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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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E-LEARNING POLICY EXAMPLES

Instructors understand the importance of creating and distributing clear, explicit course policies to their students. These generally cover the course requirements and deadlines, absences and assignment make-up policies, and other "housekeeping" areas. When moving into the online environment, setting up policies can get more complicated. In "The Importance of Policies in E-Learning Instruction" (*EDUCAUSE Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2004, pp. 28-39), Shirley Waterhouse and Rodney O. Rogers provide a useful collection of sample policies that cover using the basic tools of online instruction. Their examples cover email use, discussion forum participation, online submission of assignments, and getting technical help. They also include a checklist for fair use of copyrighted materials and a student permission-to-use form. The article is available online at <http://www.educause.edu/apps/eq/eqm04/eqm0433.asp>.

EDUCAUSE Quarterly, *The IT Practitioner's Journal* [ISSN 1528-5324] is published by EDUCAUSE, 4772 Walnut Street, Suite 206, Boulder, CO 80301-2538 USA. Current and past issues are available online at <http://www.educause.edu/eq/>.

THE MULTIMEDIA PARADOX

"Dr. Richard Mayer's research proves that there are great benefits to using multimedia in the classroom. It also proves the opposite is true." In "The Multimedia Paradox" (*Presentations*, vol. 18, no. 9, September 2004, pp. 24-5, 28-9), Tad Simons explores the perennial problem of how we assess the impact of multimedia (or, for that matter, any technology) on learning. He discusses the research into this problem by Richard Mayer, a professor of psychology at the University of California at Santa Barbara. Some of Mayer's findings indicate that when text and graphics are combined student retention goes up an average of 42 percent; if the text is spoken rather than read by the students, retention increases by an average of 30 percent. The paradox that Mayer discovered is that "while a little multimedia may be a good thing, too much multimedia is often a bad thing." Too much multimedia may interfere with a student's ability to absorb the message and diminish the effectiveness of the medium.

The article is not available online, but subscriptions to the print version of *Presentations* are free. *Presentations: Technology and Techniques for Effective Communication* [ISSN 1041-9780] is published monthly by VNU Business Media, 50 S. Ninth St., Minneapolis, MN 55402 USA; tel: 612-333-0471; fax: 612-333-6526; Web: <http://www.presentations.com/>.

See also:

Multimedia Learning by Richard Mayer
Cambridge University Press, 2001
ISBN: 0521787491 (paperback) \$24.99
<http://us.cambridge.org/titles/catalogue.asp?isbn=0521787491>

STUDY SHOWS LAPTOPS IN THE CLASSROOM IMPROVE STUDENT LEARNING

A recent study of West Point first-year students, all of whom have laptop computers, examined teaching techniques, lessons learned, and student performance during the integration of laptops in teaching and learning psychology in the traditional classroom. The study found statistically-significant improvements in learning for student using laptops. A report of the study, "Miracle or Menace: Teaching and Learning with Laptop Computers in the Classroom" by James Efaw, Scott Hampton, Silas Martinez, and Scott Smith, is available online at <http://www.educause.edu/pub/eq/eqm04/eqm0431.asp> (*EDUCAUSE Quarterly*, vol. 27, no. 3, 2004, pp. 10-18).

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WHAT DO SCHOLARLY AUTHORS WANT?

The Centre for Information Behaviour and the Evaluation of Research (ciber) surveyed 91,500 senior authors published in an ISI-indexed journal in order to "enable publishers and libraries to make a sensible contribution, based on concrete evidence, to the increasingly heated debate over the future of the scholarly communication system, open access, etc." Nearly 4,000 senior researchers from 97 countries responded to the survey. The survey results, written by Ian Rowlands, Dave Nicholas, and Paul Huntingdon, are available in "Scholarly Communication in the Digital Environment: What Do Authors Want? Findings of an International Survey of Author Opinion: Project Report."

