



**BOARD OF GOVERNORS
President's Quarterly Progress Report:
October to December 2009**

1. Board Matters

The Audit Committee held its 15th meeting on November 9, 2009 through teleconference. It approved the audited Financial Statements for 2008-2009. Minutes have been circulated.

Taking advantage of the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), the regional representative for the Caribbean on COL's Board, Professor Clement Sankat, organised a highly successful stakeholder forum on November 24, 2009 for Trinidad & Tobago at the St. Augustine Campus of the University of the West Indies, Port of Spain (where he is Principal). One hundred government and institutional representatives from Trinidad and Tobago were joined by COL's Chair, His Excellency The Honourable Burchell Whiteman; Director of Knowledge Management and Information Technology, Paul West and me for this half-day meeting. An excellent series of videos tracing the history of open and distance learning in Trinidad & Tobago and COL's involvement will be a lasting legacy of the event.

During a visit to the Maldives on December 2, Vice-President Professor Asha Kanwar and I met our Board's regional representative for Asia, the Honourable Zahiya Zareer, for a useful discussion of developments in that region.

2. General

2.1 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM)

A highlight of this quarter was the Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting and its attendant People's Forum, held in Port of Spain, Trinidad, in the week of November 22. Joining me from COL for this event were COL's Chair, HE, the Honourable Burchell Whiteman, who was also part of the Jamaican delegation, and Director of Knowledge Management and Information Technology, Paul West. An urgent family matter prevented our Vice-President, Asha Kanwar from being part of our delegation.

Following the procedure instituted four years ago at the Malta CHOGM, COL reported on its work to a meeting of Foreign Ministers on November 25. The Chair and I made this presentation, which we reinforced by providing each delegation with a report

on what COL had done in its country in 2006-2009. In the discussion following our presentation, the delegations of Mauritius, Papua New Guinea, South Africa, The Gambia, Kenya, Lesotho, Solomon Islands and Seychelles each took the floor in succession to make very favourable comments about COL's work.

The CHOGM Communiqué included the following passages:

91. Heads of Government attached particular importance to the work and potential of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL), advocated additional inter-governmental support to advance its projects, and encouraged the creation of strategic partnerships by COL.

114. Heads of Government received with appreciation the Report of the Commonwealth of Learning (COL) and its three year plan 2009-2012 Learning for Development. They expressed satisfaction that the number of countries making voluntary contributions to its budget had increased to 41, and encouraged other member governments to also consider doing so. They expressed particular appreciation for the work of the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth, and – with its first period of funding drawing to a close - encouraged the Secretariat to assist the COL in securing new funding to continue and expand the programme in terms of capacity-building in the use of ICTs in education, and the development and delivery of courses.

The Royal Commonwealth Society took advantage of CHOGM to publish the results of a global survey of attitudes to the Commonwealth, and follow-up Internet discussion, under the title *Commonwealth What?* This occasioned considerable press comment. The reference to COL in the document reads:

***Official Commonwealth Institutions:** It is quite clear that the Commonwealth needs modernisation and reform at the institutional level. With the exception of the Commonwealth of Learning (a small intergovernmental outfit focused on distance learning based in Vancouver, that received considerable praise from those who knew it), we have heard frustrations about the way that these institutions work at every turn.*

Finally, I note that in a nice innovation the Commonwealth Secretary-General published his daily diary of CHOGM on the Web. On the day of COL's presentation to Foreign Ministers he wrote as follows:

So we heard heated debate in today's meeting. We received presentations, too. The Commonwealth Business, Youth and People's Forums presented their findings, and their communiqués. And I could only admire the Commonwealth of Learning – one of our three inter-governmental bodies, based in Vancouver, running distance learning educational and vocational programmes – which gave each individual member state updated information on its work in their

own country. There is a powerful message here, that fine words and global concepts have their limits. We are an organization which brings benefits 'on the ground' – our challenge is to communicate that much better.

In addition to our official appearance before governments, Paul West and I presented some of COL's work to the People's Forum under the title: *Creativity in advancing distance learning: models and technologies*. (This and the 15 other formal presentations that I have made this quarter can be found on COL's website at www.col.org/speeches.)

