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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FACILITATING ONLINE DISCUSSION

The theme for the November 2003 issue of *SideBars* is online discussion. The issue includes links to articles on effective online facilitation and successful strategies for faculty using discussion boards in their classes. The issue is available online at http://online.bcit.ca/sidebars/03november/index.htm.

SideBars is distributed by email and on the Web at no cost and is published by the Learning Resources Unit of the British Columbia Institute of Technology [http://www.lru.bcit.ca/] to provide "useful information and news items for instructors, course developers, educational technologists and anyone else who has an interest in distributed learning in its various manifestations." For more information, contact the editors at email: sidebars@listserv.bcit.ca. Subscription information: http://online.bcit.ca/sidebars/subcribe.html.

TRENDS IN DISTANCE EDUCATION

The American Federation of Teachers publication, *AFT On Campus*, is running a series of articles on distance education trends.

In "Trends in Distance Education" (September 2003, http://www.aft.org/publications/on_campus/sept03/technology.html) Thomas J. Kriger, State University of New York, writes about how "critics of asynchronous courses and programs within higher education have recently found unexpected support in the corporate sector." Learners in corporations are increasingly expressing dissatisfaction with online-only classes. This is leading to the creation of "blended learning" -- courses that combine "face-to-face teaching with software and Web-based teaching." Such courses also allow faculty to retain greater control in their distance classes.

The October 2003 issue continues the theme with "Making the Pedagogical Case for Blended Learning" by Cynthia Villanti, assistant professor of humanities at Mohawk Valley Community College, New York (http://www.aft.org/publications/on_campus/oct03/technology.html). She presents five primary pedagogical arguments for blended, or hybrid, courses. These arguments include:
-- enabling a balance between faculty-centered and student-centered models;

-- enabling faculty and students to develop a strong sense of classroom community both online and in person;
-- allowing for both the "reflectiveness of asynchronous communication and the immediacy of spoken communication;"
-- helping to alleviate faculty concerns about academic dishonesty and plagiarism.

AFT On Campus is published eight times a year by the American Federation of Teachers, 555 New Jersey Avenue NW, Washington, DC 20001 USA; tel: 202-879-4400; email: online@aft.org; Web: http://www.aft.org/
Current and back issues are available at no cost at http://www.aft.org/publications/on_campus/index.html.

NEW RESOURCE ON ELEARNING AND COURSE MANAGEMENT SYSTEMS

This month, *Syllabus* magazine began a new, free email publication, *CMS Review: A Resource on eLearning and Course Management Systems*. This bi-monthly newsletter will provide information, analysis, case studies, and technical tips on course management systems (CMS) in higher education. To subscribe, go to http://info.101com.com/default.asp?id=2978.

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Annual subscriptions are free to individuals who work in colleges, universities, and high schools in the U.S.; go to http://subscribe.101com.com/syllabus/ for more information.

HALLOWEEN LINKS: FANTASTIC ZOOLOGY

This year our annual Halloween link is Fantastic Zoology: a graphical interpretation of Jorge Luis Borges' *The Book of Imaginary Beings*. The illustrations were done as a project by the graduate students in the Department of Illustration and Art of the Book at the Vakalo School of Art and Design in Athens, Greece. The collection is online at http://www.hum.au.dk/romansk/borges/vakalo/zf/.

The collection of illustrations is housed on the website of the Jorge Luis Borges Center for Studies & Documentation, University of Aarhus, Denmark. The Center is "dedicated to the research of works by J. L. Borges, and the study of themes and the style of thinking found in his work." The Center publishes Variaciones Borges: Journal of Philosophy, Semiotics & Literature. The website includes links to bibliographies, book reviews, articles, and other materials related to Borges' works. The Center's website is at http://www.hum.au.dk/romansk/borges/ .

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.

Emotional Design: Why We Love (or Hate) Everyday Things by Donald A. Norman. New York: Basic Books, January 2004. ISBN: 0465051359.

"Beyond the design of an object, there is a personal component as well, one that no designer or manufacturer can provide. The objects in our lives are more than mere material possessions. We take

pride in them, not necessarily because we are showing off our wealth or status, but because of the meanings they bring to our lives. A person's most beloved objects may well be inexpensive trinkets, frayed furniture, or photographs and books, often torn, dirty, or faded. A favorite object is a symbol, setting up a positive frame of mind, a reminder of pleasant memories, or sometimes an expression of one's self. And this object always has a story, a remembrance, and something that ties us personally to this particular object, this particular thing."

Sample draft chapters of this forthcoming book are available online at http://jnd.org/books.html.

Norman is Professor of Computer Science at Northwestern University and co-founder of the Nielsen Norman Group, a consulting firm that promotes user-centered design and usability. His other books include *The Design of Everyday Things*, *Things That Make Us Smart*, and *The Invisible Computer*.