CONSULTATIONS HELD WITH COL FOCAL POINTS

COL’s network of in-country Focal Points helps COL’s relationship with each Commonwealth Member State be more systematic and interactive. Ministers of education nominate Focal Points, who become COL’s primary contact in each country.

Regional meetings with Focal Points are being held as part of the wide consultation process in the development of COL’s next strategic plan (which will begin from 1 July 2015). Caribbean Focal Points met in Trinidad & Tobago in March, and Mediterranean and African representatives met in Mauritius in May (see Connections, July 2014).

In September, Focal Points in South and Southeast Asia met in Penang, Malaysia, hosted by the Malaysian Ministry of Education and Universiti Sains Malaysia, and Pacific Islanders met in Samoa, hosted by the Samoan Ministry of Education, Sports and Culture and the National University of Samoa. Focal Points discussed their national priorities and how these fit with COL’s mission and mandate. The meetings are also an opportunity to recall COL’s identity, purpose and programmes and to present the achievements in each country so far.

As at earlier meetings, “sustainable learning for development” was a recurring theme.

SOUTH AND SOUTHEAST ASIA

The main priorities expressed by participants at the Asia Focal Points Meeting were distinct from those raised at the other regional meetings and included skills development, technology, open educational resources and massive open online courses. Some Focal Points expressed the need to broaden the Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) model to include fishing, and to share information about COL’s successful models. Two underpinning concerns were raised at the meeting: (i) adopting new technologies, given that there is nearly 100% access to mobile phones in a number of countries in the region, and (ii) making tertiary education more relevant to avoid high rates of unemployment.

Participants also discussed how COL could deepen its work in the region and enhance engagement with Focal Points and the ministries.

PACIFIC

At the Pacific Focal Points Meeting, participants highlighted the relevance of COL’s work in the region and were especially appreciative of COL’s engagement at the grassroots level, its attention to specific needs.

PCF8 TO BE HELD IN MALAYSIA

COL’s Eighth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF8) will be held in Malaysia in 2016.

In making the announcement, COL’s President and C.E.O., Professor Asha Kanwar, thanked the 13 organisations from throughout the Commonwealth that provided detailed submissions in response to COL’s call for expressions of interest, issued earlier this year. She noted that the decision was difficult given the high quality of the proposals from many desirable locations.
COL HEADQUARTERS MOVING

The Commonwealth of Learning is moving in mid-December to new offices located in Burnaby, a suburb of Vancouver, where COL has been located in four offices over the course of its history. COL’s new address will be 4710 Kingsway, Suite 2500, Burnaby, BC, V5H 4M2, Canada. All other contact details (phone, fax, email, web and social media) will remain unchanged.

www.col.org/ContactUs

CONSULTATIONS HELD WITH COL FOCAL POINTS

and its team-oriented approach. Focal Points discussed common areas of priority, including VUSSC, capacity building in different aspects of open and distance learning, quality assurance, emphasis on higher education, open schooling, and technical and vocational education and training. One of the main challenges noted by Focal Points was the region’s lack of connectivity and its poor infrastructure. They also raised the challenge of reaching learners in the outer islands. As a result of the meeting, Focal Points plan to work with COL to harness appropriate technologies and to ensure that there are clear links between education, the needs of the learner and the labour market, to address the region’s challenges.

MEETING REPORTS AND PRESENTATIONS

Meeting reports and country and COL presentations are available on COL’s website.

www.col.org/FocalPoints
www.col.org/speeches

COL ORGANISES GENDER WORKSHOP

On 4 November 2014, 14 COL staff actively engaged in skills-oriented training on integrating gender equality into programmes. Participants represented a wide cross-section of the organisation, namely senior management, senior programme staff, programme support staff and knowledge management staff. The purpose of the workshop was to answer the following questions: What does the integration of gender equality into programmes mean? When should it be done? Who needs to be involved? How is it done? What are the steps?

NEWS

COL HEADS USP REVIEW

In August, invited by the Vice-Chancellor, Professor Rajesh Chandra, COL’s President and C.E.O., Professor Asha Kanwar, chaired a panel that conducted an external evaluation of the flexible learning programme offered by The University of the South Pacific (USP). USP is the premier provider of tertiary education in the Pacific region and an international centre of excellence for teaching, research consulting and training on all aspects of Pacific culture, environment and human resource development needs.

The members of the review panel were Professor Mark Brown, Director, National Institute for Digital Learning, Dublin City University, Ireland; Dr. Sanjaya Mishra, Director, Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia; and Professor Belinda Tynan, Pro Vice-Chancellor (Learning and Teaching), The Open University, U.K.

The panel was charged to “undertake a review and evaluation of the management and leadership, organisation and structure, demonstrated operational effectiveness, and overall strategic direction for USP’s flexible learning mode activities and provision at USP, [and] assess the University’s vision, initiatives and specific objectives in flexible learning as outlined in the Strategic Plan 2013–2018.”

The review will enable USP to appraise its flexible learning design and development systems and processes and to achieve the relevant key performance indicators as articulated in USP’s current strategic plan.

The panel visited campuses in Fiji, Vanuatu and Solomon Islands and interviewed university staff and students. The panel has submitted its report to the university.

www.usp.ac.fj

PCF8 TO BE HELD IN MALAYSIA

COL will be partnering with the Open University of Malaysia (OUM), which has a successful track record in hosting international conferences.

OUM was established in 2000 as Malaysia’s seventh private university. It is owned by a consortium of the country’s first 11 public universities and holds the unique status of being Malaysia’s first fully fledged open and distance learning institution. Built on the philosophy that education should be democratised and bearing the motto “University for All,” OUM has concentrated on creating an accessible, affordable and flexible alternative pathway to higher education, with a focus on eLearning and using information and communication technology to ensure that learning opportunities are open to anyone who seeks them.

The Government of Malaysia and several of the country’s public and private educational institutions have been valued partners of COL for decades. OUM has received the COL Excellence in Distance Education award, and its President and Vice-Chancellor, Professor Anuwar Ali, is a COL Fellow.
Co-operative Makes Profits Through L3F in Kenya

Siyaya Seed Savings and Credit Co-operative (Siyaya Seed SACCO), in Kenya, was established by the Ugunja Community Resource Centre (UCRC) to foster economic empowerment among marginalised sections of society by facilitating accessible and affordable financial services for members.