2.2 President's Activities

As the Secretary-General noted in the diary extract that I reproduced above, COL earns part of its reputation for effectiveness by having a strong country focus. Visiting Member States in connection with the planning and implementation of our work is an important aspect of this. Our challenge is to achieve this without excessive travel and I hope that the following report of our programme activities indicates that my Education Specialist colleagues are getting the balance about right.

Although I myself have travelled somewhat less in 2009 than in previous years, I have undertaken a heavy travel schedule in this last quarter. In successive visits to Sri Lanka, India, Bangladesh, Malaysia, Jamaica, Trinidad & Tobago and Maldives I have been able to discuss the implementation of COL's work with ministers, senior officials and institutional leaders and to visit some of our projects in the field.

I am particularly pleased by the development of our work in Sri Lanka under the Lifelong Learning for Farmers initiative. In this we are particularly indebted to Honorary COL Fellow Professor Uma Coomaraswamy, who is indefatigable in promoting the programme and seems to count many of the university leaders in Sri Lanka among her former students!

In Bangladesh I was pleased to meet the Ministers of both Education and Higher Education and, in particular, to spend time with the new Vice-Chancellor of the Bangladesh Open University. These meetings have been followed up by colleagues and I am confident that COL will be able to facilitate some useful outcomes in Bangladesh in the positive climate created by the new government.

In India I was able to be present for the formal announcement, in Chennai, of the Sixth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning, which will be held in Kochi, Kerala in November 2010 (see section 8 below). I also met Dr S. S. Jena, the new head of our important partner institution, the National Institute of Open Schooling, and I am confident of good developments there too. I report below how India has taken a lead in organising the new Commonwealth Open Schooling Association (COMOSA).

In Malaysia, I made a joint presentation with UNESCO to the Global Forum of the Observatory of Borderless Higher Education and was privileged to receive an honorary doctorate of Education from the Open University Malaysia.

Some important events for the global development of technology-mediated learning take place in non-Commonwealth countries. Thus I accepted invitations to give a keynote address at the celebration of the 30th anniversary of the China Central Radio and Television University (CCRTVU – now renamed the Open University of China) and to give the opening address at the World Assembly of the International Council on Education for Teaching held in Muscat, Oman. My continuing membership of the Steering Committee of the joint World Bank – UNESCO Global Initiative for Quality Assurance Capacity (GIQAC) is also a useful forum to promote COL's work.

While in Paris for the GIQAC meeting, I was able formally to sign COL's new Work Plan agreement with UNESCO with the Assistant Director-General of Education *ad interim*, Dr. Qian Tang. COL signed a Memorandum of Agreement with UNESCO in 1994 and this was updated with Work Plan agreements in 1999 and 2007. The new agreement covers the periods of COL's three-year plan 2009-2012 and UNESCO's biennial plan for 2009-2011. Our collaboration with UNESCO is increasingly productive and I hope that the more recent agreement with ComSec, which I mentioned in my last Quarterly Report, will be equally fruitful (www.col.org/col-unesco and www.col.org/col-comsec).

Finally, I have discovered that the work of writing a book is not over when you submit the manuscript to the publisher. I am delighted to say, however, that *Mega-Schools, Technology and Teachers: Achieving Education for All* is now in press. It will appear early in the New Year and be published almost simultaneously in Chinese by the CCRTVU Press. It summarises the successes and failures of the global campaign to achieve Education for All in order to argue, with examples, that the large scale use of ODL in secondary schooling and teacher education will be necessary if the Millennium and Dakar goals are to be achieved.

3. Programme

This has been a productive quarter for the programme.

3.1 Education Sector

The Education Sector has been particularly busy with work related to additional budget contributions such as Open Education Resources (OER) for open schooling initiative (The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation), the Child Friendly Schools project (UNICEF) and capacity building through the Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth (VUSSC) (Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation – CFTC). All this work is in the mainstream of the programme and its outputs will contribute to the corporate-level outcomes planned for this triennium.

3.1.1 Open Schooling

Five capacity-building workshops were held during this quarter for OER programmes in Lesotho, Seychelles, Trinidad & Tobago and Zambia funded by The Hewlett Foundation. Two of the workshops were for the development of print-based materials, and three of the workshops were to convert print-based to online materials. The first five sets of print based materials are ready. The training on Moodle (open source Learning Management System) for five countries that began in the previous quarter has been completed.

