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About INFOBITS

Infobits is an electronic service of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill ITS Teaching and Learning's Center for Instructional Technology. Each month the CIT's Information Resources Consultant monitors and selects from a number of information and instructional technology sources that come to her attention and provides brief notes for electronic dissemination to educators.

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"NO SIGNIFICANT DIFFERENCE" REVISITED

For many years Thomas L. Russell, Director Emeritus of the Office of Instructional Telecommunications at North Carolina State University, has compiled quotations from research reports, summaries, and papers to demonstrate that using technology to deliver instruction is no better and no worse than other methods. Richard Clark, in his article "Media Will Never Influence Learning" (*Educational Technology Research and Development*, vol. 42, no. 2, 1994, pp. 21-29), advised researchers to "give up your enthusiasm for the belief that media attributes cause learning." Now Thomas R. Ramage (Associate Vice President, Parkland College, Champaign, IL) revisits the issue in "The 'No Significant Difference' Phenomenon: A Literature Review" (*e-Journal of Instructional Science and Technology*, vol. 5, no. 1, April 2002) and attempts to answer the question "Does technology impact learning?" The article is available online at http://www.usq.edu.au/electpub/e-jist/docs/html2002/ramage_frame.html

Russell's website, "The 'No Significant Difference Phenomenon'" is available at

<http://teleeducation.nb.ca/nosignificantdifference/>

His research has also been published as *The No Significant Difference Phenomenon* (Montgomery, AL: International Distance Education Certification Center, 1999). For more information, go to

<http://www.idecc.org/IDECCorderform.pdf>

e-Journal of Instructional Science and Technology (e-JIST) is published by the Distance Education Centre, University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Queensland 4350, Australia; Web:

<http://www.usq.edu.au/dec/>

Current and back issues of *e-JIST* are available at no cost at <http://www.usq.edu.au/electpub/e-jist/>

RECENT ARTICLES ON TEACHING WITH TECHNOLOGY: ADOPTERS AND OPTIMISTS

"Commonsense Ideas from an Online Survivor" by Herman D. Lujan

EDUCAUSE Review, vol. 37, no. 2, March/April 2002

<http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/erm0222.pdf>

"Many myths surround technology and its role in teaching and learning. One myth is that online instruction requires big bucks. It does not. . . . Another myth concerns the view that online instruction is great for the pre-academic experience . . . but that online instruction cannot serve 'real education' well." In this article Lujan debunks these and other myths of online education.

EDUCAUSE Review [ISSN 1527-6619] is a bimonthly print magazine which explores developments in information technology and education. *EDUCAUSE Review* is published by EDUCAUSE, 4772 Walnut St., Suite 206, Boulder, CO 80301-2538 USA; tel: 303-449-4430; fax: 303-440-0461; email:

info@educause.edu; Web: <http://www.educause.edu/>

Articles from current and back issues are available on the Web at

<http://www.educause.edu/pub/er/erm.html>

"Online Education Must Capitalize on Students' Unique Approaches to Learning, Scholar Says" by Michael Arnone

The Chronicle of Higher Education, March 4, 2002

<http://chronicle.com/free/2002/03/2002030401u.htm>

In a recent interview, Nishikant Sonwalkar, principal educational architect at the Education Media Creation Center at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, says "online learning provides tremendous opportunity for providing pedagogical choices to learners that cannot be provided by a single professor or teacher in a classroom situation. Online education provides a unique opportunity to use multiple representations of knowledge in terms of media. At the same time, it also provides opportunity to sequence this knowledge in a way so that it makes more pedagogical sense, by providing different learning strategies."

The Chronicle of Higher Education [ISSN 0009-5982] is published weekly by The Chronicle of Higher Education, Inc., 1255 Twenty-third Street, NW, Washington, DC 20037 USA; tel: 202-466-1000; fax: 202-452-1033; Web: <http://chronicle.com/>

RECENT ARTICLES ON TEACHING WITH TECHNOLOGY: SKEPTICS AND PESSIMISTS

"High-tech teaching could be 'suicidal,' scholar says" by John Sanford

Stanford Report, February 11, 2002

<http://www.stanford.edu/dept/news/report/news/february13/gumbrecht-213.html>

Speaking at the Stanford University Center for Teaching and Learning's "Award-Winning Teachers on Teaching" series, Hans Ulrich Gumbrecht, Albert Guerard Professor of Literature, said, "I think this enthusiastic and sometimes naive and sometimes blind pushing toward the more technology the better, the more websites the better teacher and so forth, is very dangerous -- [that it] is, indeed, suicidal."

Stanford Report is published daily by the Stanford University News Service, 425 Santa Teresa Street, Stanford, CA 94305-2245 USA; tel: 650-723-2558; email: stanford.report@forsythe.stanford.edu; Web: <http://www.stanford.edu/dept/news/report/>

"Philosopher's Critique of Online Learning Cites Existentialists (Mostly Dead)" by Michael Arnone

The Chronicle of Higher Education, March 15, 2002

<http://chronicle.com/free/2002/03/2002031501u.htm>

Hubert L. Dreyfus, a professor of philosophy at the University of California at Berkeley, "argues that the Internet's promise of extending and improving human interaction through the digital medium isn't everything it's cracked up to be. . . . To prove his point, Mr. Dreyfus calls on existentialist philosophers

from the 19th and 20th centuries, most of whom never saw a computer or heard of the Internet."