During 2011, Ms. Victorine Atieno, Manager of the SACCO, and Mr. Charles Ogada of UCRC visited India and observed self-help groups and community banking activities among women farmers engaged in COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) initiative. After returning to Kenya, Ms. Atieno, with the help of UCRC and COL, introduced L3F to Siyaya Seed SACCO. With the concurrence of all its members, she implemented a rule of “learning before loans,” whereby every borrower undergoes a blended learning process facilitated by UCRC. She also introduced “table banking”; groups within the SACCO meet once a month, place their savings, loan repayments and other contributions on the table, and then immediately take out long-term or short-term loans. Over 1,200 SACCO members have now benefited from the financial literacy and credit management programme.

Ms. Atieno reports that in 2012, the SACCO for the first time showed profits, and it continued to do so in 2013 thanks to its innovative approach.

Mr. Ogada points out that 98 per cent of the loans have been repaid and the members have started various agricultural enterprises, such as poultry or dairy farming or the cultivation of orange-fleshed sweet potatoes. Siyaya Seed SACCO and its L3F approaches have now become a role model for others in the region.

Mapping Healthy Communities for Jamaica

The workshop, facilitated by COL Education Specialist, Mr. Ian Pringle, drew senior officers from the JCF along with representatives of the Community Security and Justice Programme, Rural Family Support Organisation, Women’s Centre Foundation of Jamaica, and Stand Up Jamaica.

The group identified healthy communities, including peaceful co-existence and respect for difference, as long-term goals. Intermediate goals include strengthening the capacity of local community-based groups – among these police clubs, youth groups and parent-teacher associations – to develop community learning programmes that will combat fear, build knowledge of basic rights and reinforce life skills.

www.col.org/HealthyCommunities
**ENGLISH LANGUAGE TEACHER TRAINING**

**INDIA**

Gauhati University’s Department of English Language Teaching and its Institute of Distance and Open Learning have launched a new diploma programme for English teachers at the primary level. The Diploma in English Language Teaching with ICT Skills (DELT-ICT) is a practical training course developed in collaboration with COL and is the first teacher education programme for pre- and in-service English language teachers offered by Gauhati University in the distance mode. The programme is expected to help improve the skills of English teachers in primary schools in Assam State.

To ensure greater access, the university will upload all these modules online as open educational resources (OER) under a Creative Commons licence.

**KENYA**

Open Resources for English Language Teaching (ORELT) are learning materials collaboratively developed to support the class-room activities of teachers in junior secondary schools. These are open-content, multimedia resources in online and traditional text formats.

In Kenya, implementation started with the training of teachers from rural and urban/peri-urban junior secondary schools. These teachers were then monitored in the field to assess the impact of the modules upon the teaching and learning of English. The materials were found to be particularly helpful in rural schools, many of which had no resources at all except the teacher’s book. With the ORELT modules, teachers have access to free resources.

This second phase brought together 60 teachers to become trainers of other teachers. Many of these teachers are now enthusiastically sharing skills and resources with other teachers in their communities and have trained over 100 teachers. The ORELT resources have helped bring in new approaches. For example, according to Mr. Daniel Mutembei Mbobua, a teacher in Kawiru Secondary School, “The resources encourage working in groups . . . I have started doing this and I can see the confidence of my pupils growing.”

Continuing this work, COL is now partnering with the Kenya Institute for Curriculum Development to have the materials vetted for use across all junior secondary schools in Kenya. [http://orelt.col.org](http://orelt.col.org)

**TVSD IN AFRICA**

**TVET TEACHER TRAINING**

COL continues to focus on expanding access to good-quality TVET teacher training. Fifty TVET teachers from 13 Innovation in Vocational Education and Skills Training (INVEST) Africa partner institutions are engaged in a new online course on teaching with PowerPoint. Online course-design training is continuing through workshops in three INVEST Africa partner institutions in Kenya and Tanzania, with 67 teachers having completed the training.

**TARGETING GIRLS IN TVET**

Mombasa Technical Training Institute has introduced a new curriculum in cosmetology. COL provided support for training the instructors and developing print-based learning materials so this full-time programme may be offered more flexibly. Twenty-four girls are enrolled. [www.col.org/tvsd/invest](http://www.col.org/tvsd/invest)
STRENGTHENING TVSD IN THE PACIFIC

To strengthen COL’s work in technical and vocational skills development (TVSD) in the region, COL TVSD Education Specialist, Dr. Alison Mead Richardson, visited seven Pacific countries to review current work and build partnerships for future collaborations.

In May and June 2014, visits were made to Nauru, Papua New Guinea (PNG) and Kiribati. A workshop on flexible TVET was held for Port Moresby Technical College senior managers and teachers. Caritas Technical Secondary School, in PNG, also received support with developing materials and with their plans to introduce flexible learning. Meanwhile, support is continuing for the TVET Flexible Open Learning Unit in PNG, with a COL consultant training instructors from six institutions to manage TVET systems and develop materials.

In Kiribati, meetings were held with key stakeholders from the Kiribati Institute of Technology, the Fisheries Training College, USP, the Ministry of Labour and Human Resource Development and the Ministry of Education. An outer-island delivery strategy is now in place to advance the development of the programmes that will provide non-formal training. In September 2014, a visit was made to Tuvalu to discuss with TVSD stakeholders how to provide youth skills training. The meeting was attended by representatives from government departments responsible for women, the media, immigration, education and tourism, as well as NGOs, the police force, the Public Service Commission and school principals.

Audio content for the Pacific Basic Trades Literacy and Numeracy course has been developed by the National University of Samoa. The course was introduced to stakeholders at the COL Pacific Focal Points meeting in September.

www.col.org/tvsd

CEMBA/CEMPA IN GUYANA

Enhancing leadership performance is critical in driving productivity at the workplace, be it in the public sector or the private sector. The University of Guyana is one of the many institutions that have embraced the Commonwealth Executive Master of Business Administration (CEMBA) and Commonwealth Executive Master of Public Administration (CEMPA) programmes to enhance the performance of leaders in the workplace.

Initially, as observed by Dean O’Neil McGreaves, all of the CEMBA/CEMPA programmes were doing well, as there were no other similar offerings in the country, but now they face competition from programmes delivered by private providers. The Co-ordinator of the CEMBA/CEMPA programmes, Mr. Hector Edwards, observed that the most recent batch of applications for the first time showed gender parity; generally over the years, more females have been participating in this programme than males.

www.col.org/cemba

PARTICIPATORY LEARNING DESIGN COURSE LAUNCHED

The fourth course in COL’s online Community Learning Programme Developer’s Certificate, “Participatory Learning Design,” was launched in September, attracting 80 learners from 15 countries.

The certificate is offered in collaboration with the University of the West Indies’ Caribbean Institute of Media and Communication and other COL partners. The aim of the certificate is to enable local groups to develop and deliver effective, low-cost community learning programmes focusing on local community health and development priorities and, in the process, to create a cadre of developers and new programmes.