Forty participants from 21 countries attended the Inaugural Meeting of the Commonwealth Open Schooling Association (COMOSA) in Delhi. The Inaugural Executive Board, with an equal gender representation, was elected and the Founding Constitution was adopted. The Founding President is Dr. S.S. Jena, Chair of India's National Institute of Open Schooling.

A three-day workshop facilitated by a producer from the British Broadcasting Corporation (BBC) was held in October in Zambia to train students and teachers to write news reports.

Thirty-five senior officials from open schools attended a two-day OER/Copyright workshop for open schools in Delhi.

An evaluative study of the Zambia College of Distance Education (ZACODE) was conducted and a Plan of Action developed to assist the Ministry of Education in redesigning it as an open school.

A guide for private providers of distance education in Tanzania was developed for submission to the Ministry of Education.

A directory of secondary providers of distance education and open schooling was developed and can be found at on the COL wiki at www.colwiki.org/SLDEIC.

The Namibian College of Open Learning (NAMCOL) has completed a comprehensive manual entitled *Implementing a Multi-media Content Development Strategy in Open Schooling* and have offered to share this as a model for other countries, including up to ten days of on-site consultation at no charge, through COL and COMOSA. It is available at www.col.org/OpenSchooling.

3.1.2 Teacher Education

A workshop on quality assurance in teacher education was held in Jamaica from September 28 to October 1, 2009 in collaboration with the Joint Board of Teacher Education. It attracted 31 participants from teacher training colleges and universities.

The Child Friendly School project that is being implemented under the UNICEF-COL partnership aims at mainstreaming child-friendly models and approaches into pre-service and in-service teacher education curricula. Consultative meetings on the implementation of the project were held with ministries of education and partner institutions in Botswana, Lesotho, Malawi, Nigeria, Rwanda, South Africa, Swaziland and Zambia. Detailed work plans have been developed for each country.

3.1.3 Higher Education

COL organised a highly successful five-day intensive hands-on train-the-trainer workshop from September 28 to October 2, 2009 in Dhaka, Bangladesh. Twenty-one professors from seven countries teaching in the Commonwealth Executive MBA and MPA programme received training on how to write case studies.

Thirty-six participants from 10 countries attended a two-day debriefing workshop in Abuja, Nigeria, for representatives of universities that had expressed interest in the COL Review and Improvement Model (COL RIM) of institutional quality audit (IQA). Eight institutions indicated their interest in applying the COL RIM.

Athabasca University (Canada) is offering the COL Postgraduate Diploma Programme in Legislative Drafting. The programme was officially launched in the Legislative Assembly in Edmonton, Alberta in November 2009. COL's Higher Education Specialist was invited to join the dignitaries in attendance.

COL commissioned a desk study on Respect and Understanding (R&U) at the request of the consortium of seven universities that are collaborating in producing culturally appropriate R&U material for use in their respective jurisdictions. COL will receive a final report on the study in December 2009.

3.1.4 Virtual University for Small States of the Commonwealth

Five participants representing the Bahamas, The Gambia, Samoa, Sierra Leone and Tonga participated in the Team Leaders' orientation meeting which was held in Vancouver from October 19 to 23, 2009 in preparation for the Samoa course development workshop.

The 7th VUSSC International Training and Materials Development Workshop was held in Apia, Samoa from November 23 to December 11, hosted by the National University of Samoa. There were 25 participants from 14 countries: Antigua & Barbuda, The Bahamas, The Gambia, Jamaica, Lesotho, Maldives, Mauritius, Namibia, St Kitts & Nevis, Samoa, Seychelles, Sierra Leone, Tonga and Trinidad & Tobago. Participants developed content on Transport and Logistics with a focus on Stevedoring. The five study units related to: Personnel Safety, Cargo Safety, Cargo Handling, Cargo Operations and Security.

3.2 Livelihoods and Health Sector

Even though the Education Specialists in this sector have joined COL relatively recently, work in all four initiatives in this Sector, which covers all four regions of the Commonwealth is gathering momentum.

3.2.1 Skills Development

The main activity this quarter was to provide consultancy support to the Government of the Solomon Islands in developing a national policy and strategic framework for distance and flexible learning. The draft policy and strategic framework has been accepted by the Ministry of Education and Human Resource Development and is expected to be submitted to Parliament mid-2010.

