The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) is playing a leadership role in the development and use of open educational resources (OER) that can be freely shared, adapted and re-used. Recent initiatives in open schooling and teacher education demonstrate the potential of OER to support Learning for Development.

**OER for Open Schools**

COL’s “OER for Open Schools” initiative made significant strides in promoting the use of OER in open schools across the Commonwealth. This multi-year, pan-Commonwealth programme built capacity in developing OER in six Commonwealth countries, which resulted in a repository of OER for 20 subjects at the Grade-10 level: www.col.org/CourseMaterials.

Recognising the role of OER in expanding access to education, COL is continuing to support growth in awareness, acceptance and use of freely available learning resources in open schools. There continues to be a great need for capacity building so that educators have the ability to develop, adapt and share OER. By supporting enhanced capacity in online learning, COL seeks to contribute to the development of sustainable models of online learning in open schooling through various activities.

COL supported development of new OER and a TV channel to enhance access to basic education in Kenya. The Elimu TV channel and web portal were launched in September at Kenyatta International Conference Centre in Nairobi. The channel is broadcasting video lessons for out-of-school children and youth in the city’s least developed neighbourhoods. COL partnered with the Network for Non-Formal Education Institutions, a non-governmental organisation, to adapt lessons in 10 subjects to OER. These lessons can be accessed through Elimu’s web portal, www.nnfeischools.co.ke.

“In addition to making education more accessible, the Elimu initiative is contributing to OER that can be freely used by teachers and students anywhere,” said Ms. Frances Ferreira, COL Education Specialist, Open Schooling. “The next step will be to explore how to use mobiles to support learning among this target group.”

COL trained 25 teachers in Lesotho and Zambia to repurpose print-based course materials for online

**Education Ministers Commit to Post-2015 Discussions**

Commonwealth education ministers concluded their 18th conference in Mauritius in August with an undertaking to contribute to United Nations and UNESCO discussions about global development goals after 2015, the deadline for the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All goals. Ministers have set up a Commonwealth Ministers Working Group to ensure that Commonwealth perspectives are presented for inclusion in the framework for post-2015 anti-poverty targets.
OER FOR “LEARNING FOR DEVELOPMENT” CONTINUED FROM COVER

COL Education Specialist, Ms. Frances Ferreira, made a presentation about development and use of OER at the Distance Education Association of Southern Africa (DEASA) annual general conference in Swakopmund, Namibia in September 2012.

learning. Held in collaboration with the Ministries of Education in both countries, workshops in July (Zambia) and August (Lesotho) provided training in instructional design for online learning. Participants developed assignments that can be used in online courses and are continuing to work on developing online courses, with post-workshop support from a COL consultant. When complete, the courses will be freely available as OER on the Moodle learning management system.

COL is also sponsoring 20 students, including 12 from open schools, to take the Certificate in Designing and Facilitating eLearning programme at the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand. The online course consists of three 20-credit courses that focus on the theory and practice of eLearning.

www.col.org/OpenSchooling

OER FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHING

COL is collaborating with partners to improve the quality of English language teaching at the junior secondary school level through the Open Resources for English Language Teaching (ORELT) initiative.

ORELT began with extensive research about English language teaching in Commonwealth nations. Through a partnership of Ministries of Education, schools and teacher training institutions across the Commonwealth, ORELT has developed a bank of open-content, multimedia, English-language resources in online and traditional text formats to support school-based education. Educators in six countries in Africa and Asia collaborated over the past three years to develop the materials, incorporating case studies, activities, video, audio and print. Six modules have been created, covering essential skills in reading, writing and speaking English.

To ensure the new ORELT modules are successfully introduced and rolled out, COL hosted a workshop to train “Master Trainers”. Facilitated by the University of the Gambia, the four-day workshop brought together 25 educators from The Gambia, Ghana, Nigeria and Sierra Leone. In addition to learning about the ORELT modules, participants received training in using the multimedia resources in the classroom, navigating the ORELT website, and adapting and sharing open resources.

The 25 Master Trainers are now leading in-country training of junior secondary school teachers and teacher educators. The ORELT materials will be disseminated among junior secondary school English-language teachers through training workshops in The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Sierra Leone and Uganda.

“The ORELT modules offer a rich learning experience that will help improve learning outcomes in English-language teaching,” explains Dr. Abdurrahman Umar, COL Education Specialist, Teacher Education. “In addition to creating a library of open resources that can be adapted, shared and used, this initiative will also continue to build capacity in developing and using open educational resources.”

www.colorelt.org

EDUCATION MINISTERS COMMIT TO POST-2015 DISCUSSIONS CONTINUED FROM COVER

In their Mauritius Communiqué, Ministers acknowledged that solid progress had been made towards reaching the Millennium Development Goals in education and the Education for All goals by 2015, particularly in universal primary education. They noted, however, that 25.8 million primary-aged children are still out of school in Commonwealth countries and identified quality education and equal access as common challenges.

COL formally reports to Commonwealth education ministers when they meet every three years at their Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM). At 18CCEM, COL partnered with the Commonwealth Secretariat to provide each education minister with a seven-inch tablet computer loaded with COL activity reports, conference and background documents, introductory videos and demonstration software. The tablets, described more fully on page 16, were presented through funding from UNICEF Child-Friendly Schools and the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation as a “tool for learning” that represents a part of the future of education.

Ministers also commended COL in their Communiqué, referring to COL’s growing impact and leadership in developing innovations in technology to enhance access to education. Education ministers also emphasised the need to strengthen the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) and the importance of developing and using OER for teaching and learning.

18CCEM was attended by 40 countries, including 44 delegations led by ministers. It also included parallel forums for stakeholders, teachers, you

The 19th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers will be hosted by The Bahamas in 2015.

18CCEM Communiqué: http://tinyurl.com/18CCEM-Communique
INVEST: INNOVATION IN VOCATIONAL EDUCATION & SKILLS TRAINING

In consultation with Flexible Skills Development partners in Africa, COL has changed the initiative’s name to INVEST Africa: Innovation in Vocational Education & Skills Training. The 11 partner institutions in The Gambia, Ghana, Kenya, Nigeria, Tanzania and Zambia are expanding access to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) by integrating information and communication technology (ICT) in flexible and blended approaches.

The programme’s 2012 evaluation report details the following developments in the 11 Key Institutions in Africa:
- 3,750 new training places were created in 2011;
- INVEST Champion teams are supporting flexible and blended learning approaches in all institutions;
- Campus radio stations are being established or re-invigorated in three institutions, and lessons are being delivered via radio;
- Koforidua Polytechnic in Ghana has established a new Institute for Open and Distance Learning and Auchi Polytechnic in Nigeria has created a Center for Flexible Skills Development;
- Moodle platforms have been established in six colleges to facilitate the creation and sharing of course materials, and staff are building capacity in eLearning; and
- Lecturers from all partner institutions and others are sharing information about integrating technology into their teaching through the online Community Learning Network.

www.col.org/tvst/INVEST

ADDRESSING GENDER ISSUES IN TVET

Nigeria’s National Board for Technical Education has taken the bold step of establishing a new Gender Desk to spearhead activities to promote the participation of women and girls in TVET. This came as a result of a recommendation made following COL’s Flexible Skills Development Gender and Policy workshop at Auchi Polytechnic. COL commends this important development and will be supporting the unit to develop a strategy for actions to make TVET in Nigeria more accessible for women and girls.

