

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.

[Online Learning Versus Classroom Learning](#)

[Is the Classroom a Dirty Word?](#)

[Report on All-Online MBA Program](#)

[Higher Education in the Digital Age](#)

[Online Database of Science and Technology Resources](#)

[Recommended Reading](#)

ONLINE LEARNING VERSUS CLASSROOM LEARNING

Much research into the efficacy of online learning over classroom learning has been anecdotal and of questionable quality, leading to inconclusive results and the need for further study. Two recent articles in the *Journal of Interactive Instruction Development* address this question of efficacy.

Terrence R. Redding and Jack Rotzein ("Comparative Analysis of Online Learning Versus Classroom Learning," *Journal of Interactive Instruction Development*, vol. 13, no. 4, Spring 2001, pp. 3-12) compare the learning outcomes associated with three classroom groups and an online community college group in pre-licensing insurance training. They conclude that "online instruction could be highly effective" and that a "higher level of cognitive learning was associated with the online group." They also note that higher achievements of the online group can be attributed to the self-selected nature of the students, the instructional design of the online course, and the motivation associated with adult learners. Redding and Rotzein recommend that further studies be conducted in other fields of study to see if their results can be replicated in other professions or disciplines.

In the same issue Kimberly S. Dozier (Assistant Professor of English, Dakota State University) urges restraint in rushing to replace traditional classroom courses with online classes ("Affecting Education in the On-Line 'Classroom': The Good, the Bad, and the Ugly," , *Journal of Interactive Instruction Development*, vol. 13, no. 4, Spring 2001, pp. 17-20). She cautions educators "not to forget what makes us teachers and what makes us learners. We must not forget the limitations of technology and we must not assume that an on-line course duplicates a traditional course." One of the aspects of learning that she fears may be missing in some online learning experiences is self-reflection as students are "simply responding to a specified task and moving on to the next one."

Note: neither article is available on the Web. Check with your college or university library to obtain copies.

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IS THE CLASSROOM A DIRTY WORD?

With seminars, trade shows, and magazines emphasizing online learning, Elliott Masie, President of The MASIE Center, worries, "Is the classroom a dirty word? Does classroom training suffer from a public relations or self-concept problem?" In "Does the Classroom Have a Self-Concept Problem? A TechLearn 2001 Think Piece," he presents several situations in which the classroom can be a more appropriate learning setting:

- the learning activity involves discussion or live role modeling;
- the learning target is a motor skill that requires the use of equipment;
- the audience is small and it is easier and cheaper to put a subject matter expert with a learner, than to produce a digital learning module that will be used by just a few people;
- the bulk of the content is gained from a Socratic dialogue with fellow learners.

The article, from the *TechLearn Trends* on-line newsletter, is available online at <http://www.masie.com/masie/default.cfm?trends=253&page=trendsdisplay>

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REPORT ON ALL-ONLINE MBA PROGRAM

Launched in 1999, the Merrick School of Business at the University of Baltimore was the first school to offer all-online accredited Web MBA. Professor Hossein Arsham, who taught the first course in this program, has created the "Impact of the Internet on Learning & Teaching" website to share his experiences with other educators and to illustrate "how to begin, how to operate, and how to make e-learning successful and enjoyable." The site covers cost-benefit issues of the program, key factors for optimizing online learning, and what goes into setting up and running a typical course. The website is at <http://home.ubalt.edu/ntsbarsh/interactive.htm>

HIGHER EDUCATION IN THE DIGITAL AGE

"The nearly exponential growth of information, coupled with the ability to exchange it more rapidly among more people than ever before, is creating a new environment for education, in which the university may have to negotiate its standing as the de facto source of scholarly knowledge." In "Higher Education in the Digital Age: Planning for an Uncertain Future" (*Syllabus*, vol. 15, no. 2, September 2001, pp. 10-12), Diane Harley examines the market forces that can determine what goals and niches that colleges and universities should focus on. The article is available online at <http://www.syllabus.com/syllabusmagazine/article.asp?ID=4769>

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ONLINE DATABASE OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY RESOURCES

The National Technical Information Service (NTIS) has created the SciTechResources.gov database to provide one-stop, searchable access to key U.S. Government science and technology resources. Websites selected for the database provide links to government expertise, services, laboratories, information centers, and other important resources. Included on the website are links to computer software; federal laboratories; information centers; online databases; and sources of images, photographs, publications, reports, and data. The site is at <http://www.scitechresources.gov/>

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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.

"No Boundaries for the Journeys of the Mind"

by *Infobits* subscriber Arun Kumar Tripathi

Ubiquity: An ACM IT Magazine and Forum, vol. 2, issue 27, September 11-17, 2001

"What makes the new technologies worth embracing? Why should institutions of higher education undertake the major investments that are involved? What makes the Internet more than just the latest in a long chain of technological innovations -- including radio and television -- that have fallen short of inflated expectations in the realm of advanced learning?" Tripathi's essay is a preview from a forthcoming anthology on digital education. The article is available on the Web at http://www.acm.org/ubiquity/views/a_tripathi_1.html

The site also includes a forum where readers can post their comments on the article.

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