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REPORT ON E-LEARNING RETURNS ON INVESTMENT

"Within the academic community there remains a sizable proportion of sceptics who question the value of some of the tools and approaches and perhaps an even greater proportion who are unaware of the full range of technological enhancements in current use. Amongst senior managers there is a concern that it is often difficult to quantify the returns achieved on the investment in such technologies. . . . JISC infoNet, the Association for Learning Technology (ALT) and The Higher Education Academy were presented with the challenge of trying to make some kind of sense of the diversity of current e-learning practice across the sector and to seek out evidence that technology-enhanced learning is delivering tangible benefits for learners, teachers and institutions."

The summary of the project is presented in the recently-published report, "Exploring Tangible Benefits of e-Learning: Does Investment Yield Interest?" Some benefits were hard to measure and quantify, and the case studies were limited to only sixteen institutions. However, according to the study, there appears to be "clear evidence" of many good returns on investment in e-learning. These include improved student pass rates, improved student retention, and benefits for learners with special needs.

A copy of the report is available at <http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/publications/camel-tangible-benefits.pdf>.

A two-page briefing paper is available at <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/publications/bptangiblebenefitsv1.pdf>.

JISC infoNet, a service of the Joint Information Systems Committee, "aims to be the UK's leading advisory service for managers in the post-compulsory education sector promoting the effective strategic planning, implementation and management of information and learning technology." For more information, go to <http://www.jiscinfonet.ac.uk/>.

Association for Learning Technology (ALT), formed in 1993, is "the leading UK body bringing together practitioners, researchers, and policy makers in learning technology." For more information, go to <http://www.alt.ac.uk/>.

The mission of The Higher Education Academy, owned by two UK higher education organizations (Universities UK and GuildHE), is to "help institutions, discipline groups, and all staff to provide the best possible learning experience for their students." For more information, go to <http://www.heacademy.ac.uk/>.

INFORMATION SEARCHING BEHAVIOR OF "GOOGLE GENERATION" STUDENTS

The British Library and the Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) commissioned a study "to identify how the specialist researchers of the future, currently in their school or pre-school years (the 'Google generation'), are likely to access and interact with digital resources in five to ten years' time." How this group uses the Internet for information and research has implications for both instructors and librarians. Some of the group's characteristics revealed in the study conclude that:

--they "have a poor understanding of their information needs and thus find it difficult to develop effective search strategies"

-- they "have unsophisticated mental maps of what the internet is, often failing to appreciate that it is a collection of networked resources from different providers"

-- they "find it difficult to assess the relevance of the materials presented and often print off pages with no more than a perfunctory glance at them"

A number of popular myths about the Google generation were explored, with the researchers concluding that many popularly-held beliefs about the generation are, in fact, not substantiated by the research.

The study's report "Information Behaviour of the Researcher of the Future" (January 2008) is available at

http://www.jisc.ac.uk/media/documents/programmes/reppres/gg_final_keynote_11012008.pdf

The Joint Information Systems Committee (JISC) is a strategic advisory committee working on behalf of the funding bodies for further and higher education in England, Scotland, Wales, and Northern Ireland. For more information on JISC, see <http://www.jisc.ac.uk/>.

PUBLISHING POLICIES FOR FACULTY AUTHORS AND OPEN ACCESS

"[O]n February 12, 2008, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS) at Harvard University took a landmark step. The faculty voted to adopt a policy requiring that faculty authors send an electronic copy of their scholarly articles to the university's digital repository and that faculty authors automatically grant copyright permission to the university to archive and to distribute these articles unless a faculty member has waived the policy for a particular article. Essentially, the faculty voted to make open access to the results of their published journal articles the default policy for the Faculty of Arts and Sciences of Harvard University."

The SPARC/Science Commons White Paper "Open Doors and Open Minds: What Faculty Authors Can Do to Ensure Open Access to Their Work Through Their Institution" (April 2008) describes Harvard's policy and provides a plan of action for other institutions contemplating similar policies to extend access to faculty publications. The paper is available at

http://www.arl.org/sparc/bm~doc/opendoors_v1.pdf.

SPARC, the Scholarly Publishing and Academic Resources Coalition, is "an international alliance of academic and research libraries working to correct imbalances in the scholarly publishing system. Developed by the Association of Research Libraries, SPARC has become a catalyst for change. Its pragmatic focus is to stimulate the emergence of new scholarly communication models that expand the dissemination of scholarly research and reduce financial pressures on libraries." For more information, contact: SPARC, 21 Dupont Circle, NW, Suite 800, Washington, DC 20036 USA; tel: 202-296-2296; fax 202-872-0884; email: sparc@arl.org; Web: <http://www.arl.org/sparc/>.

USING LEISURE DEVICES IN THE LEARNING ENVIRONMENT

"[T]he blurring of leisure and learning has corroded the respect that is necessary to commence a scholarly journey."

In "Learning to Leisure? Failure, Flame, Blame, Shame, Homophobia and Other Everyday Practices in Online Education" (*Journal of Literacy and Technology*, vol. 9, no. 1, April 2008, pp. 36-61), Juliet Eve and Tara Brabazon "map a singular teaching hypothesis: when using platforms most frequently positioned in leisure-based environments, such as the iPod, text messaging, and discussion fora, there are institutional and ideological blockages to creating a successful learning experience and scholarly environment." From their in-class experimentation and the work of other researchers, they observed that the "user-generated content 'movement' -- including Flickr, wikimedia, blogs, podcasting, MySpace, Facebook and YouTube -- has provided a channel and venue for the emotive excesses of grievance, hostility and insolence against teachers, students and education." The paper is available at http://www.literacyandtechnology.org/volume9/jlt_v9_1_eve_brabazon.pdf.

The *Journal of Literacy and Technology* [ISSN: 1535-0975] is an online peer-reviewed international academic journal "exploring the complex relationship between literacy and technology in educational, workplace, public, and individual spheres." For more information, contact The Journal of Literacy & Technology, Florida Atlantic University, School of Communication and Multimedia Studies, 777 Glades Road, Boca Raton, FL 33431 USA; tel: 561-297-2623; fax: 561-297-2615; Web: <http://www.literacyandtechnology.org/>.

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.

Shakespeare's Global Globe
<http://www.orbismundi.org/>

Shakespeare's Global Globe, conceived by Michael Witmore an associate professor of English at Carnegie Mellon University, is "a web resource that provides an

instantaneous visualization of all self-reporting readers of Shakespeare on the planet, viewable by region, genre and play. Upon arrival at the site, visitors are asked to indicate which Shakespeare play they are currently reading and where they are on the planet. The site then locates that reader and play at a particular point on the globe, which remains illuminated for two weeks. Site visitors can also explore what other readers of Shakespeare are doing in different cities, regions or continents using a range of display options."

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