Mbeya Institute of Science & Technology (MIST) in Kenya has a very low percentage of female students, less than 15 per cent. To address this, MIST developed an access course that was offered through an outreach centre. The 160 young women who successfully completed the 10-week course have been admitted to diploma programmes at MIST.

To commemorate the United Nations’ first International Day of the Girl on 11 October 2012, the dynamic team at Mombasa Technical Training Institute in Kenya launched its new Women in Technical and Vocational Education and Training (WITED) chapter. Led by their Principal, Mr. Bashir Mursal, himself a father of four girls, the event was attended by nearly 260 young women from neighbouring secondary schools and more than 100 female students from the TVET institution. The young women explored making choices, trust, leadership and change. They were enthralled by the presentation of Ms. Mariam Maawi, who runs her own architecture company. She told the story of the fight for girls’ education in her family starting with her grandmother and called on the young women to take their place in bringing about change so that everyone has equal rights to education. Participants went home “walking tall” and ready to work hard to make the world a better place for both girls and boys.

BUILDING CAPACITY IN FLEXIBLE APPROACHES

COL continues to support training workshops at TVET institutions to build capacity in flexible approaches to learning.

Masai TTI in Kenya hosted a workshop for 27 participants focusing on pedagogical approaches for using audio and video in teaching. The workshop was supported by senior officials from the Ministry of Higher Education Science and Technology, Mr. Owate Wambayi, Director of the Directorate of Technical Education and Professor Crispus Kiamba, Permanent Secretary, who officiated at the opening and closing ceremonies respectively.

Capacity building at Kenya Technical Teachers’ College (KTTC) continued in August when 33 educators explored a range of technologies for teaching and learning including Moodle training. KTTC is in the process of integrating eLearning into their TVET teacher training programmes and are developing a blended approach to teacher education. Kenya has plans to establish an “open TVET” system, which will require large numbers of TVET teachers who can integrate ICT into teaching and learning.

An INVEST Africa introductory workshop was held at Rift Valley Technical Training Institute in Kenya, the 12th institution seeking to join INVEST and the 6th from Kenya. “I’m very happy that my institution is being considered for the INVEST programme,” said Principal Edwin Tarno. “We are already working on the action plan developed as a result of the workshop.”

The Workforce Development Authority (WDA) and COL partnered recently to introduce innovative approaches to TVET in Rwanda. Sixteen senior management staff from Integrated Regional Polytechnic Centers and WDA engaged in a workshop to establish how their national policy objectives can be achieved through flexible and blended approaches. The Integrated Regional Polytechnic Center in Kigali may soon join the 11 INVEST key institutions.

More than 140 teachers, managers and policy makers are currently enrolled in INVEST online courses that introduce the issues and concepts involved in flexible and blended learning in TVET.
More than 2,000 educators in eight countries have received training in Child-Friendly Schools approaches through the UNICEF-COL Child-Friendly Schools Project. This three-year initiative sought to mainstream “child-first” concepts into teacher education curricula in Botswana, Lesotho, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Sri Lanka, Swaziland and Zambia.

Developed by UNICEF as a response to growing concerns about the often poor quality of basic education, the Child-Friendly Schools model promotes a rights-based concept of quality that goes beyond good teaching methods and learning outcomes to include health, safety and adequacy of school facilities and supplies.

COL’s work was in two areas: integrating the Child-Friendly Schools model into pre-service and in-service teacher training curricula and strengthening the roles of Teacher Resource Centres to promote Child-Friendly Schools. The project’s outputs include providing 50 training workshops for 1,973 educators in eight countries and developing extensive resources (training manuals, ODL modules, eLearning packages, radio broadcasts and Child-Friendly Schools Standards and Indicators) that are all available as open educational resources (OER).

One of the most significant outcomes of COL’s Child-Friendly Schools initiative is the development of replicable approaches to capacity development in several countries.

- In South Africa, the University of Limpopo has integrated Child-Friendly Schools concepts into its Life Skills/Orientation programmes, and there is interest from other South African universities to apply it to their Life Skills programmes.

- In Nigeria, the Interactive Radio Interaction (IRI) initiative for nomadic communities has potential to be replicated across the country and in other countries with nomadic schools such as Kenya and Tanzania.

- The Child-Friendly Schools eLearning package in Tamil developed by partners in Sri Lanka can be modified and rolled out to Tamil-speaking regions of India, Malaysia and Singapore.

“The Child-Friendly Schools project exceeded expectations in terms of the number of people trained, the richness of the resources developed and the long-term sustainability of our efforts,” says Dr. Abdurrahman Umar, COL Education Specialist, Teacher Education. “Ultimately, this initiative will result in huge strides towards improving the quality of basic education.”

**SUPPORTING THE EXPANSION OF OPEN SCHOOLING**

**NEW OPEN SCHOOL IN PAKISTAN**

COL is supporting the establishment of a new open school at Pakistan’s Allama Iqbal Open University (AIOU). After commissioning a study on launching an open school in Pakistan, COL has committed to support the development of content for 14 primary and elementary school courses. By providing training for educators in course development, COL is building capacity among educators.

AIOU plans to enrol one million open schooling students over the next three years, with an emphasis on expanding access to skills-related education for girls.

**TRAINING AT NEW OPEN SCHOOL IN GHANA**

COL led a workshop on integrating technical and vocational education for 28 educators at Ghana’s new open school. The 10-day instructional design workshop at the Centre for National Distance Learning and Open Schooling (CENDLOS) in Accra focused on developing seven new courses in vocational subjects. Once completed, the courses will be freely available as OER.
COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) initiative is making a significant contribution to livelihoods and health in Kenya and Uganda, according to recent research. A survey by Dr. Rosemary Atieno of the Institute of Development Studies, University of Nairobi found that the L3F initiative participants increased their consumption of dairy, meat, poultry and vegetables compared to others in the community who are not taking part in the initiative.

Households with Increased Poultry Product Consumption

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>% of Households</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Neither in L3F nor in Groups</td>
<td>14.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Members of Groups but not in L3F</td>
<td>24.9%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>L3F Participants</td>
<td>53.0%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The survey of 829 randomly selected respondents in the Western part of Kenya and the Kabale district of Uganda compared three groups of people with similar socio-economic backgrounds:

- L3F initiative participants from various groups/associations (involved in semi-structured open and distance learning),
- Members in groups or associations such as Self-Help Groups, women’s associations, farmers associations and co-operative societies (social capital without semi-structured learning) who are not participating in the L3F initiative, and
- People who are not involved in the L3F initiative or in groups/associations (not involved in social capital or semi-structured learning).