Since the certificate’s launch in October 2013, over 300 representatives of health, development and communication organisations in over 20 countries have participated.

www.col.org/HealthyCommunities
Fiji was reinstated as a full member of the Commonwealth on 26 September, following a decision by the Commonwealth Ministerial Action Group (CMAG) at their 44th meeting, in New York. The group concluded that Fiji’s suspension from the Councils of the Commonwealth should be lifted, in recognition of the credible elections held on 17 September 2014, and the assumption of office by a democratically elected government.

Following a military coup d’état in 2006 and then the abrogation of the constitution in 2009, Fiji had been under full suspension from Commonwealth membership and Commonwealth activities.

Welcoming the announcement, Professor Asha Kanwar, President and C.E.O. of COL, said, “We have been waiting for this moment and are eager to work with the institutions and individuals in Fiji to harness the potential of technologies to promote learning for development. Fiji has much to contribute to the Pacific region – and, indeed, the Commonwealth – and COL looks forward to catalysing partnerships and linkages based on shared values and the common objectives of sustainable development for all.”


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When Uganda’s Makerere University engaged with COL’s Lifelong Learning for Farmers initiative (L3F), under the co-ordination of Dr. Moses Tenywa, it established the Open Distance Learning Network (ODLN) of Uganda to promote learning for the farming community. The network has played a major role in strengthening L3F and other related programmes in Uganda. The review of the Sub-Saharan Africa Challenge Programme during 2010 pointed out that ODLN played a very active role in promoting a new perspective on using a multi-stakeholder approach to identify practical solutions to marketing challenges (www.fao.org/docrep/014/i2350e/i2350e00.pdf).

Based on the successful implementation of L3F, ODLN became a social enterprise and registered as the Agricultural Innovation System Brokerage Association (AGINSBA), which established two farmer-based co-operatives within a period of two years and helped the farmers to establish agri-enterprises. More than 10,000 farmers learned financial and market literacy using mobile phones and radios.

Recently, it entered into a partnership with the National Organic Agricultural Movement of Uganda (NOGAMU) to strengthen organic farming in Uganda and other parts of East Africa. NOGAMU is an umbrella organisation that unites producers, processors, exporters, non-governmental organisations and others involved in the promotion and development of the organic sector in Uganda.

AGINSBA and NOGAMU believe that the L3F approach will enable these farmers to translate capacity into capability and empowerment.

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The Botswana College of Distance and Open Learning (BOCODOL) launched its newest programme – a Master of Education in Leadership – based on a VUSSC-developed programme. The programme attracted 85 learners, comprising school heads, heads of departments and other senior professionals within the Botswana schooling system. All learners use tablets for learning, thereby promoting the uptake of information and communication technology by Botswana educators and managers. The programme is helping to create major shifts in learning and in the empowerment of women leaders.


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COL has been named a “co-opted member” of the Executive Board of the African Council for Distance Education (ACDE), and the President has been invited to serve on the board for a period of three years, “in recognition of your role in promoting activities of distance education generally and contribution to the progress of ACDE specifically.”

ACDE is a continental educational organisation comprising African universities and other higher-education institutions that are committed to expanding access to quality education and training through open and distance learning. COL has supported the ACDE and will continue to do so in this new capacity.

www.acdeafrica.org
ODL POLICY DEVELOPMENT IN GRENADA

Supported by COL and the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development, T.A. Marryshow Community College (TAMCC) in Grenada is taking a bold step towards expanding access to its tertiary-level programmes by using distance learning and technologies. TAMCC is already involved in delivering lessons through video conferencing, whereby one instructor is able to reach many learners located in different campuses. TAMCC is now geared towards further expanding access through online learning.

Through its Distance Education Co-ordinator, Ms. Caundi Joseph, TAMCC is currently engaged in an institutional open and distance learning (ODL) policy formulation exercise to provide a framework for guiding the development and deployment of a dual-mode system. In August, COL supported a workshop for senior college managers, during which they examined and discussed ODL concepts and terminologies, along with the challenges facing the institution and country in expanding access to education. The workshop significantly advanced policy development.

SAMOA HOSTS SMALL ISLAND STATES CONFERENCE

The United Nations’ Third International Conference on Small Island Developing States (SIDS) was held in Samoa in September. Over 2,300 people from around the world participated. The Commonwealth delegation was led by the Secretary General H.E. Kamalesh Sharma. COL was represented by Board Member Dr. Emma Kruse Va’ai, the Deputy Vice-Chancellor of the National University of Samoa.

Significantly, the international community pledged $1.9 billion in sustainable development. The partnerships are in the areas of sustainable economic development, climate change, disaster risk management, social development, sustainable energy, ocean health, water and sanitation, food security and waste management.

www.sids2014.org

UNESCO CELEBRATES WORLD TEACHERS’ DAY

UNESCO celebrated the 20th anniversary of World Teachers’ Day on the 6th and 7th of October at their HQs in Paris and invited the President to give a presentation on “How ICTs can support teacher training.”

JEFFREY TOWN FARMERS ASSOCIATION WINS EQUATOR PRIZE 2014

Jeffrey Town Farmers Association (JTFA), Jamaica, was presented with a United Nations Development Programme Equator Initiative Prize for 2014. Developed in response to land degradation, natural disasters and irregular water supply, JTFA employs a multimedia approach to inform and educate farming communities about alternative energy options, sustainable agriculture techniques and disaster risk reduction. The association focuses on pineapple farming, water harvesting and reforestation.

www.equatorinitiative.org

On behalf of longstanding Healthy Communities partner the Jeffrey Town Farmers Association, Ivy and Wordsworth Gordon accept the 2014 Equator Prize from Helen Clark, UNDP, as part of the UN General Assembly.
Access remains inequitable, especially in rural areas, with girls particularly disadvantaged. Despite the encouraging progress made to increase access to schooling, the latest edition of the Global Education Digest reveals that an alarmingly high number of children are repeating grades and leaving school before completing primary or lower-secondary education. “New data from the UNESCO Institute for Statistics (UIS) show that about 32.2 million primary pupils were held back a grade in 2010, and 31.2 million dropped out of school and may never return” (UNESCO, 2012). The dilemma, therefore, is not only to deal with out-of-school children, but also to address why children leave school. Those most at risk are girls, minors, and rural and poor children.

If girls are not educated, they are compelled into early marriages. Most of these girls who enter into early marriages cannot even take care of themselves, so how can they take care of the hygiene of their children?