The survey found that authors want to be able to "target a very specific group of key readers, narrowcasting to those working on similar problems," which might indicate that more journals, rather than fewer, would be needed in some disciplines. Not surprisingly, they want to publish in "peer-reviewed, high impact" journals that offer refereeing and editing services. The much-discussed "Open Access" funding model that charges authors (or their institutions) for publishing services did not receive much support from the authors. Only 16% of the survey responders said they would pay more than US\$500 to have their papers published. The majority of those in the social sciences and arts and humanities fields responded that they would not be willing to pay anything. The report is available online at no cost at <http://ciber.soi.city.ac.uk/ciber-pa-report.pdf>.

ciber "seeks to inform by countering idle speculation and uninformed opinion with the facts. It engages in funded studies, contract research, scholarship and dissemination events in its areas of expertise." For more information, contact: Centre for Information Behaviour and the Evaluation of Research, Department of Information Science, City University, Northampton Square, London EC1V 0HB United

Kingdom; tel: 44 020 7040 8381; fax: 44 020 7040 8584; email: ciber@soi.city.ac.uk; Web: <http://ciber.soi.city.ac.uk/>.

See also:

"Journal Publishing: What Do Authors Want?"
by Ian Rowlands, Dave Nicholas, and Paul Huntingdon
<http://www.nature.com/nature/focus/accessdebate/31.html>

Nature's online series: "Access to the Literature: The Debate Continues"
<http://www.nature.com/nature/focus/accessdebate/>

"Open Access to Journals Won't Lower Prices" by John H. Ewing
The Chronicle of Higher Education, vol. 51, issue 6, October 1, 2004, p. B20
<http://chronicle.com/prm/weekly/v51/i06/06b02001.htm>
(Subscription required to access article online.)

NEW PUBLICATIONS FOR IT PROFESSIONALS AND STUDENTS

EDUCAUSE has released two publications dealing with campus information technology, one for IT professionals and one for students.

For nearly twenty years CAUSE had been capturing data about administrative and academic computing from college and university members. After the merger of CAUSE and Educom to form EDUCAUSE, there was a gap in the collection and reporting of this data. In 2001, EDUCAUSE established "a Research Task Force to advise about a member-based data collection strategy that would focus on establishing a database of member campus profiles through the capture of 'core' campus data for the purpose of peer comparisons and information sharing." In 2002, EDUCAUSE conducted its first Core Data Service (CDS) survey to capture data from colleges and universities about their campus IT environments and practices for fiscal year 2001-2002. Findings from the latest CDS survey of 800+ institutions are now available in "EDUCAUSE Core Data Service 2003 Summary Report." The report covers IT organization, staffing, planning, financing, and management; faculty and student computing; networking, advanced technologies, and IT security; and information systems. The report is available online, at no cost, at <http://www.educause.edu/apps/coredata/reports/2003/>.

The "Student Guide to Evaluating Information Technology on Campus" was recently updated. This brochure, along with the associated website, provides students with basic IT-related questions to ask of schools they're considering attending. Some of the questions include:

- "Can you find a computer at 2:00 a.m. if you need one?"
- "Are there wireless connections on campus?"
- "Will you have to pay a technology fee in addition to tuition?"
- "What technology training is available?"

Colleges and universities are encouraged to use the guide to create their own materials for prospective students. The brochure and related materials are available online at <http://www.educause.edu/studentguide/>. Bulk copies are available for purchase from the website.

EDUCAUSE is a nonprofit association whose mission is to advance higher education by promoting the intelligent use of information technology. Membership is open to institutions of higher education, corporations serving the higher education information technology market, and other related associations and organizations. For more information, contact: EDUCAUSE, 4772 Walnut Street, Suite 206, Boulder,

ONLINE COURSE CONTENT REPOSITORY

The Monterey Institute for Technology and Education announced plans to develop a new resource, the National Repository of Online Courses (NROC). Contributed materials in the NROC library will be assessed by NROC to "ensure an appropriate level of scope and scholarship, production and instructional design values, instructional support, sustainability, and distribution compatibility" and will be available in, or compatible with, most leading course management systems. For more information, go to <http://www.montereyinstitute.org/nroc/index.html>.

The NROC received grant support from the William and Flora Hewitt Foundation, which also funded the Massachusetts Institute of Technology's OpenCourseWare project. For information about that course materials repository, go to <http://ocw.mit.edu/index.html>.

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