

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.

[Are Instructors Essential?](#)

[Synchronous Collaboration Tools](#)

[Simulation Software and Physical Collaboration](#)

[Online Facilitation E-Book](#)

[EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative](#)

[Deliberations Website Revived](#)

[Recommended Reading](#)

ARE INSTRUCTORS ESSENTIAL?

"In the commercial sector, learner-content interaction is often seen as the only essential learning transaction, with instructors viewed as a cost rather than a necessity." With courseware software, online discussion tools, and instructional designers performing many tasks related to instruction, what is left for instructors to do? This question was recently discussed in a Sloan-C forum. In "Are Instructors Essential?" (*Sloan-C View*, vol. 4, issue 5, May 2005, pp. 5-6), forum participants cited many roles for instructors, including:

-- Meaning makers: "explaining how and why information is important, helping learners integrate disparate content and make sense of it so that information can become 'knowledge and maybe even wisdom'"

-- Growth agents: "pushing [learners] . . . 'beyond their level of comfort and into areas of improvement'"

-- People builders: "instructors serve as a bridge—in some situations, the only bridge—between learners and the society in which they seek a place"

The article is online at <http://www.aln.org/publications/view/v4n5/blended4.htm>.

Sloan-C View: Perspectives in Quality Online Education [ISSN: 1541-2806] is published by the Sloan Consortium (Sloan-C). For more information, contact: Sloan Center for OnLine Education (SCOLE), Olin College of Engineering and Babson College, Olin Way, Needham MA 02492-1245 USA; tel: 781-292-2524; fax: 781-292-2505; email: publisher@sloan-c.org; Web: <http://www.sloan-c.org/>.

Sloan-C is a consortium of institutions and organizations committed "to help learning organizations continually improve quality, scale, and breadth of their online programs according to their own distinctive missions, so that education will become a part of everyday life, accessible and affordable for anyone, anywhere, at any time, in a wide variety of disciplines." Sloan-C is funded by the Alfred P. Sloan

SYNCHRONOUS COLLABORATION TOOLS

"Most of us experience more satisfying interactions when we can see and hear each other in the same space and at the same time. While online interactions support flexibility and convenience, synchronicity provides for more efficient and natural interaction." In "Designing for the Virtual Interactive Classroom" (*Campus Technology*, vol. 8, no. 9, May 2005, pp. 20, 22-3), Judith V. Boettcher reviews several synchronous collaboration tools used for Web or video conferencing, interactive classrooms, and screen sharing. She presents several scenarios and which tools are most appropriate for each situation. The article is online at <http://www.campus-technology.com/article.asp?id=11046>.

Campus Technology [ISSN: 1089-5914] is a monthly publication focusing exclusively on the use of technology across all areas of higher education. Subscriptions to the print version are free to qualified U.S. subscribers. For more information, contact: Campus Technology, 101communications LLC, 9121 Oakdale Ave., Suite 101, Chatsworth, CA 91311 USA; tel: 818-734-1520; fax: 818-734-1522; Web: <http://www.campus-technology.com/>.

SIMULATION SOFTWARE AND PHYSICAL COLLABORATION

Laboratory dissections provide opportunities not only for subject-matter learning, but also opportunities for cooperative learning. In "Virtual Dissection and Physical Collaboration" (*First Monday*, vol. 10, no. 5, May 2005), Kenneth R. Fleischmann uses the example of dissection simulation software to illustrate how such educational tools can limit a student's learning experience. By focusing on human-computer interaction rather than human-human interaction, the software leaves out the socialization component that is part of traditional lab practice. Until these tools are redesigned to encourage collaboration, Fleischmann gives suggestions for adapting these tools to provide more interaction among students. The paper is available online at http://firstmonday.org/issues/issue10_5/fleischmann/index.html.

First Monday [ISSN 1396-0466] is an online, peer-reviewed journal whose aim is to publish original articles about the Internet and the global information infrastructure. It is published in cooperation with the University Library, University of Illinois at Chicago. For more information, contact: First Monday, c/o Edward Valauskas, Chief Editor, PO Box 87636, Chicago IL 60680-0636 USA; email: ejv@uic.edu; Web: <http://firstmonday.dk/>.