Interview with a religious leader in Bihar State, India, 2012

Sub-Saharan Africa accounts for half of the world’s children who are out of school. The same region accounts for 35 per cent of the world’s primary education repeaters (UNESCO, 2012). From this snapshot it is evident that, despite global progress, we still face the daunting task of providing access to quality education that can reap the dividends expected of such an investment. Investment in education benefits not only individuals but also societies.

Attending the course at the open school has made me more confident, and I want to learn more. After I complete my studies, I want to find a job.

Interview with a young woman in Sindh Province, Pakistan, 2012

A study of 98 countries found that each additional year of education results, on average, in a 10 per cent increase in lifetime earnings (Psacharopoulos & Patrinos, 2004).

Statistics may not always express what a personal encounter can convey:

I left school in year 5 to marry my husband at the age of 12. I am now 22 and have three children. As a mother, I would like to help them with their schoolwork, but I can’t, because I did not complete school.

Interview with a young mother in Bangladesh, 2013

WHAT IS OPEN SCHOOLING?

Open schooling has been introduced successfully in Asia, Africa, the Caribbean and the Pacific to complement, or as an alternative to, the conventional school system. COL defines it as “the physical separation of the school learner from the teacher, and the use of unconventional teaching methodologies and information and communications technologies.”

Open schooling can be provided by standalone, independent distance education institutions, or be managed as part of the education ministry within a specific directorate, or be part of a university. In the COL publication Perspectives on Distance Learning: Open Schooling in the 21st Century (2009), various case studies illustrate how open schooling has been implemented in different contexts (www.col.org/psOpen-Schooling).

WHAT HAS CHANGED IN OPEN SCHOOLING?

Over the past 10 years, COL has worked, through various means, with ministries of education, institutions and non-governmental organisations to facilitate and improve the delivery of open schooling by establishing new open schools and strengthening existing ones. While open schools have traditionally used print-based curriculum content, the use of modern technology and the sharing of resources have led to significant shifts in open schooling design.
Perhaps the most significant shift in open schooling was inspired by the open educational resources (OER) movement, which promised to address some of the most difficult educational challenges. To tackle the issue of access to quality education, COL introduced OER to open schools in 2009 via the collaborative development of course materials in 20 subjects across six countries. This was met with some reluctance, however, as copyrighted material had previously provided additional revenue to many of the open schools.

After various sensitisation activities, which started with a three-day workshop for all open schools in the Commonwealth (representing 22 countries), we are finally reaping the benefits. In 2013, five open schools, with the support of COL, developed and introduced their OER policies, a first for open schools. The acceptance of OER by open schools can go a long way toward responding to the challenges faced not only by open schools but by the education sector as a whole. OER developed through this initiative are available for any school, in any country, to repurpose and use (www.col.org/resources/crsMaterials/osOER).

A further shift took place with the integration of technology-mediated content such as multimedia resources. COL supported Commonwealth open schools through capacity building in the development of educational videos to enhance the quality of the learning experience. While the seeds were planted among six open schools, not all were ready to start the process. However, the national open schools in Botswana, India and Namibia seized the opportunity and have introduced multimedia as part of their offerings. The most significant change can be observed in Namibia, where COL supported the development of video lessons in four subjects in 2011.

Inspired by the success of the Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) and realising the value of the video lessons for all students, the Namibian Ministry of Education supported NAMCOL to introduce more video lessons. Today, NAMCOL has established its own TV channel, called EDU TV, dedicated to educational content mainly produced by NAMCOL. The aim is to cover all syllabi and make it easier for learners to learn anytime, anywhere. This is an example of a different shift, whereby open schooling – formerly on the periphery – has now become central in addressing a national challenge of enhancing the quality of learning.

In Kenya, the NGO Network for Non-Formal Education Institutions (NNFEI), inspired by the availability of OER and with COL’s support, contextualised 10 subjects and offered instruction to all students through television broadcasts. COL supported the launch of the Elumi TV channel. What is significant in this Kenyan context is that even in slum schools, students can access the TV lessons.

A few open schools in the developing Commonwealth have made the shift to introduce online learning, albeit on a small scale. This is a major shift, and COL – supported by partners such as The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation – has played a role in building the capacity of teachers in selected open schools using COL’s Wiki and Moodle (www.moodle.org).

Recently, Commonwealth open schools have also been able to capitalise on the capacity built through online collaboration for content development, using a shared platform called NotesMaster. Partnering with open schools through the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association (CO-MOSA), NotesMaster has built a cadre of staff at open schools in the Caribbean and Africa who can cascade the training of online content development. This community of practice offers an excellent platform for collaboration and support, and it promises to speed up the process for introducing more online learning (www.notestmaster.com).

Open schools have the potential to offer diverse curricula. The past three years have also seen a shift from purely academic to more vocational subjects. COL has supported various countries in Africa, Asia and the Caribbean to repurpose technical and vocational OER so as to help them expand their offerings and provide skills development training to their citizens.

**CONCLUSION**

Open schooling programmes have grown significantly in many Commonwealth countries and are proving to be cost-effective solutions to the growing demand for secondary education. They are especially suitable for encouraging the disadvantaged to gain skills training.

Open schooling systems have evolved from exclusively using print-based curricula; in most cases, even where they have the hardware, it is difficult to afford or access effective Internet connections.

Today, a number of open schools are in the process of developing and offering online curriculum content, with the National Institute of Open Schooling, in India, leading the way with Virtual Open Schooling (http://vos.nios.ac.in/niosvirtual).

This momentum has not been the same in all countries, as many are struggling to provide hardware to their teachers and faculty, in most cases, where they have the hardware, it is difficult to afford or access effective Internet connections.

Students can access the TV lessons. Today, a number of open schools are in the process of developing and offering online curriculum content, with the National Institute of Open Schooling, in India, leading the way with Virtual Open Schooling (http://vos.nios.ac.in/niosvirtual).

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TEACHERS, THE UNSUNG HEROES

World Teachers’ Day was celebrated on 5 October, and in the coming years, the world will continue to do this because we all agree that teachers are critical in the education of our children.

Some may argue that with advances in technology, the role of teachers has been diminished and perhaps we soon shall have no need for them. The truth, however, is that we shall continue to need teachers even as technology advances; the difference is that the role of the teacher is changing. Teachers have had to make a paradigm shift from “teaching” to “facilitating,” wherein technology complements and supplements their role. Teachers need continuous support to help them adapt to this changing role.

In many Commonwealth countries, however, we are still grappling with issues of access to and costs of technology and also with the challenge of helping both teachers and learners gain the skills to effectively use technology. This means that institutions, organisations and governments need to identify and promote appropriate technologies that can best be used in specific contexts to meet different local needs. COL calls upon governments and institutions to sincerely and strategically plan for this and for other methods of helping our teachers’ work become more fruitful.