More than 60 per cent of the participants in the survey were women. “This research provides compelling evidence that the L3F initiative makes a significant contribution to livelihoods,” says Dr. K. Balasubramanian, COL Education Specialist, Agriculturae and Livelihoods. “Even when compared with people who have the support of groups or associations, a significant number of L3F households have increased consumption of dairy products, vegetables, meat and poultry products, thereby strengthening household food security. We hope this will help support the expansion of the L3F initiative, which is now active in six Commonwealth countries.”

More details from the L3F research: www.col.org/L3Farmers

Laying Foundations for Community Learning

As COL sharpens its focus on evaluating results and validating the community learning programme model, the Healthy Communities team is leading research in the Caribbean and India. This research is measuring the availability and quality of local programming about community health issues and local health indicators. The data will serve as a baseline from which progress can be measured following the introduction of community learning programmes.

Transformative Communication Partners recently conducted baseline research in Spring Village, Jamaica (local level), Jamaica (national), St. Lucia and the Eastern Caribbean (regional). COL will be working with regional partners in the Caribbean to support participatory community learning projects as part of the Three-Year Plan 2012-2015.

The rapid increase in community radio licenses in India in recent years, led in part by COL’s regional agency, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA), has created a need for capacity building in the fledgling stations. One response is a COL Healthy Communities pilot programme in Gurgaon, a suburb of Delhi.

Working with Maraa, an Indian media and arts collective, COL commissioned baseline research in Gurgaon. The plan is to work with a local community radio station, community groups and health authorities to develop programming that addresses health issues of residents, particularly migrant workers and women living in informal settlements. The approach could then be expanded to more communities in India.

Building Capacity to Plan and Design Radio Programmes

Farm Radio International and COL are partnering to run a third competition and eLearning course for skills building and content development. The focus of the 2012 course is designing ongoing farm radio programmes.

Close to 250 people, including teams from 13 Commonwealth countries, are enrolled in the eLearning course, which provides training, learner support and mentoring over a 12-week period, ending in December 2012. After the course, individuals and teams in the competition stream will enter their programme designs into a competition. The best entries will receive seed funding to help turn the designs into radio programmes for local farmers and their wider communities.

“We are encouraged by the quality of mentors who are volunteering to be part of this initiative,” says Mr. Ian Pringle, COL Education Specialist, Media. “Well respected national broadcasters from the Canada and Africa are sharing their expertise, which adds great value to the course. They are helping local broadcasters and their partners to develop some innovative programme designs that will provide information that could make a significant impact on the livelihoods of farmers in developing countries.”

The competition winners will be announced in early 2013. As with past competitions, the winning designs will be made available to over 350 broadcast stations across Africa.

http://ecourse.farmradio.org
www.col.org/HealthyCommunities
Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) courses are being introduced in four Commonwealth countries. Developed by small states for small states, VUSSC courses are freely available as open educational resources (OER).

The Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL) is offering the Bachelor in Business and Entrepreneurship programme. Developed at the VUSSC workshop in Lesotho in March 2011, the distance-mode programme offers three completion streams: certificate, diploma and Bachelor’s degree. More than 300 students have enrolled in the certificate programme through BOCODOL. The course materials are delivered to students on CD-ROM.

The Seychelles Tourism Academy has introduced the VUSSC Sustainable Tourism course. The online modules are being offered primarily to students enrolled in the Advanced Diploma in Hospitality, Tourism and Tour Guiding programmes. COL will provide support to staff to build capacity in eLearning to ensure the successful roll-out of the course.

The University of Lesotho is preparing to offer VUSSC courses in Sustainable Tourism, Disaster Management and Business/Entrepreneurship, with roll-out expected in early 2013.

Barbados Community College will offer the Sustainable Agriculture in Small States course next year.

VUSSC is a network of small countries committed to the collaborative development of skills-related post-secondary courses. VUSSC course materials can be used in the offering of credit-bearing qualifications and to strengthen educational capacity and access in member countries. Originally a COL initiative, VUSSC is now led by a Management Committee with representation from all regions of the Commonwealth, with support from COL. It is based on a Transnational Qualifications Framework (TQF), a system of accreditation that facilitates the movement of courses and learners among states.

www.vussc.org

COL is expanding access to learning programmes for higher education institutions and learners by ensuring all new courses/programmes are created as open educational resources (OER). There are several recent developments.

• Legislative Drafting: A team from Athabasca University (Canada) has undertaken the assignment to convert COL’s Legislative Drafting distance education programme into OER. Scheduled to be released in early 2013, it will help expand capacity in developing legally sound, coherent legislative documents.

• Leadership in Higher Education: In collaboration with the Indian Institute of Management, Kozhikode (IIMK), COL is developing online training materials for a training programme in leadership in higher education. Piloting and roll-out of the self-administered course will take place next year.

• Business Ethics course: A new elective in COL’s Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration and Public Administration (CEMBA/CEMPA), this course has been developed in collaboration with partners in India and will be freely available for download, adaptation and use as OER. All the proposed electives in the CEMBA/CEMPA programmes will be developed as OER.

www.apqn.org
COL RIM ENHANCES QUALITY IN HIGHER EDUCATION

COL’s Review and Improvement Model (COL RIM) has now been implemented in 10 higher education institutions in six Commonwealth countries. This “do it yourself” approach to quality assurance enables institutions to conduct internal quality reviews with the support of an external verifier. Universities/institutions in Guyana, Dominica, India, Nigeria, Seychelles and Sri Lanka have implemented COL RIM.

COL is also helping institutions develop quality policies following their COL RIM implementations. “After conducting a quality audit, the next step is to create an ongoing commitment to quality through an institutional quality policy,” explains Prof. Madhulika Kaushik, COL Education Specialist, Higher Education. “As more higher education institutions strengthen their internal quality cultures, we will see a significant improvement in learning outcomes at the tertiary level.”

COL plans to oversee at least 10 more COL RIM implementations during the current Three-Year Plan, 2012-2015.

www.col.org/COL-RIM

SOCIAL MEDIA AND eLEARNING

Many of COL’s eLearning for International Organisations programmes include online forums that enable real-time dialogue among learners. A recent pilot for the Commonwealth Youth Programme’s “Embracing Commonwealth Values” course successfully introduced more social media elements.

COL transformed one module in the Diploma for Youth Development programme from a paper-based course to a stand-alone online course. The three-month pilot programme earlier this year involved 110 learners from 36 Commonwealth countries. They communicated through a social network site, cyp-ejournal.net. The site, which uses the Mahara open source e-portfolio and social networking software, enables learners to:

• Create a personal profile,
• Interact with other learners, both in an online forum and through one-on-one email,
• Post comments on each other’s walls,
• Share their reflections in an e-portfolio, and
• Comment on each other’s e-portfolios.