The relationship with the African Medical and Research Foundation (AMREF) has been strengthened through continued support for curriculum development for Community Nursing. Support was provided to AMREF to hold a second workshop to finalise a curriculum for the BSc Nursing and BSc Mental Health by distance learning. This was attended by subject experts from eight universities in Kenya.

3.2.2 Learning for Farming

COL and the University of British Columbia conducted preliminary tests on the Mobile Phone based Learning Management System called LIVES (Learning through Interactive Voice Educational Systems).

Farmers' organisations, women's organisations, microfinance institutions and research institutions have come together to launch the Lifelong Learning for Farmers (L3F) initiative in Papua New Guinea. In Uganda, Makerere University Agriculture Research Institute Kabanyolo has linked the Batwa and Bakiga communities of Kabale District for blended learning in honey, potato and sorghum production. Similar initiatives have been launched in Mauritius where the National Productivity and Competitiveness Council is working with various secondary stakeholders in involving women in agriculture through open and distance learning. In India, a team of five members from the Centre for Environment Education and the Maharashtra Animal & Fishery Sciences University visited the Theni, Madurai and Dindigul districts to interact with village communities and participating institutions involved in L3F in order to gain a better understanding of L3F from a field perspective.

3.2.3 Healthy Communities

As a part of a regional competition on smallholder innovation, COL supported Farm Radio International to develop and run an online course in scriptwriting skills. One hundred and thirty broadcasters and rural development workers from Sub-Saharan Africa completed the course resulting in 65 new educational scripts.

Eight representatives of COL partner organisations from across the Commonwealth took part in a consultative meeting in Vancouver, where they developed plans to roll out community ODL programmes in different regions during the coming three-year period and drafted the framework for an online toolkit.

More than 50 local media representatives, healthcare workers and community members were trained in a series of workshops that resulted in two new collaborative health education programmes in Isabel Province in the Solomon Islands. Both the Provincial Government and the Ministry of Health are centrally involved in the activity.

COL supported the development of a new community learning programme about HIV/AIDS in Karagwe, Tanzania, with a variety of local and national partners.

3.2.4 *Integrating eLearning*

The completion of the Commonwealth Computer Navigator's Certificate was announced at CHOGM and the Learning and Teaching Support Materials, Version 1.0, have been distributed. The materials are available at www.col.org/ccnc.

In collaboration with ComSec, Microsoft and UNESCO, COL has initiated a policy development and implementation process in ICT integration for teachers in Guyana. The Ministry of Education and the Government of Guyana are supporting this initiative fully.

3.3 CEMCA

The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) is a preferred partner for community radio and has succeeded in drawing additional funding from two ministries of the Government of India. It has also expanded its regional profile and is active in five of the eight Commonwealth countries in South and Southeast Asia.

Encouraged by the success of using community radio to create awareness about health and nutritional issues among women, the Indian Department of Science and Technology has initiated a third phase of the *Science for Women* project. CEMCA conducted an orientation workshop for 27 newly established community radio stations on October 18-19, 2009.

As the nodal agency for the development of community radio in India, CEMCA held four state wide consultations in Tilonia-Rajasthan (November 8-9); Shillong-Meghalaya (November 13-14); Gurgaon-Haryana (November 23-24); and Chanderi-Madhya Pradesh (December 18-19) for the Ministry of Information and Broadcasting, Government of India.

The CEMCA Advisory Council, which I chair, met on December 1, 2009 in the Republic of Maldives. This was timed to coincide with the launch in Male on December 3 of the Internet Radio (IRadio) system that is to be provided to all schools in Maldives. This system has been developed by the Ministry of Education, CEMCA and the Open University

Malaysia. The IRadio will provide access to quality learning material across the atolls of the Maldives. The Vice President of the Maldives, the Honourable Mohammed Waheed, and the Minister of Education, the Honourable Mustafa Lufti, officiated at the event and I brought greetings from COL. The Open University Malaysia was represented by the Vice-Chancellor, Tan Sri Anuwar Ali, who is an Honorary Fellow of COL.