Much has been accomplished in the last decade to increase access to education and to meet the Millennium Development Goals and Education for All targets. A number of governments have committed resources to universal primary education and universal secondary education, and as COL is “helping developing nations improve access to quality education and training,” we commend these governments for their efforts.

However, more still needs to be done. In the past decade, whilst we were able to get many children into schools, the massive increase in numbers may have compromised quality. To guard against this, we need to ensure quality teachers and teacher educators. Teacher preparation is as important as teacher deployment, so comprehensive strategies are needed – strategies that will address gaps and challenges in teacher preparation, deployment, development, remuneration and motivation as well as supervisory support.

This is perhaps more urgent today than it was a decade ago because of advances in technology, changes in the role of the teacher and shifts in the skills that graduates need. There has been a proliferation of technologies, with correspondingly greater demands and expectations for teachers to integrate these technologies into their practices. While stories abound of teachers successfully and innovatively integrating technologies and embracing their new role, large numbers of teachers are still struggling with issues of access and capacity. They need all the support they can get.

Teachers in limited-resource circumstances are to be commended because they make do with the very least while helping children learn. So, for World Teachers’ Day, we remember these teachers and celebrate them, but we should resolve to go beyond celebration and also make every effort to support them better, taking into account their different needs and circumstances. How can we support teachers to deliver education that excites curiosity, develops creativity and instils confidence? Teachers are the foundation of our children’s future, and COL is committed to empowering the teaching community.

See www.col.org/blog179 for further exploration of this topic.

INCREASING ACCESS TO EDUCATION FOR ALL THROUGH MOBILE LEARNING

by Dr. Mohamed Ally, Athabasca University, Canada

COL’s Knowledge Series is a topical, start-up guide to distance education practice and delivery. The latest title in this series is Increasing Access to Education for All Through Mobile Learning.

Mobile technology use has increased more rapidly than that of any other technology in our history, and developing countries have the fastest growth rate in mobile technology acquisition. Mobile Web usage is expected to double within five years and so become the most common way of accessing the Web. People in remote locations and in developing countries are moving directly to mobile technology rather than acquiring desktop or notebook computers. Mobile technology (mobile phones, smartphones, tablets, etc.) has proven to be a powerful learning tool.

Educators and governments must be prepared to use mobile learning approaches to meet the needs of, and empower, current and future generations of learners. However, successful implementation of mobile learning requires that organisations have the proper infrastructure, people, policies and training programmes. This start-up guide will help.

www.col.org/knowledge

OPEN SCHOOLING IN PERSPECTIVE

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

lum material to complementing this with television and radio and introducing online offerings.

Open schooling approaches and curriculum content can also assist in addressing national educational challenges through deployment in conventional schools:

• The videos prepared by open schools are particularly useful to all students studying national curricula.

• Good-quality curriculum content developed by open schools can also be used in conventional schools, which can reduce costs and lead to more affordable education.

• When certain subjects are not available in conventional schools, due to teacher shortages or lack of curriculum resources, students in conventional schools should also be able to register in open schools to take a desired subject.

It was indeed a pleasure to learn about the open school, which is excellent for Belize. With this new innovation, many more of our students will have access to quality education, and I am so grateful that you brought it to our country.

Dr. Carol Babb, Deputy C.E.O., Ministry of Education, Belize, 2013

www.col.org/OpenSchooling
JOURNAL OF LEARNING FOR DEVELOPMENT

COL’s online Journal of Learning for Development (JL4D) has published its third issue. Chief Editor Professor Alan Tait of The Open University (U.K.) reflects on the journal’s first year and first three issues:

COL took a big decision in January 2013 to launch the Journal. The challenging questions that arose were whether there was a need for yet another journal, whether there would be enough articles submitted, and whether it would be possible to find a place for our particular niche.

I must leave it to the reader to judge for her- or himself to what extent we have begun to achieve the goals we set ourselves in our first year, but once our third issue appeared in September 2014, it was clear that we have not only validated the proposition of an open access journal dedicated to the twin issues of learning for development, but have witnessed considerable momentum and interest from authors, reviewers, readers and the development community at large.

We have published 22 articles in three issues to date, of a total of 78 articles received since the journal’s inception in December 2013. These articles came from across the main categories of research, case studies, reports from the field and book reviews. We have had the support of 33 referees who authored and revised those submitted articles.

The articles have come from authors in several countries, including Australia, Bangladesh, Canada, Germany, Ghana, Guyana, India, Kenya, Malaysia, Mauritius, Nepal, Nigeria, South Africa, Tanzania and the United Kingdom. We are also providing a stepping stone into peer-assessed published work for academics and practitioners who are early in their scholarly careers.

COL encourages researchers and writers from around the world to submit their work to this important journal. www.jl4d.org

FROM CEMCA

COL’s regional agency, the Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia, has published two new resources and revised editions of two others.

Case Studies on OER-based eLearning, Som Naidu and Sanjaya Mishra, Eds.

Technology Tools for Teachers, by M.S. Vidya

Quality Assurance Guidelines for Open Educational Resources: TIPS Framework (Version 2.0), by Paul Kawachi


GENDER MAINSTREAMING TOOLKIT FOR TEACHERS AND TEACHER EDUCATORS

COL has developed this toolkit to help teachers and teacher educators learn more about gender mainstreaming. This resource explains why gender equality is important to students, teachers, schools, communities and governments. It also explores how teachers, education institutions and other stakeholders can make changes that will help male and female learners participate and succeed in learning programmes.

Although the primary audiences for this toolkit are teachers and teacher educators, it will also provide information useful to other important stakeholders in open and distance learning – parents, communities, non-governmental organizations, and local, regional and national governments.

This toolkit draws on an extensive review of international commitments, reports, case studies and tools. It offers plain-language explanations of important gender issues, and it features tools to help teachers and teacher educators address gender issues and provide a safe and encouraging atmosphere for all students.

www.col.org/GenderMainstreamingToolkit

RESOURCES FOR DEVELOPING ONLINE COMMUNITIES OF PRACTICE

There is increasing interest in learning how to manage online communities of practice.

The Information Management Resource Kit (IMARK) is a partnership-based eLearning initiative (of which COL is a member), facilitated by the Food and Agriculture Organization of the United Nations (FAO), that aims to enable development practitioners to acquire skills, competencies, behaviours and attitudes in knowledge sharing and information management.

IMARK provides free eLearning courses on information management and knowledge sharing that are available online, on CD-ROM or as downloadable packages.