“This programme was well-suited to using social media, because it emphasises sharing reflections about subjects such as human rights, equality, empowerment and peace,” explains Ms. Angela Kwan, COL’s Learning Manager, International Organisations. “The learners embraced the social media and generated fascinating cross-cultural communications.”

Participants expressed satisfaction in the flexibility offered by this learning experience.

“The course gave me a chance to learn at my own pace,” says one learner. “The course content was easy to understand. Having the opportunity to write reflections not based on right or wrong answers gave me the opportunity to fully express myself. I actually enjoyed the learning process.”

An external evaluation of the pilot by Dr. Mary Wilson recommended that the Commonwealth Youth Programme build upon the success of this pilot by expanding eLearning to other modules of the Diploma for Youth Development to make learning more portable, engaging and interactive.

TRAINING MORE WITH LESS: AN eLEARNING SUCCESS STORY

More than 100 learners from over 30 countries have taken part in CS-DRMS eLearning, the first eLearning course offered by the Commonwealth Secretariat’s Debt Management Section (DMS). Developed by COL in 2010 to enhance the debt recording and reporting capabilities of debt managers in Ministries of Finance and central banks, CS-DRMS eLearning uses technology and simulation to teach debt management at a distance. COL delivers the course via an online Virtual Learning Environment.

With the help of a personal tutor to support learning, learners have achieved an impressive average completion rate of 88 per cent. Funded by an investment of £44,000, CS-DRMS is able to help more debt managers to grasp the declarative and procedural knowledge of debt management implemented through a sophisticated and powerful database.

“The CS-DRMS eLearning course has revolutionised the Commonwealth’s Secretariat capacity building programme in debt management,” says Mr. Walter Gilpin, the debt advisor who leads CS-DRMS eLearning. “In addition to successfully training a larger number of clients at a much lower cost, it also provides learners with a lasting educational resource through the eLearning CD-ROM. We thank the Commonwealth of Learning for the excellent service and effective running of the course.”

Errol la Cruz from the Ministry of Finance in Guyana and Sharon McCardy-Joseph from the Ministry of Finance in St. Kitts & Nevis were among the first cohort of students in the CS-DRMS eLearning programme in 2010.
TUTORS ADD THE PERSONAL TOUCH TO DISTANCE LEARNING

Bobbie Ogletree uses her love of words to help make the world a better place. A COL tutor since 2001, Ms. Ogletree has provided learner support for students in COL’s “Writing Effectively” course from Nelson, a picturesque town in southeastern British Columbia, Canada.

Formerly an English as a Second Language (ESL) teacher, Ms. Ogletree is a volunteer ESL tutor who writes poetry and creative non-fiction in her free time. She has found that tutoring involves a delicate blend of encouragement and strictness.

“It helps to have personal contact to help bridge the distance between the tutor and each learner,” she explained. “Many of them face hardship related to their job or where they live. I’m flexible, but it is important to emphasise and stick to deadlines. Otherwise, students may cram and not benefit nearly as much from other course material, or they may not complete the course.”

A recent experience with a student from Gabon demonstrates the important role of tutors in helping learners overcome obstacles.

“This young woman is a classic example of a learner who was initially very excited about taking part in an eLearning programme,” Ms. Ogletree said. “She wasn’t accustomed to independent study, and she rushed through her first assignment without reading the instructions properly. Her first submission was 17 pages...for a four-page assignment. Her next submission was also off the mark, so I had to send it back. That’s when she completely stopped communicating with me.”

COL tutors check in with learners on a regular basis to keep them engaged and motivated. Over the next six weeks, Ms. Ogletree kept sending encouraging emails to her discouraged learner. Finally she broke through.

“When I got that email from my learner, I responded right away,” she said. “We started working together step-by-step. When she finished the first assignment, I marked it quickly and gave her clear feedback. She responded really well and then she took off. In fact, she finished the course before the deadline.”

Distance learners face numerous challenges. The biggest challenge faced by Ms. Ogletree’s learners is usually their workload. They are often traveling and dealing with difficult situations – war zones, repatriation and protection work. Some only have computer access at work. Many speak English as a second language.

Ms. Ogletree’s motivation comes from helping people learn despite these hardships.

“I like working with people who are involved in humanitarian work. It’s very satisfying to get an email at the end of a course that says, ‘You really helped me. My reports are more accurate and it’s having a positive impact,’” said Ms. Ogletree. “That’s very gratifying.”

MAKING SENSE OF DEBT

Michele Robinson cultivates learners as carefully as she cultivates her prized orchids – with great perseverance. A tutor with the Commonwealth Secretariat Debt Record Management System (CS-DRMS) eLearning programme, Ms. Robinson is an expert in international debt management. She provides consulting services to governments, the Commonwealth Secretariat, the World Bank and other international organisations, such as advising on institutional arrangements for debt management.

Based in Jamaica, Ms. Robinson helps Debt Managers from Commonwealth nations learn to use a computerised system for debt management. Learners receive a CD-ROM that demonstrates the step-by-step recording and reporting of debt through purpose-designed software.

Tutors help the students overcome obstacles related to technical issues and the usual challenges of distance learning. The first challenge is often getting IT support to set up the training databases they need for course work. A second challenge is common to many COL eLearning for International Organisations students – completing the course while dealing with a heavy workload.

“All my learners work full time, so they usually have to do their reading and assignments at the end of the workday or on weekends,” said Ms. Robinson. “It requires a commitment to discipline to adhere to a study schedule and complete the programme. Fortunately, my learners have all demonstrated the will and the capacity to complete the work.”

Tutoring such a technical course requires an understanding of how to help students overcome frustration. This was evident recently with a learner who was ready to give up after Ms. Robinson asked him to make extensive revisions to an assignment.
Mr. Gibson Gotaha is a former rugby player who remains a keen fan, Ms. Robinson explains. “When I didn’t get a response from one email address, I contacted her through a different one and finally got a response,” he said. “I told her that she had been granted an extension while she was on leave. I proposed a detailed work schedule to help her catch up on her assignments, and I gave her plenty of encouragement. The fact that I tried so hard to contact her demonstrated to her that we had faith in her ability to complete the course.”

When the learner submitted assignments, Mr. Gotaha responded within three hours, providing detailed guidance for corrections. His approach was successful: the learner completed the course on time.

A former rugby player who remains a keen fan, Mr. Gotaha understands the power of teamwork.

“I have learned that commitment, dedication and open, clear communication are keys to success in tutoring,” he said.

Approximately half of Mr. Gotaha’s students are from Pacific nations. Technology is a challenge for the region, he reports, and his learners face obstacles to online connectivity such as high costs and intermittent service. Time zones can also be a challenge when his students are in Africa and the Caribbean and looking for instant responses.

