCESS AND SUCCESS IN LEARNING: GLOBAL DEVELOPMENT PERSPECTIVES
Le Méridien Cochin Resort & Convention Centre
Kochi, Kerala, India.
24-28 November 2010
Hosted by the Commonwealth of Learning and Indira Gandhi National Open University
www.col.org/pcf6
TREND WATCH: eREADERS
By Amy Monaghan
Manager, COL Information Resource Centre

While Kindle and the Sony Reader continue to dominate the market for digital reading devices, a number of new eReaders have hit the market in recent months.

• The Nook from book retailer Barnes & Noble is the first colour eReader. It allows for book lending.
• The Skiff Reader, a partnership between Heart and Sprint, is the thinnest eReader on the market to date.
• The Plastic Logic Que is aimed at business professionals.
• Alex is a dual-screen eReader that provides access to one million Google Books online.

We can expect the flurry of new eBook reader launches to continue in 2010, including a solar-powered eReader from LG. And of course Apple’s new iPad tablet (launched on 27 January) is expected to have a dramatic impact on this market.

Three issues come to mind with regard to eBook readers:

• Do people want another device that only does one thing?
  Current eReaders such as Kindle only read eBooks. An eBook-like tablet, such as Apple’s new release and Microsoft’s eagerly anticipated Courier booklet, will have greater functionality.
• Do eReaders accommodate different formats sufficiently?
  Formats for many of the readers can hamper the owner’s ability to build their eBook collection. For example, the Kindle uses the proprietary format .azw, which is not transferable to any other device. And the Kindle will only read a few other formats such as .txt, Mobi and .prc (and only if they do not have DRM attached). PDFs can be read on the later model Kindle DX, whereas the earlier models require a conversion process and payment. Many of the cheaper readers such as Foxit and eSlick only read PDF and .txt. This is fine for reading on computers, but PDF graphics do not transfer well to dedicated eBook readers and the print can be so small that when it is enlarged it does not wrap well around the smaller screen.
• Do eReaders respect copyright restrictions?
  Copyright is an important issue to consider when deciding whether to convert from PDF or other formats to epub. If the copyright is not held by the person wishing to convert formats, then changing formats is usually breaking copyright. So unless the original publisher (or copyright holder) issues the publication in the epub format, then the user of the eBook reader will be unable to view that particular publication on their dedicated machine. One open access journal in our field, the International Review of Research in Open and Distance Learning, very considerately offers their articles in a variety of formats, including PDF, HTML, MP3 and epub.

MOBILE PHONE BANKING IN AFRICA

A service that allows people to transfer money using a mobile phone is rapidly growing in popularity in Africa. M-PESA (M for mobile; pesa is money in Swahili) is available to Safaricom mobile phone subscribers, even if they don’t have a bank account. The M-PESA application is installed on their SIM card. Originally developed to enable microfinance borrowers to conveniently receive and repay loans, M-PESA is now being used mostly by migrant workers sending remittances home and for bill payments.

There are more than 2.3 million registered users in Kenya, where M-PESA was first launched in 2007. Previously only one in five Kenyans had access to banking facilities due to high transaction fees. M-PESA is also being deployed in Tanzania. A similar system, Wizzit, is available in South Africa.

www.safaricom.co.ke
www.wizzit.co.za

A LOOK AT . . . VIRTUAL SERVERS

Organisations that previously had a separate server to host each computer application are discovering the flexibility and cost savings of a “virtual” server system. Also known as virtual machines, a virtual server system is part of a larger trend of IT virtualisation. COL is virtualising its IT infrastructure by replacing 14 traditional physical servers with three powerful new servers and a Storage Area Network (SAN) that will host all applications on virtual servers. With a life span of about five years and an average replacement cost of $5,000, traditional servers can be expensive, especially since each server optimally only hosts one application.

Read more about Virtual Servers, as well as “The Learning Potential of Google Wave” in our Online edition. www.col.org/connections