Two of the courses are Knowledge Sharing for Development and Building Electronic Communities and Networks, which include topics such as: how to assess community members’ needs; issues to consider when designing your online community, including required skills, privacy, security and usability; multilingual computing, marketing and training; the wide range of technical options and tools; tasks, methods and techniques for online facilitation; and knowledge-sharing techniques and methods. Course contents are OER with attribution to FAO.

www.imarkgroup.org
Professor Atta-ur-Rahman, the regional appointment for Asia on COL’s Board of Governors, was presented with the “Friendship Award of China” in Beijing on 29 September. The Friendship Award is the People’s Republic of China’s highest national award for “foreign experts who have made outstanding contributions to the country’s economic and social progress.”

The award recognises the many contributions that Professor Atta-ur-Rahman has made toward developing strong linkages between China and Pakistan in various fields of science and higher education. He was responsible for initiating a major programme of academic collaboration and linkages with Chinese universities and other institutions as Federal Minister of Science and Technology and later as Chairman of the Higher Education Commission.

Professor Atta-ur-Rahman is currently Chief Patron of the International Centre for Chemical and Biological Sciences (ICCBS) at the University of Karachi, Pakistan.

www.col.org/board

Professor Asha Kanwar, President and C.E.O. of COL, was awarded a DLitt (honoris causa) at the first convocation of the K.K. Handiqui State Open University, India, held in September. She also delivered the convocation address, wherein she congratulated one of India’s newest public open universities – and the first to serve the Eastern region – on providing opportunities to thousands of men and women who are very diverse in terms of age and social background, enabling them to gain qualifications ranging from certificates and diplomas to degrees and doctorates.

Professor Kanwar was also awarded the 2014 Meritorious Service Award by the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) at their annual conference, held in October, in recognition of her “remarkable achievements as a visionary, dynamic leader in open and distance learning.” Each year, the AAOU recognises an individual from amongst the Asian or global ODL community who has, over a long period of time, made outstanding contributions in the areas of open and distance education.

Mark Bullen joined COL in Oct 2012 – at the same time that I joined. The name seemed very familiar, and my inability to place him troubled me. After having various discussions with Mark and learning about his history and experiences, I realised that he had been a tutor for the UBC online course Technology-Based Distributed Learning, and I had been his student.

Our discussions and debates revolved around his programme – eLearning as cross-cutting, how to deliver projects, meeting the needs of our stakeholders, and the role of technology. Mark’s approach is to ensure that learning and teaching are enhanced through the use of technology, but he does not see technology as “the answer” to education and training challenges. He focuses on delivery with minimal fanfare and on ensuring a strong focus on quality work so that partners and learners benefit.

In the development field, our engagement with partners and stakeholders is critical. Mark often expressed his frustration at the slow pace of engagements and delivery. He works best when there is a high level of commitment and willingness to work hard to see a project to its conclusion. We will miss his quiet approach, his thorough manner of implementation and his strong analysis and views of what technology can and cannot do.

Prior to joining COL, Dr. Bullen was the Associate Dean and Dean of the Learning and Teaching Centre at the British Columbia Institute of Technology, Canada.

Vis Naidoo, Vice President, COL

One of COL’s earliest staff members, the Communications Manager, Mr. Dave Wilson, moved on from COL in October – after over 23 years. Working with all of COL’s four Presidents, five Board Chairs, and dozens of staff members, he has helped to build COL’s international reputation through various communications vehicles, including COL’s website, the Connections newsletter, electronic messaging and positioning, publications and resources, official Commonwealth events and COL’s Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning. COL’s President and C.E.O., Professor Asha Kanwar, said, “Dave has been the repository of COL’s collective and cumulative memory. He has also been a familiar face at various Commonwealth conferences and inter-governmental events. Stakeholders around the Commonwealth could count on Dave for any information relating to COL. Even those who had not met him knew Dave through Connections, which continues to be a very popular newsletter, especially with ministers of education, on whose desks it is often present when I visit them. All of us at COL thank Dave for his valuable contributions over the years and wish him well in all his future endeavours.”

www.col.org/staff

PACFOLD LAUNCH

Left to right: University of the South Pacific (USP) Vice-Chancellor and President, Professor Rajesh Chandra, and President and C.E.O. of COL, Professor Asha Kanwar, with Samoan Education Minister, the Honourable Magele Tafuna Magele, who launched the Pacific Centre for Flexible and Open Learning for Development (PACFOLD) and the PACFOLD-learn online community, in conjunction with COL’s regional Focal Points meeting in Samoa in September. PACFOLD is supported by COL and hosted by USP (see full story in Connections, July 2014).

www.pacfold.org
COL is organising a series of training workshops in Botswana and Bangladesh to awaken and enhance the leadership potential of girls who are studying at local open schools.

In Botswana, this training was carried out by the Community Capacity Enhancement and Empowerment Society (CCEES), and 20 girls were trained. The workshop followed an interactive approach, covering topics on leadership and mentoring for adolescent girls.

In September, COL’s open schooling specialist, Ms. Frances Ferreira, co-facilitated the second workshop in the series, with faculty members of Bangladesh Open University’s Open School (BOU OS).

One hundred girls from eight BOU OS centres participated in the training. The workshop content was quite different from that of the Botswana workshop in that more emphasis was placed on the girls’ own experiences and aspirations. Each session was introduced with a game and led to the highlighting of specific leadership issues. The topics included the girls’ voices on leadership. During this session, the girls came up with a list of 10 tips for leadership:

• to inspire others through positive influence
• to give direction to what one is trying to achieve
• to develop people by empowering them
• to be honest and trustworthy
• to motivate others
• to be brave and self-confident
• to share responsibility for one’s success
• to give power for making the right decision at the right time
• to have a mentality for accepting challenges
• to take the time to understand and listen to others

The session on values and the links between values, choices, decisions and leadership was likely the most revealing for the girls. The facilitators agreed that this exercise assisted the girls in seeing how one’s own value system influences one’s leadership style, choices and decisions. Their leadership was put into practice with a fashion show, in which the girls developed beautiful costumes from flip-chart paper and Post-it notes. The leaders stepped forward, took control and supported each other. It was an amazing experience for the facilitators to observe how the participants worked in harmony.

At the end of the workshop, the girls were asked for their impressions. Here are two of the responses:

Before this workshop, I had no clear idea about leadership and values. Now I know how to choose the right path and why I have to choose this path.

Facilitators are friendly. I was nervous before coming to the workshop. But now I am satisfied about the workshop. I have learned about leadership, role models, values, relationships and how to work in a group.