CEMCA attempts to develop powerful educational applications of ICT using inexpensive hardware and open software. A first success was *Easy Now*, which uses open source ICT tools to create multiple media educational content in nine formats at low cost. It is easy for teachers to use and they are already doing so in a number of tertiary institutions in India, Sri Lanka and other Asian countries.

CEMCA is now working on a low-cost educational computing device. Called the *EduFrame*, it is a blend of a netbook and a digital photo frame. The CEMCA team is experimenting with various types of motherboards and software in order to get the best combination of low cost and useful functionality. It uses the *EasyNow* platform for providing access to quality teaching/learning material developed in a learner friendly format and also lends itself to Internet browsing, email facilities and all office documentation and presentation support. Presently the team's *EduFrame* prototype, made from parts purchased at retail, costs \$75. The Government of Maldives is going to pilot test the prototype on an atoll with 30 school children. The aim is to create, by May 2010, a device that can provide all basic computing functions for a cost of about \$50 when manufactured in volume. CEMCA will make the designs freely available and allow the market to do the rest.

3.4 Presentations by Senior Colleagues

Our Vice President, Professor Asha Kanwar, was invited to speak at the 13th UNESCO-APEID International Conference and World Bank-KERIS High Level Seminar on ICT in Education held in Hangzhou, People's Republic of China in November 2009. The title of her paper was *ICTs in Higher Education: Who Stands to Gain?*

The Director, Knowledge Management and Information Technology, Paul West, attended a meeting of the University Consortium for small and Island States (UCSIS) in Jamaica and presented the VUSSC experience.

See www.col.org/speeches for these presentations.

4. Stakeholder Relations

During this quarter stakeholder relations have been further enriched by our new Honorary COL Advisors. They have already started sending valuable feedback and comments on the Three-Year Plan and my President's Quarterly Report.

4.1 Member Governments' Support

During this quarter two major donors, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, made their annual contributions. Other countries providing contributions include: Cyprus, Malta, St. Kitts & Nevis, St. Lucia (for 2008-2009), Seychelles and Swaziland, bringing the number of contributions to 27 countries. At this time last year, 25 countries had contributed to COL.

4.2 Focal Points

Draft Country Action Proposals 2009-2012 were sent to the Focal Points on December 1, 2009. They have been requested to send their comments by January 15, 2010 after which the proposals will graduate into Country Action Plans.

4.3 Honorary Advisors

Professor Veronica McKay (South Africa) and Mr. Desmond Bermingham (UK) have both accepted this honorary role. This completes our plan to appoint 12 Honorary Advisors this year. Professor Hazel Simmons-McDonald, a COL Honorary Advisor in the Caribbean, has now been appointed to the post of Pro Vice-Chancellor and Principal, Open Campus, University of West Indies. She was previously Pro Vice-Chancellor, Non-Campus Countries and Distance Education.

4.4 Congratulatory Letters

Congratulatory letters were sent to various people who were newly elected or appointed to senior posts in Member States, including the President, Minister of Education and Minister of Foreign Affairs of Botswana, the Sri Lankan and the Ghanaian High Commissioners to Canada.

5. Finances

5.1 Revenue

COL has received a total of \$5.25 million in voluntary contributions from Commonwealth member governments since the beginning of the financial year starting July 1, 2009. This represents over 60% of the annual funding forecast from member governments for this fiscal year. Canada's contribution, when received, will bring this figure to over 90%.

Contributions in the following sums were received from member governments in the second quarter: Cyprus - \$18,619; Malta - \$15,750; New Zealand - \$622,240; St. Kitts & Nevis - \$11,600; St. Lucia - \$19,006; Seychelles - \$17,490; Swaziland - \$31,800; and the United Kingdom (UK) - \$1,932,260. A Memorandum of Understanding was signed in this quarter with the UK's Department for International Development confirming support to

COL over the life of COL's new Three-Year Plan for 2009-2012 at a level of £3.3million (£1.1 million annually).

These levels of funding continue to support my optimism that the global economic downturn will not impact COL's funding levels adversely over the life of the Plan. We were encouraged by the call from Ministers in the 17CCEM communiqué for countries to continue their financial support to COL and more recently by comments made about COL at CHOGM that I mentioned earlier.