"Oversold and Underused: Why Faculty Don't Use Computers in the Classroom" by Larry Cuban
AFT On Campus, March 2002
http://www.aft.org/publications/on_campus/march02/technology.html

While affirming that most academics make great use of computer technology in their writing, research, and communication, Cuban argues that "University promoters of computers for instruction need to downsize their expectations for deep changes in pedagogy or seriously examine other factors that influence how professors teach." He believes that "[t]raditional forms of teaching seem to have been relatively untouched by the enormous investment in technologies that universities have made in recent decades."

AFT On Campus is published eight times a year by the American Federation of Teachers, 555 New Jersey Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20001 USA; tel: 202-879-4400; email: online@aft.org; Web: <http://www.aft.org/>
Current and back issues are available at no cost at http://www.aft.org/publications/on_campus/index.html

HIGHER EDUCATION INSTITUTIONS AND THE CORPORATE MODEL

"As institutions of higher education throughout the US and abroad have adopted the corporate model, 'efficiency' and profit have been emphasized, while students have been redefined as 'customers,' 'consumers,' and 'clients.' In reality, what we are currently witnessing, as the result of this corporate paradigm, is the destruction of American higher education." In "Higher Education and the Corporate Paradigm: the Students are the Losers" (*Workplace*, issue 4.2, February 2002) Zuleyma Tang-Martinez (professor of Biology and Women's Studies, University of Missouri, St. Louis) argues that this model leads to putting the requirement of profit before the needs of students, creates a threat to the tenure system, and promotes distance education as a cheap path to degrees. The article is available on the Web at <http://www.louisville.edu/journal/workplace/tang-martinez.html>

Workplace: A Journal for Academic Labor is published by a "collective of 50 scholars in critical higher education" on a website hosted by the University of Louisville (Kentucky, USA). For more information and back issues, link to <http://www.louisville.edu/journal/workplace/>

Tom Moore, dean of Babson College's School of Executive Education, writes: "The popular notion of a new graduate entering 'the real world' points to the fact that we commonly view academia and the corporate environment as two disparate, almost polarized communities. The perception may be that universities focus on theory while businesses concentrate on practice. And to combine the two--to influence academic curriculum on behalf of corporate needs--has traditionally been frowned upon as a corruption of pure academic purpose." In "Tailor-Made Degrees: Customized Corporate Education" (*Syllabus*, vol. 15, no. 8, March 2002, pp. 30-1, 33), Moore describes how Babson created a school that can be customized to meet individual corporation's needs while students benefit from both e-learning and face-to-face instruction experiences. The article is available online at <http://www.syllabus.com/syllabusmagazine/article.asp?id=6135>

Syllabus [ISSN 1089-5914] is published monthly by 101communications, LLC. Annual subscriptions are free to individuals who work in colleges, universities, and high schools in the U.S. Contact Syllabus Press, 345 Northlake Drive, San Jose, CA 95117-1261 USA; tel: 408-261-7200; fax: 408-261-7280; email: info@syllabus.com; Web: <http://www.syllabus.com/>

In his book, *Higher Ed, Inc: The Rise of the For-Profit University* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University

Press, 2001), Richard S. Ruch writes, "I must confess that until a few years ago I thought that all proprietary institutions were the scum of the academic earth. I could not see how the profit motive could properly coexist with an educational mission. While I did not know exactly why I believed this, I was certain in my conviction that non-profit status was noble, just as the profession of education is noble, and that to be for-profit meant to be in it for the money, which was corrupting and ignoble." Based on his subsequent experiences with for-profit colleges and universities, Ruch re-examines these assumptions.

The first chapter of the book is available online at <http://www.press.jhu.edu/press/books/titles/s01/s01ruhi.htm>

Recommended Reading

"Recommended Reading" lists items that have been recommended to me or that *Infobits* readers have found particularly interesting and/or useful, including books, articles, and websites published by Infobits subscribers. Send your recommendations to kotlas@email.unc.edu for possible inclusion in this column.

Co-author (and *Infobits* subscriber) Alfred Bork recommends this new book:

Tutorial Distance Learning: Rebuilding Our Educational System

By Alfred Bork (Department of Information and Computer Science, University of California, Irvine) and Sigrun Gunnarsdottir (Research Department, Iceland Telecom, Reykjavik)

New York: Kluwer Academic/Plenum Publishers, 2001

ISBN 0-306-46644-9

More information: <http://www.wkap.nl/prod/b/0-306-46644-9>

"The book begins with the problems and goals of learning. It considers possible forms of distance learning, looking at the variables involved, current examples of distance learning, and possible future forms including examples from science fiction. It then investigates student interactions, considering both frequency of interactions and the quality of each interaction. Programs developed in the Educational Technology Center at the University of California, Irvine, illustrate the critical idea of tutorial learning with computers. Production of tutorial learning material and costs for a student hour of learning is discussed. The book ends with suggestions for future progress."

Chapters 1-3 (in PDF format) are available for downloading at no charge at <http://www.wkap.com/tdl/>