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About INFOBITS

Infobits is an electronic service of The University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill Academic & Technology Networks' 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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GOOGLE SCHOLAR

This month the search service Google launched "Google Scholar," which provides searching for scholarly literature located on the Web. The service allows limiting searches specifically to academic materials, including peer-reviewed papers, theses, books, preprints, abstracts, and technical reports. Some of the material included is normally part of the "invisible Web" -- items publishers keep in databases that are only accessible to subscribers. Google has made arrangements with some publishers to provide access to these materials. To use Google Scholar, go to <http://scholar.google.com/>.

See also:

"Google Scholar Offers Access To Academic Information" by Danny Sullivan

Search Engine Watch, November 18, 2004

<http://searchenginewatch.com/searchday/article.php/3437471>

Sullivan points out some caveats to keep in mind when using this new service.

REPORT ON QUALITY AND EXTENT OF U.S. ONLINE EDUCATION

"Entering the Mainstream: The Quality and Extent of Online Education in the United States, 2003 and 2004" presents the findings of the second annual study, funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, on the state of online education in over 1,100 U.S. higher education institutions. Questions addressed in the report include:

-- Will online enrollments continue their rapid growth?

-- Are students as satisfied with online courses as they are with face-to-face instruction?

-- What role do schools see online learning playing in their long-term strategy?

-- What about the quality of online offerings: do schools continue to believe that it measures up?

The full text of the report is available online at <http://www.sloan-c.org/resources/survey.asp>.

The Sloan Consortium (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 Foundation. For more information, see <http://www.sloan-c.org/>.

MENTORS IN E-LEARNING ENVIRONMENTS

"The need for mentors within eLearning environments emerges when the faculty are constrained by their limited time to spend toward assisting students overcoming eLearning barriers, meeting student expectations and, simultaneously, assuming regular teaching responsibilities. Mentors can take up part of the faculty roles and serve as an intermediary between the faculty and the students to alleviate the faculty time limitation." In "The Roles of Mentors in Electronic Learning Environments" (*AACE Journal*, vol. 12, no. 3, pp. 331-42, 2004) Shujen L. Chang discusses the factors that impede effective online learning and the roles mentors play in alleviating these factors. She also provides guidelines for setting mentor roles, responsibilities, and contributions. The paper is available online at <http://www.aace.org/pubs/AACEJ/dispart.cfm?paperID=27>.

AACE Journal [ISSN 1551-3696], originally a print journal entitled Educational Technology Review, is a quarterly journal published online by the Association for the Advancement of Computers in Education. Current and back issues are available at <http://www.aace.org/pubs/aacej/>.

AACE is an "international, educational, and professional not-for-profit organization dedicated to the advancement of the knowledge, theory, and quality of learning and teaching, at all levels, with information technology." For more information, contact AACE, PO Box 3728, Norfolk, VA 23514 USA; tel: 757-623-7588; fax: 703-997-8760; email: info@aace.org; Web: <http://www.aace.org/>.

COMPUTER GAMES AND LEARNING

According to a recent article in *The Times Educational Supplement* (26 October 2004), "[c]omputer games should be taught in schools because they are good for children's development." Research by the Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Medias suggests that computer games can develop literacy skills and "help children learn concepts such as critical appreciation of narrative structure or character development which they might otherwise study in a novel." The Times article is available online at <http://www.tes.co.uk/2043023>.

The Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Medias is based within the London Knowledge Lab and is part of the Institute of Education, University of London. The Centre undertakes research, holds conferences and seminars, and publishes books and reports focusing on "new ways of empowering young people, both as critical consumers of media and as producers in their own right."

For more information contact: David Buckingham, Director, Centre for the Study of Children, Youth and Medias, Institute of Education, University of London, 20 Bedford Way, London WC1H 0AL UK; tel: +44 (0) 20 7612 6515; fax: +44 (0) 20 7612 6177; email: d.buckingham@ioe.ac.uk; Web: <http://www.ccsonline.org.uk/mediacentre/main.html>.