Additional contributions – grants (and special projects) and fee-for-service contracts – continue to form an integral part of the financing of the budget for 2009-2010 and we estimate that the target of at least 20% of COL's overall revenues will be achieved from this source.

5.1.1 Grants and special projects

Work is ongoing under three major grants with expected revenues as follows: from the Commonwealth Fund for Technical Co-operation (CFTC) for VUSSC (£300,000 in 2009-2010 in year four of a four-year grant); from UNICEF for Mainstreaming Child Friendly School Models (\$700,000 in 2009-2010) and from The William and Flora Hewlett Foundation for Open Educational Resources and Learning4Content (\$450,000 in 2009-2010).

5.1.2 Fee-for-service contracts

COL entered into one new agreement this quarter with an international development agency to provide eLearning services totalling US\$109,000, and a smaller contract financed by the European Commission to assist the Solomon Islands in developing a distance and flexible learning policy. Over \$600,000 in revenues is forecast for the year from the eLearning services with over \$300,000 recognised by the end of the second quarter. Full cost recovery was achieved in 2008-2009 with a surplus of about \$20,000 generated. We are aiming for a similar or greater surplus this year.

5.2 Cash Flow

COL's cash position remains strong with a steady stream of funding received to date. COL began the new fiscal year on July 1, 2009 with cash of \$10.5 million, before commitments and liabilities, with current levels of cash increasing to about \$12 million. Of this amount, \$1.7 million is restricted in accordance with the cash reserve policy to protect against any possible shortfalls in expected revenues; about \$3 million is to be on hand each year to meet approximately four months of activity until revenues materialise; and \$1 million is needed to meet current liabilities.

This level of cash will enable COL to deal with any downturns in funding, should they occur, while ensuring that activity levels are maintained. We continue to monitor the

health of the banks/financial institutions that we use and limit our exposure to foreign currencies while making prudent financial decisions about the use of COL's resources.

5.3 Expenditures

Using July through November 2009 figures (the December data is not yet finalised), we estimate that approximately \$5 million or 45% of the \$11.2 million budget will have been spent or committed to meet programme and organisational management activities, staffing costs and office, site & IT costs by the end of the second quarter. The budget for 2009-2010 includes \$2.15 million of expenditures related to additional contributions.

6. Human Resources

6.1 Staff Changes

6.1.1 Arrivals

Ms. Kris Roberts joined COL in November 2009 for a temporary period as Knowledge Management Coordinator to replace Ms. Helen Askounis while she is on maternity leave.

6.1.2 Movements

Ms. Tatiana Anestik, Knowledge Management Assistant, returned from maternity leave in November 2009. Ms. Michele Gocolay, her replacement while on leave, departed COL in the same month.

Ms. Alex Hennig, Designer and Production Coordinator departed COL in December 2009 to relocate to the interior of British Columbia.

6.1.3 Recruitment

Recruitment for the Designer and Production Coordinator position which became vacant in December 2009 has been completed. Ms. Denise Tremblay will leave her position at the Legal Services Society of British Columbia to take up this position at COL on January 18, 2010.

COL has begun the recruitment process for the Director, Technology and Knowledge Management position which will become vacant under the rotation policy at the end of June 2010.

7. Information Technology & Knowledge Management

COL's new Knowledge Base is being implemented for all event, mission and quarterly reports produced by staff. The system will help COL compile information about all contacts between COL staff, Member States and other stakeholders. A key step in strengthening COL's institutional memory, it will facilitate and expedite the creation of country and initiative reports.

COL's IT systems have been given a 'deep scan' for Trojan horses and viruses, which also served to stress-test all IT equipment. The process identified a range of problems that have been corrected.

After investigating the feasibility of implementing a virtual server infrastructure contracts have now been signed to implement a virtual machine system. This new system will comprise four physical machines, which will be able to run up to 15 virtual servers. This significantly improves effectiveness of equipment use and strengthens COL's ability to provide for improved backups, new servers and the replacement of aging physical servers with new virtual servers over the next few years.

Selected servers are hosted on the Internet ("cloud servers") in the USA and system administration support is contracted with an IT specialist in Kenya. Daily contact between Vancouver and Nairobi enables a quick turn-around on IT service requests. This combined with the cost-effective and high up-time offered by hosting services in the USA shows the strengths of the global Internet. COL's virtual learning environments (Moodle) are also hosted in this way.