One of Mr. Gotaha’s motivational methods is to send a group update to all learners in his group. These fortnightly Summary Statistics of Group Performance provide information about key dates for assignments and learner progress. When learners see they are lagging behind the group, they are often prompted to catch up.

Constant contact is another form of motivation used by Mr. Gotaha. When one of his learners went on leave and fell behind in submitting assignments, she stopped responding to Mr. Gotaha’s emails. Convinced that time – and not lack of talent – was the only factor standing in her way, Mr. Gotaha stepped up his efforts to bring her back into the fold.

“He was not happy that I asked him to correct every detail that he recorded incorrectly,” Ms. Robinson explained. “He had lots of promise and was a great problem solver, but he had decided to give up. We exchanged numerous emails. I encouraged him to persevere, to ‘stay the course’. To my delight, he yielded to my barrage of encouragement. It was a joy to see him progress and meticulously complete his assignments. To me, the best reward of all was that he caught up to his peers and successfully completed the programme on time.”

As one of the authors of the CS-DRMS programme, Ms. Robinson appreciates seeing the transformation that takes place with learners.

“I enjoy helping my learners think through the challenges they encounter with their assignments. I am thrilled when I observe that they have ‘got it’ and they can apply the learning to their assignments. My satisfaction comes from my learners’ successes.”

An avid gardener and gourmet cook, Ms. Robinson has a special talent for nurturing success – whether it’s with an orchid, a splendid dinner or a learner far away from her Caribbean island home.

OPEN AND CLEAR COMMUNICATION IS KEY

Hands-on experience with the Debt Record Management System is valuable for Mr. Gibson Gotaha in his role as a tutor for CS-DRMS eLearning students. Currently Assistant Secretary with the Securities Execution Branch of the Department of Treasury in Papua New Guinea, Mr. Gotaha has extensive experience with debt data statistics management.

“A WEB OF LEARNER SUPPORT

Learner support involves much more than connecting a tutor with a learner. COL’s eLearning for International Organisations programmes are backed up by a comprehensive learner support system that includes several elements:

• Course administration: COL uses online platforms such as Moodle and Mahara to link disperse learners with their tutors and course administrators. Course materials are available to learners through the organisation’s Intranet, on a website, on CD-ROM or in hard copy. This virtual system enables “anywhere, anytime” learning.

• Help Desk: All COL eLearning courses feature a virtual Help Desk that can be accessed 24/7 for information about key dates and frequently asked questions. A Learner Support Hotline is an email address that connects learners to a learner support assistant who can respond to individual questions.

• Tutor development: COL recruits tutors based on specific requirements for expertise, experience, teaching ability, commitment and interpersonal skills. Once hired, tutors undergo extensive training and are evaluated on a regular basis. Tutors connect with each other through an online forum to share best practices and solve problems.

• Support for tutors and learners: COL staff members and external course advisors provide oversight and support for tutors and learners. This includes monitoring tutor quality and standardisation of marking, logistical issues and overall quality assurance of the course materials and programmes.

“The three key pillars of open and distance learning best practice are learner support, logistics and materials,” explains Ms. Angela Kwan, COL Learning Manager, International Organisations. “We are committed to meeting high standards in all three areas, with support from our dedicated tutors, competent administrators and intuitive technology.”

www.col.org/COLeLIO
Discourse about MOOCs is overloaded with hype and myth while the reality is shot through with paradoxes and contradictions. However, an important process is underway that will chart new paths for the universities involved and for higher education generally.

This development may fall apart. Some earlier Internet ventures of elite universities that started with fanfare were wound up shamefacedly only six years ago. This time, however, the scale of the involvement is such that something will survive, even if some who can well afford it lose money on the way. We envisage that MOOCs will have an important impact in two ways: improving teaching and encouraging institutions to develop distinctive missions.

But first, we agree with Bates (2012) that what MOOCs will not do is address the challenge of expanding higher education in the developing world. It may encourage universities there, both public and private, to develop online learning more deliberately, and OER from MOOC courses may find their way, alongside OER from other sources, into the teaching of local institutions. We have long argued that higher education must find ways to address the needs of those at the bottom of the pyramid (Prahalad, 2004) but institutions in those countries will eventually do that, using technology, and it is unlikely that they will make fortunes.

We also agree with Bates that current “xMOOCs” pedagogy is pretty old hat but this will now change fast. Even if Coursera gave its partner universities great freedom in course formats in order to sugar the pill of signing the contract, this will quickly produce a great diversity of approaches and much healthy experimentation. By the end of 2012 various actors from the media through student groups to educational research units will be publishing assessments of xMOOC courses. These will quickly be consolidated into league tables that rank the courses – and the participating universities – by intellectual quality and rigour of the institutions that have exposed themselves in this way. Other combinations of institutions and commercial partners will join the fray and a new pecking order will emerge.

With luck, the dream of the great American educator Ernie Boyer (1990) may even come true. In 1990, in Scholarship Reconsidered: Priorities of the Professoriate, he wrote: “We need a climate in which colleges and universities are less imitative, taking pride in their uniqueness. It’s time to end the suffocating practice in which colleges and universities measure themselves far too frequently by external status rather than by values determined by their own distinctive mission”.

The broader purpose of Boyer’s book was to encourage the emergence of a scholarship of teaching alongside the scholarships of discovery (research), integration (multidisciplinary) and application (development). Placing their xMOOCs in the public domain for a worldwide audience will oblige institutions to do more than pay lip service to importance of teaching and put it at the core of their missions. This is the real revolution of MOOCs.

This will not please the participating universities. Elite universities in the UK thoroughly disliked the state-approved teaching quality assessment system that operated there between 1995 and 2004 (Laughton, 2003). Eventually their presidents successfully petitioned the authorities to close it down. My own conclusion was that behind the fog of methodological arguments about the difficulty of assessing teaching quality, the real problem was that some elite universities did poorly and some lesser-known institutions did well. The difference with the xMOOCs assessments and rankings is that no one will be able to abolish them by appealing to authority. Institutions that rate poorly will either have to quit playing xMOOCs or raise their game. This, in turn, will put a focus on teaching and pedagogy to which these institutions are unaccustomed, which will be healthy. At the same time academics all around the world will make judgments about the intellectual quality and rigour of the institutions that have exposed themselves in this way. Other combinations of institutions and commercial partners will join the fray and a new pecking order will emerge.

The full research paper is available at http://tinyurl.com/Making-Sense-of-MOOCs


A recent post on COL’s blog: www.col.org/blog166

Some of the online discussion sparked by Sir John’s research paper: www.tonybates.ca, click on the post dated 1 October 2012.

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT TRAINING IN INDIA

COL is helping a volunteer organisation in Kerala, India increase access to training for community development workers who provide literacy and skills training in rural areas. A new distance Certificate in Community Development programme is being created by members of the organisation, State Resource Centre Kerala (SRC Kerala).

