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PRODUCTION LINE PROFESSORS

"In higher education in the United States, teaching and research in the fields of language and literature are in a desperate condition. Laboring on the age-old axiom 'publish-or-perish,' thousands of professors, lecturers, and graduate students are busy producing dissertations, books, essays, and reviews. Over the past five decades, their collective productivity has risen from 13,000 to 72,000 publications per year. But the audience for language and literature scholarship has diminished, with unit sales for books now hovering around 300."

In the white paper "Professors on the Production Line, Students on their Own," Mark Bauerlein, professor of English at Emory University, argues that the trend for faculty to do more research and publishing translates into less time for motivating and mentoring students. The result is "less academic engagement" and a lack of balance between scholarship and instruction on the part of professors. While decrying the situation, Bauerlein presents several recommendations for improving the situation, including "creating a 'teacher track' in which doctoral students are trained and rewarded for generalist knowledge and multiple course faculty rather than a highly-specialized expertise."

The paper is available online at http://www.aei.org/docLib/20090317_Bauerlein.pdf.

The white paper is a publication of the American Enterprise Institute for Public Policy Research, a "private, nonpartisan, not-for-profit institution dedicated to research and education on issues of government, politics, economics, and social welfare." For more information, contact The American Enterprise Institute, 1150 Seventeenth Street, N.W., Washington, DC 20036 USA; tel: 202-862-5800; fax: 202-862-7177; Web: <http://www.aei.org/>.

See also:

"Unread Monographs, Uninspired Undergrads"

Inside Higher Ed, March 18, 2009

<http://www.insidehighered.com/news/2009/03/18/production>

Article about the paper plus readers' comments.

PAPERS ON DIGITAL LITERACY

"In the beginning of the 21st century, we are experiencing an interesting evolution of the demand for learning both by individuals, societies and education authorities. Evidently, the acrimonious relation between the education provision and the social mandates of growth (performance) and social inclusion is becoming extremely complex. Economic globalization and the emergence of what has been identified as the Knowledge Society go, hand-in-hand, with a gradually changing set of key competences. They have been feeding in the dialogue about academic and policy implementation of what some thinkers and stakeholders already have named as the Literacies of the 21st century."
-- Nikitas Kastis and Roberto Carneiro, eLearning Papers editorial

"Digital Literacy -- The Evolution of the 21st Century Literacies" is the topic of the latest issue of *eLearning Papers*

(no. 12, February 2009). Papers include:

"Digital Literacy for the Third Age: Sustaining Identity in an Uncertain World" by Allan Martin
-- digital literacy for older citizens

"A Digital Literacy Proposal in Online Higher Education: The UOC Scenario" by Montse Guitert and Teresa Romeu

"T-learning for Social Inclusion" by Chiara Sancin, Valentina Castello, Vittorio Dell'Aiuto, and Daniela Di Genova
-- instruction delivered through interactive digital television (IDTV)

"Designing E-Tivities to Increase Learning-to-Learn Abilities" by Maria Elisabetta Cigognini and Maria Chiara Pettenati

"How to Strengthen Digital Literacy? Practical Example of a European Initiative 'SPreaD'" by Michelle Veugelers and Petra Newrly

The issue is available online at <http://www.elearningpapers.eu/index.php?page=home&vol=12>.

eLearning Papers [ISSN 1887-1542] is an open access journal created as part of the elearningeuropa.info portal. The portal is "an initiative of the European Commission to promote the use of multimedia technologies and Internet at the service of education and training." For more information, contact: eLearning Papers, P.A.U. Education, Muntaner 262, 3rd, 08021 Barcelona, Spain; tel: +34 93 367 04 00; email: editorial@elearningeuropa.info; Web: <http://www.elearningpapers.eu/>.

REPORT ON COMPUTER-BASED ASSESSMENT

"Future international surveys are going to introduce new ways of assessing student achievements. Electronic tests, especially adaptive ones can be calibrated to the specific competence level of each student and become more stimulating, going much further than can be achieved with linear tests made up of traditional multiple choice questions. Simulations also provide better means of contextualising skills to real life situations and provide a more complete picture of the actual competence to be assessed."

The report "The Transition to Computer-Based Assessment: New Approaches to Skills Assessment and Implications for Large-scale Testing" (European Commission's Joint Research Centre Scientific and Technical Reports, 2009, edited by Friedrich Scheuermann and Julius Bjornsson) represents a combination of paper presentations from a 2008 research workshop along with additional articles that grew out of workshop discussions.

The themes of "The Transition to Computer-Based Assessment" workshop and the papers associated with it were:

- Comparison between paper and pencil tests and computer-based assessment
- Electronic tests and gender differences
- Adaptive vs. linear computer-based assessment.

The report is available online at <http://crell.jrc.it/RP/reporttransition.pdf>.

The report was produced by the Educational Testing Institute and CRELL.

CRELL (Centre for Research on Lifelong Learning), sponsored by the European Commission's Directorate General for Education and Culture, was established in order to "gather expertise in the field of indicator-based evaluation and monitoring of education and training systems. CRELL combines fields of economics, econometrics, education, social sciences and statistics in an interdisciplinary approach to research." For more information, see <http://crell.jrc.it/>.

The Educational Testing Institute is an independent institution funded by the state through the Iceland Ministry of Education, Science and Culture and is "responsible for organising, setting, and grading the nationally co-ordinated examinations and for undertaking comparative analysis of the educational system through participation in international surveys."

FACTORS INFLUENCING FACULTY CMS USE

In "Factors Influencing Faculty Use of Technology in Online Instruction: A Case Study" (OJDLA, vol. XII, no. 1, Spring 2009) authors Elizabeth Reed Osika, Rochelle Y. Johnson, and Rosemary Buteau report on a study they performed "to investigate faculty perceptions of the usefulness and importance of online courses, the factors that contribute to the decision of a faculty member to use the CMS [course management system] in their courses, and the barriers that exist which make the use of the CMS difficult." They found that faculty attitudes that presented barriers to adoption of online instruction included belief that:

"[T]he quality of online courses is not equivalent to traditional courses."

"[Online courses are] impersonal; no-face-to-face; no discussion; no substitute for being in class."

Their paper provides suggestions that universities can implement to overcome some of the factors that influence faculty who do not use online technology tools. The paper is available at

<http://www.westga.edu/~distance/ojdl/spring121/osika121.html>.

The *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration (OJDLA)* is a free, peer-reviewed quarterly electronic journal published by the Distance and Distributed Education Center, The State University of West Georgia, 1603 Maple Street, Carrollton, GA 30118 USA; email: distance@westga.edu; Web: <http://www.westga.edu/~distance/>.

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.

"Getting Serious About Research Online"

By Sara Kubik

Inside Higher Ed, March 20, 2009

<http://www.insidehighered.com/views/2009/03/20/kubik>

"[I]n 2006 the creator of Wikipedia advised us not to use the site as a source, and yet two years later he now wants to make the site more accepting to academic referencing by having "faculty-approved" sites. Also, wikis such as Scholarpedia claim to have content written by experts with a curator moderating all changes. Gray matter, it seems. If we are to use these quality online resources, while insisting on high standards for students, academics need to take seriously issues related to citing materials in media that didn't exist a generation ago more seriously."