

# CIT Infobits

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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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## THE EDUCATED BLOGGER

According to David Huffaker (in "The Educated Blogger: Using Weblogs to Promote Literacy in the Classroom," *First Monday*, vol. 9, no. 6, June 2004), "blogs can be an important addition to educational technology initiatives because they promote literacy through storytelling, allow collaborative learning, provide anytime-anywhere access, and remain fungible across academic disciplines." In support of his position, Huffaker provides several examples of blogs being used in classroom settings. The paper is available online at [http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue9\\_6/huffaker/index.html](http://www.firstmonday.org/issues/issue9_6/huffaker/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](mailto:ejv@uic.edu); Web: <http://firstmonday.dk/>.

Suzanne Cadwell and Chuck Gray of the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill's Center for Instructional Technology have compiled two feature comparison tables that describe three blogging services and four blogging applications.

## Blogging Services Feature Comparison

Using a blogging service generally doesn't require any software other than a web browser. Users have no administrative control over the software itself, but have some control over a blog's organization and appearance. Depending on the particular service, blogs can be hosted either on the service's servers or on the server of one's choice (e.g., [www.unc.edu](http://www.unc.edu)). Users purchasing a paid account with a service typically will have no banner ads on their blogs, more features at their disposal, and better customer

support from the service. The Blogging Services Feature Comparison chart is available <http://www.unc.edu/cit/blogs/blogcomparison/services/>.

## Bloggging Applications Comparison

Downloadable bloggging applications require the user to have access to server space (e.g., [www.unc.edu](http://www.unc.edu)). Most of these applications are comprised of CGI scripts that must be installed and configured in a user's cgi-bin folder. Although they are packaged with detailed instructions, applications can be difficult to install, prohibitively so for the novice. Bloggging applications afford users fine-grained control over their blogs, and most applications are open-source or freeware. The Bloggging Applications Comparison chart is available at <http://www.unc.edu/cit/blogs/blogcomparison/applications/>.

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## WHAT HAPPENED TO E-LEARNING?

"Thwarted Innovation: What Happened to E-learning and Why" presents the results of the Weatherstation Project of The Learning Alliance at the University of Pennsylvania. This study sought to answer the question "Why did the boom in e-learning go bust?" Over an eighteen-month period authors Robert Zemsky, an education professor at the University of Pennsylvania, and William F. Massy, professor emeritus of education and business administration at Stanford University, tracked faculty and staff attitudes towards e-learning at six colleges and universities. Their findings challenged three prevalent e-learning assumptions:

- If we build it they will come -- not so;
- The kids will take to e-learning like ducks to water -- not quite;
- E-learning will force a change in the way we teach -- not by a long shot.

The complete report is available online, at no cost, in PDF format at <http://www.irhe.upenn.edu/Docs/Jun2004/ThwartedInnovation.pdf>.

The Learning Alliance is "a provider of educational research and leadership support services to presidents of accredited, non-profit two- and four-year colleges and universities. The Learning Alliance serves the mission of higher education institutions by providing its senior administrators with timely access to expertise, current research, and market data." For more information, contact: The Learning Alliance, 1398 Wilmington Pike, West Chester, PA 19382 USA; tel: 610-399-6601; fax: 815-550-8892; Web: <http://www.irhe.upenn.edu/index.php>.

The Weatherstation Project was conceived as "an antidote to those first descriptions of the market for e-learning, which were often warped by missing data and overly hopeful assumptions about how quickly new products would come to market and how receptive learners and instructors were likely to be."

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## STUDY OF ONLINE TEACHING WORKLOAD

In "Faculty Self-Study Research Project: Examining the Online Workload" (*Journal of Asynchronous Learning Networks*, vol. 8, issue 3, June 2004), Melody M. Thompson, Director of the American Center for the Study of Distance Education at Penn State, reports on a workload study that was designed to go beyond anecdotal testimony. In the project six faculty who were teaching online courses "stroved to identify those tasks that consumed a disproportionate amount of faculty time -- particularly time taken away from actual teaching/learning interactions with students." The study indicated that their workload "as measured by time on task, was comparable to or somewhat less than that for face-to-face courses."

The article is available online at [http://www.aln.org/publications/jaln/v8n3/v8n3\\_thompson.asp](http://www.aln.org/publications/jaln/v8n3/v8n3_thompson.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/>.

See previous articles in 2002 *CIT Infobits*:

"Online Teaching and the 24-Hour Professor"

<http://its.unc.edu/tl/infobits/bitmay02.html#1>

"More on Increased Faculty Workload and Online Technologies"

<http://its.unc.edu/tl/infobits/bitaug02.html#2>

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## THE AGE OF GOOGLE

Love it or hate it, we can't dismiss the influence Google and other commercial search services have had on information searching. Unfortunately, a major problem when relying on these services for scholarly research is the fact that many free scholarly resources are not included in their search results. For example, many universities' online book collections are never indexed by Google because its search engine can't access these databases. According to a recent article, "Libraries Aim to Widen Google's Eyes" (by Jeffrey R. Young, *The Chronicle of Higher Education*, vol. 50, issue 37, May 21, 2004, p. A1), this situation may soon change. Increased competition for market share among search engine providers is spurring increased competition for quality content, and scholars and researchers will be winners in this race to put quality over quantity. The article is available online at <http://chronicle.com/prm/weekly/v50/i37/37a00101.htm> (a *Chronicle* subscription is required for online access).