A team of 30 writers, editors and course coordinators from SRC Kerala attended a COL workshop in June. Workshop participants developed course materials that use simple language, incorporate gender sensitivity and encourage learning through activities.

The SRC Kerala team is finalising the course materials and identifying learning centres that can be readied to provide learner support. They plan to launch the new Certificate in Community Development programme in early 2013.
MEDIA FOR HEALTHY COMMUNITIES IN NAMIBIA

COL helped bring together the community radio sector in Namibia to plan the establishment of a national community radio network. The three-day workshop in Windhoek was organised by the World Association of Community Radio Broadcasters (AMARC) and the Media Institute of Southern Africa, with support from UNESCO Windhoek and COL.

The aim of the workshop was to lay the foundations for a more active and effective national network of community radio stations in the country. Participants explored ways that the sector can address relevant community issues and contribute to social development using participatory communication strategies. Mr. Thabang Pusoyabone, the manager of Radio Riverside, a COL-partner community radio station in South Africa, shared his experience of the Summer for All community learning programme.

“We hope this workshop is a step forward in creating national strategies to support participatory communication programmes and build synergies between community media groups and health and development stakeholders,” says Mr. Ian Pringle, COL Education Specialist, Media. “Although local is a defining characteristic of community radio, that doesn’t mean stations should operate in isolation. While strongly rooted in their local contexts, community media have unique national significance as a national network.”

COL and UNESCO will support development of a pilot community learning programme in a community radio station in Eenhana in northern Namibia next year. Results and lessons will be shared with the emerging community radio network.

SUPPORTING TESSA IN UGANDA AND ZAMBIA

COL has partnered with the U.K. Open University to expand primary teacher education in Uganda and Zambia by widening the use of resources developed by Teacher Education in Sub-Saharan Africa (TESSA). A consortium of 18 organisations, universities and teacher training institutions in Africa, TESSA has developed an extensive range of multilingual open educational resources (OER) that are appropriate for all primary school teachers, including those with little or no formal training. The COL/U.K. Open University initiative focused on promoting use of these OER at teacher training institutions.

The U.K. Open University created booklets of TESSA resources for primary grades 1-6. In Uganda, COL oversaw the distribution of 1,200 booklets to nine primary teacher training colleges. In Zambia, support was provided to five colleges of education and clusters of community colleges to promote the use of the TESSA resources. By encouraging use of the TESSA OER, COL is helping to improve the quality of teacher training in both countries. www.tessafrica.net

COMMUNICATION FOR DEVELOPMENT IN SOLOMON ISLANDS

COL’s work in Isabel Province in Solomon Islands stretches back several years. An assessment carried out this year identified the need to raise awareness of communication for development among senior policymakers and community leaders.

COL hosted a workshop entitled Communication for Development: Why. How. Now in September for 24 elected officials and representatives from the civil service, civil society and the private sector, including the Honourable Michael Meredi, Deputy Premier and Minister of Health. The one-day workshop provided information and examples about the potential of communication strategies to address social issues, such as positive parenting and youth health. The workshop aimed to contribute to an enabling environment for community learning programmes in Isabel Province by identifying opportunities and needs. COL is exploring expanding policy maker information sessions to other areas of the Commonwealth to build understanding of the role of participatory communication in “Learning for Development”.

Dr. Godson Gatsha, Director of the Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE), seated, with Master of Arts in Distance Education students in Lesotho during a COL visit in September. COL is providing scholarships to seven distance educators in Lesotho to participate in Indira Gandhi National Open University’s programme to help increase the country’s cadre of quality distance education practitioners.


**OPEN SCHOOLING BEHIND LOCKED DOORS**

Open schooling meets the needs of a broad range of learners, including prison inmates. Prison education services contribute to learning, skills, employability and successful re-entry into society. Responding to a request by several open schools that provide education to prison inmates, COL facilitated a workshop in Namibia that brought together education and prison services representatives from eight Commonwealth countries to develop curriculum for prison inmates.

The five-day workshop explored best practices in prison education, pedagogical issues and learning needs. Participants developed a curriculum framework for prison inmates that includes four core courses (math, language, computer and life skills) and five vocational skills courses (carpentry, baking, beauty, computers and dress-making). The next step is for participating countries to develop content for the courses, which will help to increase access to education among a population that can benefit hugely from education, life skills and vocational training.

**RECOGNISING PRIOR LEARNING IN INDIA**

There is growing emphasis on skills development in India as a means of increasing productivity, income levels and livelihoods. In addition to a shortage of skilled workers, there is a need for better recognition of prior learning (RPL). Individuals who acquire skills on the job or through other activities are often disadvantaged in gaining access to formal education or training, or in securing employment that adequately reflects their skills and experience.

COL is partnering with the National institute of Open Schooling (NIOS) in India and the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand (OPNZ) to develop an RPL Framework that will increase opportunities for people to validate skills and competencies that have not been formally recognised. At a three-day workshop in Mussoorie, India in June, 30 academic faculty, NIOS Regional Directors, Study Centre Co-ordinators and representatives of state open schools finalised a draft RPL Framework for India. NIOS will conduct a pilot of the RPL Framework.

**EXPANDING SKILLS TRAINING IN THE CARIBBEAN**

COL has been working with St. Vincent & the Grenadines Community College to support the development of distance, online and blended learning for the College’s Division of Technical and Vocational Education (DTVE). More than 800 students are enrolled in DTVE’s programmes. The College currently offers no distance programmes, which limits access to tertiary-level learning for residents of the country’s many small islands.

COL facilitated a capacity building workshop for 25 DTVE staff members in June 2012. The five-day workshop focused on increasing understanding of blended learning and explored different models, case studies and instructional design. Participants gained hands-on experience in writing for online learning and developing planning documents. Following the workshop, they are collaborating and sharing ideas with practitioners around the world through COL’s online vocational education and skills training Community Learning Network.

COL will continue to provide support as DTVE works toward a September 2013 launch of distance learning programmes.

**DEVELOPING LEADERS IN BOTSWANA**

Empowerment of out-of-school youth was the theme of a workshop sponsored by COL in southern Botswana in August. Forty young people from 10 rural communities took part in the 10-day workshop, which was organised by the Community Capacity Enhancement and Empowerment Society (CCEES) and the Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL).

In his opening remarks, Dr. Godson Gatsha, Director of the Southern African Development Community Centre for Distance Education (SADC-CDE) urged participants to take advantage of opportunities to become empowered and contribute to the development of Botswana as a sustainable prospering nation. The workshop was the third in a series held by CCEES. It covered topics ranging from culture and gender to proposal writing. Participants were urged to become change agents in their community and to promote social and economic empowerment.
MULTIMEDIA TRAINING IN NAMIBIA

A recent COL workshop in south Namibia provided training for 11 teachers in educational media. The English and Mathematics teachers from six rural schools learned how to create and use multimedia in teaching. Building the capacity of teachers to use technology effectively is part of COL’s effort to improve the quality of basic education.