A redesigned Intranet, migrated to COL's new Microsoft SharePoint platform, was deployed in December, replacing the old Jahia (open source platform) site. The new site provides a development path over several years that will enable COL to better support the transfer of certain manual processes into Intranet work-flow systems. The new Intranet also provides online collaboration tools.

I reported previously on the creation of a workshop manual for the training of IT Managers. This has now been re-developed into a Moodle course that will be piloted in early 2010. It will expand training opportunities for IT management in ODL institutions throughout the Commonwealth, which will enable institutions to take advantage of increasing Internet access and the development of eLearning.

8. Sixth Pan-Commonwealth Forum on Open Learning (PCF6)

PCF6 will be held from 24 to 28 November 2010 at Le Méridien Cochin Resort & Convention Centre, Kochi, Kerala, India.

PCF6 sub-themes have now been finalised and a website is now live at www.col.org/pcf6. An e-mail news bulletin was distributed in December to point people to

the site where the themes are outlined and the process for submitting abstracts is explained (deadline is January 31, 2010).

Theme: *Access & Success in Learning: Global Development Perspectives.*

Sub-Themes are:

1. Social Justice
 - Access to Justice: Life, Liberty and Livelihood
 - Scaling up Quality Education for All
 - Education and Employment of Persons with Disabilities
 - Assistive and Affordable Technologies
2. Community Development
 - Community based Learning and Outreach
 - Open Education Resources: Models to Choose Adopt and Adapt
 - Innovative Pathways to Knowledge Society
3. Skills Development
 - Skills Development for National Development
 - Global Development Discourses; North-South Dialogues
 - Regional Co-operation: Who can benefit from whom?
4. Formal Education
 - Revamping Teacher Education
 - Open Schooling
 - Technologies for Scaling up ODL programmes
 - Quality Issues

9. Visitors to COL

October

Our former Board Member, Ms. Denise Chong, visited COL on October 6, 2009 and gave a reading from her new book *Egg on Mao* to COL colleagues. There was a lively discussion followed by a reception.

Ms. Brenda Barbour, the Program Manager, Human Resources and Skills Learning Office, Writing and Speaking Skills Program of The World Bank Group, visited COL from October 6-8, 2009.

In preparation for VUSSC's November/December course development workshop on Port Management and Stevedoring in Apia, Samoa, the team leaders for the event met in Vancouver from October 19-23, 2009: Glenward A. Bain (Bahamas), Fatu Tiperio

(Samoa), Philip Grey Johnson (The Gambia), Josephus Choe Mamie Jr. (Sierra Leone) and Sateki Manu (Tonga).

Representatives of the MasterCard Foundation: Ms. Reeta Roy, President; Ms. Peggy Woo, Chief Operating Officer; and Ms. Alpha Abebe, Associate Program Manager, Youth Learning, visited COL on October 26. The Foundation has a large fund for education and training and came to explore how COL could help them in training youth in entrepreneurial skills. They are in the process of developing a strategy and will continue their discussions with us. We owe this promising contact to former COL Board Member Desmond Bermingham.

As noted above, COL hosted a consultative planning workshop with our media-focussed partners as part of our Healthy Communities programme: Njuki Githethwa (Kenya), Joke van Kampen (Story Workshop, Malawi), David Leeming (Solomon Islands), Ekta Mittal (Maraa, India), Patrick Wade Prendergast (CARIMAC/The University of the West Indies), Hara Prasad Padhy (Communication Development Division, UNESCO), Rukmini Vemraju (CEMCA) and Gail White (Media and Training Centre for Health, South Africa).

November

Dr. Didacus Jules, Registrar of the Caribbean Examinations Council (Barbados) and his colleague, Guy Hewitt, visited COL from November 2-4, 2009 to discuss further collaborations with COL. We look forward to a renewal of our successful partnership with the Council.

10. Publications/Resources

Connections/EdTech News, October 2009, Vol. 14, No. 3
(www.col.org/connections).

Mobile Technologies in Open schools, edited by Sanjaya Mishra
(www.col.org/OpenSchooling).

All currencies are in Canadian dollars unless otherwise indicated.

*Sir John Daniel
President & Chief Executive Officer
December 31, 2009*