Next, COL plans to carry out Leadership 4 Girls 4 Change (LAG4C) workshops in India in collaboration with the National Institute for Open schooling. If girls’ ability to lead is strengthened, they will have more confidence in their ability to learn and achieve, and to motivate other girls to do the same. These girls will be role models for other girls in their communities.

www.col.org/OpenSchooling

It is often said that to empower the citizenry of any nation we must first teach the people (boys, girls, women and men) to become self-sustaining and soar beyond the limits that life imposes on them; hence, it is under this principle that education should rest – that is, to breathe life into the lifeless, give vision to the visionless and bring hope to the hopeless, for education denied is like a wingless bird that will never ascend. Additionally, education should be equitable, impartial and accessible to all, regardless of gender. Education should not be prejudiced or tolerate any form of physical or mental suppression.

Education should be the empowering tributary that reaches the unreachable, and this is one of the main goals of open schooling. COL defines open schooling as “the physical separation of the school learner from the teacher, and the use of unconventional teaching methodologies and information and communications technologies.” Open schooling is an educational dais that makes learning possible and creates accessibility and achievability for all.

Open learning continues to flourish as one of the greatest teaching/learning platforms to reach marginalised populations, such as individuals from poverty-afflicted environments, early school-leavers, people with disabilities, victims of crimes and bullying, prisoners, people with invertebrate illnesses, victims of wars and social segregation, and teenage mothers and fathers. Open learning also serves people who simply do not want to be in traditional school settings.

The dynamic growth of open schooling across the globe is very palpable in many countries, one being Belize. The historic date was 23 August 2013, when the first open learning platform was launched at one of Belize’s Southside high schools, Gwen Lizaraga High School Evening Division (now known as Gwen Lizaraga Open School), which caters for at-risk individuals, predominantly females. This initiative was valiantly supported by COL, specifically Ms. Frances Ferreira, and many other partners, such as NotesMaster, the University of Belize and the Fraser Valley Distance Education School. The school continues to build its open learning platform and capacity and will carry on serving as a leading example of “education without walls” for marginalised populations in Belize.

With the significant progress that has been achieved at Gwen Lizaraga during the past year, the school is now seeking new ways to make education not just open but more innovative. They are looking towards a paradigm shift in how they deliver information to students. The school leaders, tutors and other partners believe that if innovative schooling is adapted via the use of television and radio stations, they will be able to reach more students, particularly those without Internet access.

Education is the most valuable gift that any human being can receive. If we, as educators, are gift givers of knowledge, hope and self-sustainability, then it is our utmost obligation to ensure that education is open, innovative and accessible. If open learning can be entrenched in innovative education programmes around the globe, there will be an increase in educated, resilient citizens.

Dr. Maxine McKay is an Assistant Professor in the Faculty of Education and Arts at the University of Belize
COL AND IIT KANPUR DELIVER A “MOOC ON MOOCS”

COL and the Indian Institute of Technology Kanpur (IIT Kanpur) delivered a massive open online course (MOOC) on the topic of MOOCs, from 5 September to 12 October 2014. The Technology Education Quality Improvement Programme (TEQIP) of India’s Ministry of Human Resource Development was also a partner.

The “MOOC on MOOCS” attracted over 2,300 learners from 92 countries. Learner analytics showed that almost 1,700 were active, browsing learning materials and visiting the forum and online discussion spaces. About 300 are expected to become eligible for certificates of participation. India, Nepal, Mauritius, South Africa and Canada, respectively, were the top five countries in terms of the number of participants.

The MOOC was conceptualised in response to requests from senior academics connected with the agriculture, environment and rural development sectors and from practitioners engaged in advocacy for human development issues.

COL has frequently pointed out that MOOCs need not be identified only with branded offerings. With some re-engineering, MOOC platforms can be deployed to serve the purposes of large-scale training and capacity building at a faster pace. Through such an exploration, a MOOC-for-Development paradigm can be realised. With this perspective, COL and IIT Kanpur had, in 2013, offered a MOOC on Mobiles for Development (M4D), which attracted almost 2,300 learners from 116 countries. The evaluation report on the M4D MOOC is available at www.col.org/PublicationDocuments/M4D-MOOC_Porter.pdf.

A number of lessons learned from an evaluation of the M4D MOOC were considered in the design of this MOOC. The pace was moderated so that learners could expect to spend no more than four hours per week on the course, and content was moderated to reduce the technical complexity of topics. The videos were kept to a maximum of 10 minutes each. Transcripts and slides were made available in the course space, to help those in bandwidth-limited situations and to minimise potential challenges arising from unfamiliar accents.

Much of the course content was developed at IIT Kanpur, with Professor TV. Prabhakar serving as the lead instructor and with the IIT Kanpur team hosting and managing the technical platform. A team at COL led by Dr. Balaji Venkataraman provided some content as well as course management services. Invited speakers included Sir John Daniel (former President and C.E.O. of COL), Professor Sanjay Sarma (MIT, also Director for MITx), Professor Russell Beale (FutureLearn and University of Birmingham), Dr. David Porter (Simon Fraser University) and senior programme managers from Google and Microsoft. Senior faculty from other campuses of the IIT system also served as speakers and mentors.

The IIT Kanpur team built a brand new platform called MOOKIT on which this MOOC was offered. MOOKIT was designed for low-bandwidth access and was built to be “mobile-responsive.” It was tested and approved for handling the heavy loads that a MOOC operation might entail. While deployed on this course, the platform performed well, without any interruptions. Participants’ comments in the forum space revealed a high level of satisfaction with the ease of working on the platform and with its reliability. Its computing resource requirements are modest.

Discussions in the course space were wide-ranging and intensive and have already led to the formation of collaborative efforts among learners. A number of participants are keen to design and offer their own MOOCs on topics of development interests and for learners in disadvantaged circumstances. At the suggestion of participants, this course space has now been converted into an online community of practice, with some volunteer participants and course team members serving as facilitators. IIT Kanpur has agreed to extend the hosting of this online community until March 2015.

While promoting the course globally, COL used Facebook (about 150,000 views and 4,000 “likes”) and Google’s search-based display (about 400,000 displays) and is currently evaluating the impact of this exposure.

All learning materials for this course are open educational resources, and the analytical data, after careful removal of any kind of personal identifiers, will also be released into the public domain. Many participants noted that this data would be useful in their research efforts.

http://MOOConMOOC.org

PROFESSOR ASHA KANWAR, PRESIDENT & C.E.O. OF COL, IS RECOGNIZED WITH THE 2014 AAOU MERITORIOUS SERVICE AWARD

Each year, the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) recognises an individual from the Asian or global ODL community who, over a long period of time, has made outstanding contributions in the areas of open and distance education.