UPCOMING EVENTS

Open Content Licensing for Educators (OCL4Ed)
3 – 14 December 2012
Free online workshop designed for educators and students who want to learn more about open education resources, copyright and creative commons licenses.
Sponsored by the COL Chair in OER at Otago Polytechnic, the UNESCO-COL Chair in OER at Athabasca University and Creative Commons Aotearoa New Zealand.
http://wikieducator.org/Open_content Licensing_for_educators/About

The Open and Distance Learning Association of Australia (ODLAA) 2013 Distance Education Summit
4 – 7 February 2013, Sydney, Australia
Theme: “Education Across Space and Time: Meeting the Diverse Needs of the Distance Learner”
www.odlaasummit.org.au

Seventh Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF7)
2 – 6 December 2013, Abuja, Nigeria
Theme: “Open Learning for Development: Towards Empowerment and Transformation”
Co-hosted by COL and the Federal Ministry of Education with the National Open University of Nigeria
www.col.org/pcf7

WORLD INEQUALITY DATABASE ON EDUCATION (WIDE)

Coinciding with the launch of the Education First initiative, the Education for All (EFA) Global Monitoring Report Team introduced a new interactive website: the World Inequality Database on Education (WIDE).

The development of this resource is based on the premise that to design policies to reach marginalised groups, it is important to know who they are and where they live. The WIDE website provides detailed data that goes beyond national averages to identify marginalised groups who live in extreme education deprivation due to disadvantages such as poverty, gender or rural residence. The data for 50 countries is drawn from the 2010 EFA Global Monitoring Report, Reaching the Marginalized, which offers insight into disparities in access to education within countries.
www.education-inequalities.org

UNITED NATIONS LAUNCHES “EDUCATION FIRST”

The United Nations has launched Education First, a global initiative that seeks to mobilise partners to achieve universal primary education ahead of the 2015 target date for the Millennium Development Goals. The UN has secured more than US$1.5 billion in commitments to make education a top global priority.

Education First will focus on three objectives: putting every child in school, improving the quality of learning and fostering global citizenship.

At the end of the 1990s, 108 million children of primary school age were not enrolled in schools. That number has fallen to 61 million today, according to UNESCO’s 2012 Global Monitoring Report. The gap between boy and girl enrolment has also been greatly reduced. While these are significant achievements, there is still a substantial gap between today’s reality and the goal of universal primary education by 2015.
www.globaleducationfirst.org

RWANDA’S FIRST PUBLIC LIBRARY

The Kigali Public Library has opened its doors. The first public library in Rwanda is home to more than 12,000 books, meeting rooms and an Internet café that provides access to an e-Library and reference section. Developed over a 10-year period, the new library was conceived, designed and funded by Kigali Rotary Club Virunga with support from the Rwandan government. The library is an important step in creating a reading culture in Rwanda and improving literacy.

WHY OPEN EDUCATION MATTERS

A competition that solicited videos that communicate the use and potential of OER attracted more than 60 entries from around the world. Creative Commons, the U.S. Department of Education and the Open Society Foundations sponsored the competition, which announced three winners in July. The winning videos – from South Africa, the United States and Mexico – are posted on the competition website, offering creative explanations of this important advance in education.
http://whyopenedmatters.org
THE BUSINESS CASE FOR OER

“Exploring the Business Case for Open Educational Resources”
Prepared by Neil Butcher and Sarah Hoosen for the
Commonwealth of Learning

This desk research report examines the value proposition of open educational resources (OER). A key benefit of OER relates to the potential for economic efficiencies; however, there has been little data to back up this assertion. Exploring the Business Case for Open Educational Resources is a first step towards resolving this problem. It focuses on the economics of course materials development and the educational textbook market, identifying some evidence to support the cost-effectiveness of OER.

http://tinyurl.com/IMARK-modules

COMMONWEALTH EDUCATION PARTNERSHIPS 2012/13
Published for the Commonwealth Secretariat by Nexus Strategic Partnerships
Edited by Andrew Robertson and Rupert Jones-Parry

The official publication of the 18th Conference of Commonwealth Ministers includes a number of articles by COL staff on OER (Sir John Daniel), mobiles for learning (Venkataraman Balaji), increasing access to higher education in small states (John Lesperance), participatory learning about health (Ian Pringle) and “OER for Open Schools” (Frances Ferreira).

http://tinyurl.com/Mainstreaming-OEP

DIGITAL LIBRARIES ONLINE COURSE

The Information Management Resource Kit (IMARK) has released a new online course about creating and managing digital libraries and repositories. “Digital Libraries, Repositories and Documents” is a free eLearning programme that covers the latest technologies and trends, including digital file formats, metadata management, database management and the preservation of digital information. Consisting of 24 hours of self-paced instruction, the course would be helpful to organisations that want to create a digital library to facilitate sharing of local publications, transcripts or training materials.

IMARK is an eLearning initiative in agricultural information management developed by the UN’s Food and Agriculture Organization and partner organisations, including COL.

http://tinyurl.com/IMARK-modules

OER TRAINING TOOLKIT

OER Asia offers an online toolkit that supports self-directed learning about how to use OER in teaching and learning. The five modules and learning activities cover the basics of OER use and reuse from the perspective of trainers.

http://tinyurl.com/oer-workshop

CONTRIBUTIONS OF COL-PROTEIN

“Theoretical Perspectives on the Contributions of COL-PROTEIN to Open and Distance Learning for Development”

Krisna Alluri and K. Balasubramanian

COL’s Poverty Reduction Outcomes through Education, Innovations and Networks (COL-PROTEIN) programme supported innovative uses of open and distance learning (ODL) to alleviate poverty in rural areas of the world from 2006 to 2009. COL-PROTEIN provided grants to development institutions in Commonwealth countries to support the use of ODL and information and communication technology (ICT) to build capacities for community development in areas such as food security, environmental protection, women’s empowerment, micro-enterprise and good governance. This report provides a follow-up analysis of COL-PROTEIN from five theoretical perspectives: social capital, horizontal transfer of knowledge, self-directed learning, reaching the unreached and gendered learning.

www.col.org/protein

MAINSTREAMING OPEN EDUCATIONAL PRACTICE

Intended primarily for policy makers, this new report from the Open Education Quality Initiative (OPAL) argues that the focus of OER work to date has largely been on access to and the availability of OER. The report provides three overarching recommendations for shifting the focus to open educational practice: introducing enabling legislation, empowering learners and strengthening the evidence base of open educational practice.

http://tinyurl.com/Mainstreaming-OEP
CONSULTANTS’ REPORTS

VOCATIONAL EDUCATION IN OPEN SCHOOLS
“Integrating Vocational Education with Academic Education in Commonwealth Open Schools”

By Guilherme Vaz (Author, Editor)