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To maintain its position in the field of Web search engines, the algorithm that Google uses to generate search results is a guarded secret. In "The Nature of Meaning in the Age of Google" (*Information Research*, vol. 9, no. 3, April, 2004), Terrence A. Brooks provides an overview of how Google works, an explanation of why traditional methods of indexing information can be ineffective in the "lawless meaning space of the open Web," and strategies for authors who want to maximize the visibility of their documents. The paper is available online at <http://informationr.net/ir/9-3/paper180.html>.

*Information Research* [ISSN 1368-1613] is a freely available, international, scholarly journal, dedicated to making accessible the results of research across a wide range of information-related disciplines. It is privately published by Professor T.D. Wilson, Professor Emeritus of the University of Sheffield, with in-kind support from the University and its Department of Information Studies. For more information, contact: Tom Wilson, Department of Information Studies, University of Sheffield, Sheffield S10 2TN, UK; tel: +44 (0)114-222-2642; fax: +44 (0)114-278-0300; email: [t.d.wilson@shef.ac.uk](mailto:t.d.wilson@shef.ac.uk); Web: <http://informationr.net/ir/>.

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## 2003 CAMPUS DESKTOP COMPUTING SURVEY

This is the fourteenth year that Kenneth C. Green, the founder and director of the Campus Computing Project and a visiting scholar at the Center for Educational Studies at Claremont Graduate University, has conducted a national survey of desktop (personal computers and workstations) computing and information technology in American higher education institutions. The data were provided by campus officials representing 559 two- and four-year public and private colleges and universities across the U.S. The survey enables colleges and universities to compare their academic computing capabilities with similar institutions. The data also show current patterns and future trends that can assist campus administrators in planning for technology innovations and growth. Issues of high concern to this survey's respondents included setting policies to deal with downloaded commercial content, planning for and deploying wireless networks (WiFi), and responding to continued budget cuts for academic technology.

A summary of the report, "The 2003 National Survey of Information Technology in U.S. Higher Education," is available online at <http://www.campuscomputing.net/>. The complete report costs \$37.00 (US) and can be ordered online at the same website. Summaries of reports from earlier years are also available online.

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## ACCESSIBLE DISTANCE EDUCATION BLOG

"Curb Cut Learning: Accessibility, Universal Design and Distance Education" is a blog set up by Christopher Phillips at the Institute for Community Inclusion to systematically review and archive resources related to accessible distance education. Topics covered include accessible design, course management systems, design standards, and event announcements. Curb Cut Learning is available at <http://www.communityinclusion.org/curbcut/>.

The Institute for Community Inclusion, based at the University of Massachusetts Boston, "supports the rights of children and adults with disabilities to participate in all aspects of the community." For more information, contact: Institute for Community Inclusion/UCEDD, UMass Boston, 100 Morrissey Blvd., Boston, MA 02125 USA; tel: 617-287-4300; fax: 617-287-4352; TTY: 617-287-4350; email: [ici@umb.edu](mailto:ici@umb.edu); Web: <http://www.communityinclusion.org/>.

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## EDITOR'S NOTE

Every day, just like most email addresses, [infobits@unc.edu](mailto:infobits@unc.edu) gets bombarded with spam. Fortunately, this email gets collected and deleted each day before anyone receives it. Unfortunately, on June 17, 2004, a couple of events coincided that caused a break down in this process. Someone on the Internet took advantage of an infected system or systems that had the Infobits email address and my email address in its address book. As a result, two email messages that appeared to come from me were mailed to the list. Their subject headings were "Incoming Message" and "Changes." Each message had a file attachment that contained a virus. Although the list was set so that only I could post messages, the emails fooled the list's system into thinking that the mail came from me. Therefore, the messages were sent to the list's subscribers.

Most subscribers' systems recognized the infected message and deleted the attachment or refused to send the message to the subscriber. Some subscribers, however, received the email. As soon as I was aware of the problem, I contacted those subscribers who got the message to warn them of the problem. We also further locked down the list so that even I cannot post newsletters without going through an additional approval procedure. This should prevent future occurrences of bogus email getting to the subscribers.

Please be assured also, that:

-- my system is not infected (I would have been placed in our university's penalty box if that were the case)

-- each night my system runs the Symantec virus checking tool using their latest virus definitions, and no viruses have been detected on my system

-- the list itself is not infected.

For future reference:

(1) I never, repeat NEVER, send out newsletters with attachments. So if you ever receive email that appears to be from me, and it contains an attachment, please delete it without reading it or opening the attachment.

(2) I only send out one email to the list per month, usually at the end of the month. So if you ever receive the monthly newsletter, and then get a second message from me, that second message is probably bogus. (I realize sometimes people get duplicate newsletters which, rather than being bogus, are resulting from mailserver glitches. This is a very infrequent occurrence.)

(3) I use consistent subject headings for my newsletter mailings. Every legitimate newsletter email will have a subject heading that follows this pattern: "CIT INFOBITS -- month year." If you receive email that purports to be addressed to the Infobits list and from me, and it does not follow my established pattern for subject headings, please delete it without reading it.

I apologize for the aggravation and disruption that you may have experienced from this incident. I hope that no further infections were caused by subscribers opening the attachment. Hopefully, most receiving sites killed the message before it reached individual mailboxes. That seems to be the case on our campus, since I never received a copy of the infected message in my inbox, and I normally get copies of my own newsletter postings. If you receive other bogus messages that appear to originate from the University of North Carolina - Chapel Hill campus, feel free to forward them to [postmaster@unc.edu](mailto:postmaster@unc.edu) so that we can try to track down the source.

According to our listserv's subscription statistics, no one unsubscribed to Infobits in June, despite the virus attack. I am gratified for the confidence that subscribers have in the newsletter!

--Carolyn Kotlas, *CIT Infobits* Editor

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