The Meritorious Service Award was presented to Professor Kanwar by the President of AAOU, Professor Yuk-Shan Wong, during the 28th AAOU annual conference, on Wednesday, 29 October 2014.
QUALITY ASSURANCE FOR OPEN SCHOOLING

COL’s Open Schooling initiative has worked with various open schools and the South African Institute for Distance Education (SAIDE) to develop a Quality Assurance Toolkit for Open Schools (www.col.org/QAtoolkit_OS).

While most open schools have introduced quality assurance (QA) practices based on the COL toolkit, the absence of a QA policy can constrain efforts to reach a common understanding of quality concepts and to bring everybody on board in terms of implementing institutional QA arrangements.

To address this need, COL is conducting QA workshops with the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association. The second in a series was held for Asian countries in New Delhi in September.

At the end of the workshop, seven out of the 10 participating open schools’ policy drafts were at an advanced stage. Four of the schools were Indian – Andra Pradesh State Open School, Assam State Open School, Tamil Nadu State Open School and the National Institute for Open Schooling – along with Pakistan’s Allama Iqbal Open University, the Bangladesh Open School and the National Institute for Education, Sri Lanka.

COL’s consultant will continue to provide support to these open schools to finalise the policies for submission and implementation. www.col.org/OpenSchooling

INSTRUCTIONAL DESIGN IN VANUATU

COL, in collaboration with the Ministry of Education in Vanuatu, trained 14 open school teachers to develop quality open and distance learning curriculum content during a five-day capacity building workshop held in Port Vila, Vanuatu, in August. COL engaged the Namibian College of Open Learning to facilitate the training.

The workshop team customised COL’s Instructional Design Template to create the Vanuatu Instructional Design Template.

Teachers came from six of Vanuatu’s secondary schools. One participant noted that “the training was very helpful, motivational and collaborative. I’ve learned how to use a computer with an electronic template, which I have never done before. With experience gained here by doing little by little, I have acquired skills on how to do the best design on the course I’m assigned to develop. The instructional design template will help us a lot to compile the study guides.”

UPCOMING EVENTS

Africa 2015 and Beyond: The Future of Gender Studies, Research and Service in Higher Education, International Development, the Women’s Movement and Community
5–7 November 2014; Kampala, Uganda
Organised by the School of Women and Gender Studies, Makerere University
http://womenstudies.mak.ac.ug

The 19th Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (CCEM) and parallel stakeholders’ conference
22–26 June 2015, Nassau, The Bahamas
Co-hosted by the Commonwealth Secretariat and the Government of The Bahamas
Theme: “Quality Education for Equitable Development: Performance, Paths and Productivity – 3Ps”
The Conference will take place at a time when the current Millennium Development Goals will be coming to a close, to be replaced by the post-2015 Sustainable Development Goals.
http://thecommonwealth.org/media/events
This year is the 25th anniversary of the World Wide Web. On 19 August 1989 – just months after the newly established Commonwealth of Learning became operational – Sir Tim Berners-Lee, OM, placed in the public domain the code of the World Wide Web at a server in CERN, Geneva, where he was employed. Since then, the Web's growth is a story in technology that can parallel only the story of the growth in railways in the 19th century.

The technology envisioned and implemented at the time endures to this day. A number of changes have taken place in access technologies (e.g., the rise in the popularity of mobile devices and the use of fibre optics in high-income countries), and web browsers have undergone profound transformation (e.g., Netscape, the browser of choice about 20 years ago, is no longer in use, and Chrome, which did not exist about six years ago, has a very significant share today).

While there is flux in all these matters, the basic architecture of the Web has remained unchanged. E-commerce, which was not a consideration when the Web was invented, has been a very important driver for its growth, especially in recent years. Peter Drucker, the management guru famous for his many successful predictions, wrote in 1999 that E-commerce would come to affect retail marketing as a whole. Google, considered by many to be the largest engineering company in the world, is entirely based on the wider availability and historic growth of the Web, as are Amazon and Alibaba, which are also very large companies operating globally.

In more recent times, the education sector in at least some parts of the world has been considerably impacted by the Web. eLearning today has come to mean largely web-based learning. Even when not connected to the Web, eLearning platforms such as Moodle use the Web's protocol to let learners and mentors work together. The rise of massive open online courses (MOOCs) as an Internet-based learning technology is another example.

Until very recently, a global digital divide existed, whereby a sizeable part of the world's population did not have access to the Internet/Web. With the rapidly increasing availability of affordable smartphones in the developing world, this divide has become more nuanced. Ms. Mary Meeker, a keen and well-regarded observer of the Internet scene, pointed out that by early 2014, half of the Internet traffic originating in India (which was growing very quickly) had shifted to mobile devices. That was an example of a wider trend. Today, a number of mobile-based services use web technologies, even if the end user has access only to a basic cell phone and text messaging.

A significant trend in web technology is the work towards creating mobile applications, or “apps,” as they are popularly known. While there are hundreds of thousands of apps, relatively few have been developed in support of learning in a more formal sense. With access to the Web increasingly shifting to mobile devices, this may be an important trend for educational institutions and groups to join. FutureLearn, a well-known MOOC provider anchored by the U.K.'s Open University, was built from the ground up to be mobile-responsive. COL used MOOKIT, from the Indian Institute of Technology, on a recent MOOC offering partly because it was built for mobile devices and could deliver functionalities even at the low bandwidth that is common in much of the developing world.

Emerging trends such as single-page applications are designed to significantly increase the web experience even at low bandwidths. International corporations such as Google promote these and other start-up trends.

The world of learning for development is well positioned to take advantage of the emerging fusion of mobility and web technologies. Sir Tim, in his recent writings and addresses, especially in his Magna Carta for the Web, has stressed the importance of preserving the open and seamless character of the Web. It is that simple and enduring deep architecture that has allowed so many actors to grow and realise a great many possibilities. In his view, both those who seek profits through “walled gardens” on the Web and those who seek to use the Web for surveillance to achieve political and commercial ends could cause fragmentation of the Web and thus reduce its value as a true global public good.

www.webat25.org

**GREENSHOT, IMPROVEMENT OVER SNIPPING TOOL**

First, there was Windows’ “print screen,” then, after third parties produced much better screen-capture software, Windows included “Windows snipping tool” in their releases. Many users have found the snipping tool to be extremely useful and versatile in capturing specific parts of the screen, highlighting portions, saving as image files, pasting into emails, etc. Want more? Check out “Greenshot,” an open-source software download that can also capture complete (scrolling) web pages and includes image-editing features within the programme.

http://getgreenshot.org

**VIDEO EDITING ON MOBILE DEVICES**

Video editing using mobile devices is becoming more popular. There are now many apps for Apple iOS devices (such as the well-rated iMovie) and a number of apps for Android devices (such as the also well-rated Magisto).