This COL study looks at the need to increase access to technical and vocational education and training (TVET) and options for integrating TVET with the more traditional academic curriculum. It includes the approach and attitudes of five organisations – National Institute of Open Schooling (India), Bangladesh Open University, Institute for Adult Education (Tanzania), National Open School of Trinidad & Tobago and Botswana College of Open and Distance Learning – who participated in a survey to assess the availability of TVET, and the potential for and challenges of integrating it with academic/general education.

www.col.org/consultancies

DIGITAL HEALTH LITERACY IN THE PACIFIC
“Digital Health Literacy in Commonwealth Pacific Nations”

By Trudi Van Wyk, Pale Sauni and Terry Neal

COL engaged the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand to conduct a study on current initiatives in digital health literacy in the community health sector. The study, which focused primarily on the digital health literacy of community health workers in the Pacific, provides a broad overview of current initiatives and identifies needs for capacity building. The research aimed to provide a broad overview of current initiatives in digital health literacy of community health workers in the Pacific, focusing on Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Nauru, Kiribati, Tuvalu, Vanuatu, Samoa and Tonga, and to identify possible gaps in or needs for capability building where COL may be able to add value.

www.col.org/consultancies

LINKED DATA FOR ODL
“Linked Data for Open and Distance Learning”

By Mathieu d’Aquin

This COL report explains two emerging concepts: the Semantic Web and Linked Data. It describes how organisations can contribute, interlink to and take advantage of the Web of Linked Data for open and distance learning. It describes the tools, technologies and processes to publish and use Linked Data, focusing on learning and teaching applications.

www.col.org/consultancies

AUTHOR BEWARE: SCHOLARLY SCAMS ONLINE

Online scammers have found fertile new ground for fraud: open access journals. Open access journals are freely accessible online; researchers pay to have their work published. “The author-pay mode, the number of titles, and the average developing country researcher’s inexperience in scholarly communication have provided the perfect milieu for electronic ‘dons’ to make a killing,” according to an article The Hindu. Fake journals charge fees to researchers, list people as being editorial board members without their knowledge and ask researchers to review papers for free.

http://tinyurl.com/Open-journal-scams

Staff

COL President, Professor Asha Kanwar received an honorary degree, the Doctor of Letters (honoris causa) from Vardhaman Mahaveer Open University at the university’s sixth convocation in Kota, India in August 2012.

www.col.org/akanwar

Mr. Visagan (Vis) Naidoo has been appointed Vice President of COL, responsible for managing COL’s programme and funding resources and for strategic planning and reporting.

Most recently Citizenship Lead at Microsoft South Africa, Mr. Naidoo has spent much of the past 20 years involved in the development of educational technology policy options – both in South Africa and internationally.

A national of South Africa, Mr. Naidoo was Education Specialist for Educational Technology Policy and Planning at COL from 2000-2005. He moved back to South Africa to head Mindset Network, a non-profit organisation that creates, sources and distributes educational content on a mass scale across Southern Africa using satellite and broadcast technology. Most recently, he led Microsoft South Africa’s social responsibility and employee volunteer programme. Prior to joining COL in 2000, Mr. Naidoo was the Director of the Centre for Educational Technology and Distance Education, Department of Education, South Africa.

Mr. Naidoo succeeds Professor Asha Kanwar as Vice President, following her appointment as President of COL earlier this year.

www.col.org/naidoo

Dr. Mark Bullen has joined COL as Education Specialist, eLearning, responsible for developing and managing eLearning activities focused on policy development, capacity building, models and learning materials.

Most recently the Associate Dean and Dean of the Learning & Teaching Centre at the British Columbia Institute of Technology in Vancouver, Canada, Dr. Bullen spent 23 years in distance education course development and eLearning research at the University of British Columbia. He also has extensive international consulting experience related to online course development and eLearning.

Dr. Bullen is an adjunct professor in the Master of Distance Education at Athabasca University and in the Master of Educational Technology at the University of British Columbia, and is the editor of the Canadian Network for Innovation in Education’s Journal of Distance Education. He holds a Ph.D. in adult education.

www.col.org/mbullen

People

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Tablets as a Tool for Education

Tablet computing has seen one of the fastest adoption rates of any technology. Shipments of tablets are estimated to grow from 16.1 million units in 2010 to 147.2 million units in 2015, according to the U.S. firm Infinite Research. Tablet computers are manufactured and marketed all over the world, with Apple’s iPad considered to be the industry leader.

Software leadership is with the Android operating system. It is an open-source system, but Google plays a role in upgrades and maintenance. An estimated 68 per cent of all mobile devices (phones and tablets) worldwide use Android. Being open source, the cost of Android tablets is significantly lower than the iPad. Development of applications is proceeding for Android, with over 100,000 applications already available via the online Google Play store.

Android tablets can become useful aids in education. The cost barrier to their deployment is much lower than iPads, and the functionality is good. An ecosystem of Android developers is already active in most countries, making it possible to build custom education-oriented applications. Android tablets are already available in a price range around US$100, and prices are dropping.

In August, in partnership with the Commonwealth Secretariat, COL distributed low-cost customised Android tablets to country delegations at the 18th Commonwealth Conference of Education Ministers (18CCEM) in Mauritius. The initiative was funded by UNICEF/Child-Friendly Schools and The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation.

Evaluating the Cost of “Free”

More than 20 million students, faculty and staff are using Google “Apps for Education”, according to a recent announcement by Google. Meanwhile, more than 400 universities are posting lectures online using YouTube EDU.

While distribution services such as these are free, it doesn’t mean there’s no cost. Increasingly, universities are “trading off upfront costs for downstream costs, with students and staff being tracked, identified and sent target marketing”, according to an article by Charis Palmer in “The Conversation”.

The “Do It Yourself” Approach to Creating Online Courses

Advances in technology are making it easier to create online courses. Armed with a tablet computer, webcam and a few additional tools, you can create a lesson that could be uploaded to the Internet and shared around the world.

The following tools are required to create an online lesson:

- WebCam: A high-definition webcam is needed for sound and video recording. Built-in webcams can also work.
- Graphics software: Allows you to hand-draw words and images that will appear on a computer screen. The Wacom Bamboo graphics tablet or embedded LCD tablets (Wacom Cintiq and Samsung Galaxy Notes 10.1) are examples.
- Screencasting software: Digitally records computer screen output. Examples include Camtasia Studio, Jing, Fraps and Microsoft Expression Encoder. Available at no cost are Screencast-o-matic and Microsoft Community Clips.
- Presentation software: No-cost options are Smoothdraw with Paintbrush and GIMP; other options are Microsoft Powerpoint and Adobe Photoshop.
- Video-editing software: A number of options exist for video editing including Camtasia Studio, Windows Movie Maker, iMovie, Adobe After Effects and Adobe Premiere.
- Video hosting services: Enables uploading of videos to Internet sites. Most commonly used are YouTube, Vimeo and Dailymotion.

In addition to the right technical tools, successful online courses require quality content and well-structured instructional design.