E-LEARNING ONLINE PRESENTATIONS

The University of Calgary Continuing Education sponsors Best Practices in E-Learning, a website that provides a forum for anyone working in the field to share their best practices. This month's presentations include:

-- "To Share or Not To Share: There is No Question" by Rosina Smith

Details a new model for permitting "the reuse, multipurposing, and repurposing of existing content"

-- "Effective Management of Distributed Online Educational Content" by Gary Woodill

"[R]eviews the history of online educational content, and argues that the future is in distributed content learning management systems that can handle a wide diversity of content types . . . identifies 40 different genres of online educational content (with links to examples)"

Presentations are in various formats, including Flash, PDF, HTML, and PowerPoint slides. Registered users can interact with the presenters and post to various discussion forums on the website. There is no charge to register and view presentations. You can also subscribe to their newsletter which announces new presentations each month. (Note: No archive of past months' presentations appears to be on the website.)

For more information, contact: Rod Corbett, University of Calgary Continuing Education; tel:403-220-6199 or 866-220-4992 (toll-free); email: rod.corbett@ucalgary.ca; Web: <http://elearn.ucalgary.ca/showcase/>.

NEW APPROACHES TO EVALUATING ONLINE LEARNING

"The clear implication is that online learning is not good enough and needs to prove its worth before gaining full acceptance in the pantheon of educational practices. This comparative frame of reference is specious and irrelevant on several counts . . ." In "Escaping the Comparison Trap: Evaluating Online Learning on Its Own Terms (*Innovate*, vol. 1, issue 2, December 2004/January 2005), John Sener writes that, rather than being inferior to classroom instruction, "[m]any online learning practices have demonstrated superior results or provided access to learning experiences not previously possible." He describes new evaluation models that are being used to judge online learning on its own merits. The paper is available online at <http://www.innovateonline.info/index.php?view=article&id=11&action=article>. You will need to register on the Innovate website to access the paper; there is no charge for registration and access.

Innovate [ISSN 1552-3233] is a bimonthly, peer-reviewed online periodical published by the Fischler School of Education and Human Services at Nova Southeastern University. The journal focuses on the creative use of information technology (IT) to enhance educational processes in academic, commercial, and government settings. Readers can comment on articles, share material with colleagues and friends, and participate in open forums. For more information, contact James L. Morrison, Editor-in-Chief, *Innovate*; email: innovate@nova.edu; Web: <http://www.innovateonline.info/>.

TOP 1000 MOST WIDELY-HELD LIBRARY BOOKS

OCLC Research, a division within the OCLC Online Computer Library Center, has compiled a list of the top 1000 titles owned by its 50,000+ member libraries. The top ten titles, in descending order, are the 2000 U.S. Census, the *Bible*, *Mother Goose*, *Divine Comedy*, Homer's *Odyssey* and *Iliad*, *Huckleberry*

Finn, Hamlet, Alice's Adventures in Wonderland, and Lord of the Rings. Many classics and canonical works of Western civilization and culture are represented, along with currently-popular works. You can view the list all 1000 titles at <http://www.oclc.org/research/top1000/>.

OCLC Online Computer Library Center is a "nonprofit, membership, computer library service and research organization dedicated to the public purposes of furthering access to the world's information and reducing information costs. More than 50,540 libraries in 84 countries and territories around the world use OCLC services to locate, acquire, catalog, lend and preserve library materials." For more information, go to <http://www.oclc.org/>.

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 Seb Schmoller (seb@schmoller.net) is coauthor of "Personalisation in Presentation Services," a report commissioned by the United Kingdom Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC). Personalisation is defined as "the ability of a Network Service to be shaped or re-shaped so as to better meet the individual needs or wants of a user." For example, when applied to portal applications, users are able to customize their view of the portal's layout and content based on their particular preferences. However, "[t]rue personalisation is more than allowing users to 're-skin' the interface or change the position of screen elements."

The report's findings and conclusions are based on literature reviews, interviews, workshops, and an email survey. The full report and related resources are available online at <http://www.therightplace.plus.com/jp/>.