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A UNIVERSITY IS NOT A BUSINESS, OR IS IT?

In "A University Is Not a Business (and Other Fantasies)" (*EDUCAUSE Review*, vol. 39, no. 2, March/April 2004, pp. 10–16) Milton Greenberg writes that treating the university like a business is viewed by many as the "ultimate sin." He challenges the academy's "underlying premise . . . that the application of managerial practices . . . in the conduct of the academic enterprise will infiltrate faculty prerogatives and restrict the freedom to teach and learn." Greenberg explains how academe must think about "its people, its property, and its productivity in business terms" to control its own future in an information-based economy. The article is available online at <http://www.educause.edu/pub/er/erm04/erm0420.asp>.

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DOES "BACKCHANNELING" COMPETE WITH OR COMPLEMENT LECTURES/SPEECHES?

Keeping students' attention during lectures is not a new problem. However, the combination of portable computing devices, wireless networking, and instant communication software have potential to add a new twist to lectures and conference presentations. In "Perspective: Speaking and Attention: It All Depends?" (*Cites & Insights: Crawford at Large*, vol. 4, no. 6, May 2004, p. 6; <http://cites.boisestate.edu/civ4i6.pdf>), Walt Crawford recounts his and others' reactions to people at a conference session who engaged in real-time text conversations, backchanneling or backchatting, so they could comment on a speaker's talk during the talk. Some argue that carrying on these side conversations is rude, disrupts the flow of the talk, and takes the audience's focus away from the person at the podium. Others see this multitrack communication as a way to be more engaged in the topic presented and believe that it just shifts the post-lecture chatter forward in time.

Cites & Insights: Crawford at Large [ISSN 1534-0937] is a free, online newsletter self-published by Walt Crawford, a senior analyst at the Research Libraries Group, Inc. Current and back issues are available on the Web at <http://cites.boisestate.edu/>. For more information contact: Walt Crawford, The Research Libraries Group, Inc., 2029 Stierlin Ct., Suite 100, Mountain View, CA 94043-4684 USA; tel: 650-691-

2227; email: wcc@notes.rlg.org; Web: <http://walt.crawford.home.att.net/>.

See also:

"Confessions of a Backchannel Queen" by Elizabeth Lane Lawley
mamamusings weblog, March 30, 2004
http://mamamusings.net/archives/cat_conferences.php

"In the Lecture Hall, A Geek Chorus" by Lisa Guernsey
The New York Times, July 24, 2003, p. G1

And in the "if you can beat them, join them" vein, see:

"In Class, the Audience Weighs In" by Katie Hafner
The New York Times, April 29, 2004
<http://www.nytimes.com/2004/04/29/technology/circuits/29hand.html>

Professors equipping their students with wireless keypads for classroom give-and-take say they make classes come alive.

[Editor's note: Access to recent *NYT* articles requires registration. There is no charge for registration. Access to older articles may require payment. Check with your campus library for free online access to *NYT* archives.]

ONLINE TEACHING EXPERIENCES

"How do instructors learn to teach online? What are their perceptions as they enter this new learning environment for the first time?" To find out, Dianne Conrad, assistant professor of adult education at the University of New Brunswick, interviewed five instructors in a Canadian university who were teaching online courses for the first time. Her interviews showed that the instructors drew upon their fact-to-face teaching experience, but that they "revealed very little awareness of issues of collaborative learning, of learners' social presence, or of the role of community in online learning environments." The details of Conrad's qualitative study are available in "University Instructors' Reflections on Their First Online Teaching Experiences" (*Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, vol. 8, issue 2, April 2004) at http://www.aln.org/publications/jaln/v8n2/v8n2_conrad.asp.

The *Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks (JALN)* [ISSN 1092-8235] is an electronic publication of The Sloan Consortium (Sloan-C). Current and back issues are available at <http://www.aln.org/publications/jaln/>.

For an account of online teaching from a veteran instructor, see "Less is More: Designing an Online Course" (*DEOSNEWS*, vol. 13, issue 4, April 2004; <http://www.ed.psu.edu/acsde/deos/deosnews/deosnews.asp>) by R. Thomas Berner, professor emeritus of journalism and American studies at the Pennsylvania State University.

DEOSNEWS is a monthly electronic journal established to promote distance education scholarship, research, and practice. It is sponsored by The American Center for the Study of Distance Education (ACSDE) at Pennsylvania State University. For more information, contact: Melody Thompson, Director, ACSDE, The Pennsylvania State University College of Education, 411 Keller Building, University Park, PA 16802-3202 USA; tel: 814-863-3764; fax: 814-865-5878; email: mmt2@psu.edu; Web:

<http://www.ed.psu.edu/acsde/deos/deosnews/deosarchives.asp>.

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.

Shalni Gulati, *Infobits* subscriber and PhD student in online learning and informal learning, has compiled an ebook report on her recent travels to nine U.S. institutions to learn about online learning developments in healthcare education in the USA. The travels were a result of a fellowship granted by the Winston Churchill Memorial trust in UK.

"Healthcare and other academics can read the report to review examples of learning strategies used in online courses to make learning more flexible and student centred. They may want to pursue the possibility of developing direct links with academics identified in the report and share future developments."

Gulati's report is available at no cost at <http://www.yourlearning.com/churchillreport.html>.

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