For more thoughts on educational software, see also:

"Next-Generation Educational Software: Why We Need It & a Research Agenda for Getting It" by Andries van Dam, Sascha Becker, and Rosemary Michelle Simpson
EDUCAUSE Review, vol. 40, no. 2, March/April 2005, pp. 26-8, 30-4, 36, 38, 40 42-3
<http://www.educause.edu/ir/library/pdf/ERM0521.pdf>

ONLINE FACILITATION E-BOOK

"How do people make the transition to facilitating online? What have they learned about it? What issues do they struggle with? Why do they do it?" Tammy Dewar collected their "stories" and presents them in *Keyboard Voices: Reflections on Online Facilitation and Community Building* (Calliope Learning, 2003). The e-book is available at no cost at <http://www.calliopelearning.com/resources/papers/Keyboard.pdf>, and permission is granted to distribute electronic versions in its entirety and without modification.

EDUCAUSE LEARNING INITIATIVE

EDUCAUSE announced in May that its teaching and learning program, the National Learning Infrastructure Initiative (NLII), has a new focus and a new name -- EDUCAUSE Learning Initiative (ELI) - with the mission of advancing learning through IT innovation. Programs and services include extensive online resources; member-only Web seminars; and the "7 Things You Should Know About..." publication series, which provides "concise information on emerging learning practices and technologies." For more information about ELI program themes, activities, and membership go to <http://www.educause.edu/eli/>.

The first offering in the "7 Things You Should Know About..." series, "Social Bookmarking," addresses a "community-or social-approach to identifying and organizing information on the Web. Social bookmarking involves saving bookmarks one would normally make in a Web browser to a public Web site and 'tagging' them with keywords." The paper is available online at <http://www.educause.edu/LibraryDetailPage/666?ID=ELI7001>.

EDUCAUSE is a nonprofit association whose mission is to advance higher education by promoting the intelligent use of information technology. For more information, contact: EDUCAUSE, 4772 Walnut Street, Suite 206, Boulder, CO 80301-2538 USA; tel: 303-449-4430; fax: 303-440-0461; email: info@educause.edu; Web: <http://www.educause.edu/>.

DELIBERATIONS WEBSITE REVIVED

The "Deliberations on Learning and Teaching in Higher Education" website has been inactive for a couple of years. The site was recently redeveloped and moved to a new home. The website is now based in the Centre for Academic Professional Development (CAPD) at London Metropolitan University and is currently funded and fully supported by the university. Content includes extracts of published articles; case studies; articles, comments, and discussion contributed by readers; and links to related resources.

For more information, contact: The Editor, Deliberations, Room 27b, London Metropolitan University, 31 Jewry Street, London EC3N 2EY United Kingdom; tel: 020-7320-3074; email: deliberations@londonmet.ac.uk; Web: <http://www.londonmet.ac.uk/deliberations/>.

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.

Infobits subscriber Arun-Kumar Tripathi (tripathi@amadeus.statistik.uni-dortmund.de) recommends his article in a recent issue of *Ubiquity*:

"Reflections on Challenges to the Goal of Invisible Computing"
Ubiquity: An ACM IT Magazine and Forum, vol. 6, issue 17, May 17 - May 24, 2005
http://www.acm.org/ubiquity/views/v6i17_tripathi.html

"Some years ago, I ran across an article on the Challenges to Invisible Computing in the November issue of *COMPUTER*, which has inspired me to write this short essay. In this essay, I shall try to explore the challenges of invisible computing and simplify them, to make them visible for research on Ubiquitous Computing. First of all, I will discuss what ubiquitous computing is and what it is not. Then, I will attempt

to refine some paramount issues of invisible computing: What are the impacts of this kind of computing in our society? What are the embedded computers and how are they of consequence to human beings?"

-- Arun-Kumar Tripathi

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