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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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LARGE-SCALE STUDY OF DISTANCE LEARNING EFFECTIVENESS

The extensive literature of research in distance education relies heavily on small studies and qualitative research. Many of these studies report that delivery format produces no significant difference in student learning outcomes. In "Does Distance Learning Work? A Large Sample, Control Group Study of Student Success in Distance Learning" (*e-JIST*, vol. 8, no. 1), James Koch reports on a study that uses a very large distance education sample (76,866 individual student observations) compared with a control group of residential students who took the identical course at the same time from the same instructor. According to Koch, "The results indicate that gender, age, ethnic background, distance learning experience, experience with the institution providing the instruction, and measures of academic aptitude and previous academic success are statistically significant determinants of student success." The paper is available online at http://www.usq.edu.au/electpub/e-jist/docs/vol8_no1/fullpapers/distancelearning.htm.

e-Journal of Instructional Science and Technology (e-JIST) is a peer-reviewed electronic journal published by the Distance and e-Learning Centre, University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Queensland 4350, Australia; Web: <http://www.usq.edu.au/dec/>. Current and back issues of *e-JIST* are available at no cost at <http://www.usq.edu.au/electpub/e-jist/>.

See also:

No Significant Difference Phenomenon website

<http://www.nosignificantdifference.org/>

The website is a companion piece to Thomas L. Russell's book *The No Significant Difference Phenomenon*, a bibliography of 355 research reports, summaries, and papers that document no significant differences in student outcomes between alternate modes of education delivery.

DISTANCE LEARNING AND FACULTY CONCERNS

Despite the growing number of distance learning programs, faculty are often reluctant to move their courses into the online medium. In "Addressing Faculty Concerns About Distance Learning" (*Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration*, vol. VIII, no. IV, Winter 2005) Jennifer McLean discusses several areas that influence faculty resistance, including: the perception that technical support and training is lacking, the fear of being replaced by technology, and the absence of a clearly-understood institutional vision for distance learning. The paper is available online at <http://www.westga.edu/%7Edistance/ojdl/winter84/mclean84.htm>.

The *Online Journal of Distance Learning Administration* is a free, peer-reviewed quarterly published by the Distance and Distributed Education Center, The State University of West Georgia, 1600 Maple Street, Carrollton, GA 30118 USA; Web: <http://www.westga.edu/~distance/jmain11.html>.

QUESTIONING THE VALUE OF LEARNING TECHNOLOGY

"The notion that the future of education lies firmly in learning technology, seen as a tool of undoubted magnitude and a powerful remedy for many educational ills, has penetrated deeply into the psyche not only of those involved in delivery but also of observers, including those in power within national governments." In a paper published in 1992, Gabriel Jacobs expressed his belief that hyperlink technology would be a "teaching resource that would transform passive learners into active thinkers." In "Hypermedia and Discovery Based Learning: What Value?" (*Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*, vol. 21, no. 3, 2005, pp. 355-66), he reconsiders his opinions, "the result being that the guarded optimism of 1992 has turned to a deep pessimism." Jacob's paper is available online at <http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet21/jacobs.html>.

The *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology (AJET)* [ISSN 1449-3098 (print), ISSN 1449-5554 (online)], published three times a year, is a refereed journal publishing research and review articles in educational technology, instructional design, educational applications of computer technologies, educational telecommunications, and related areas. Back issues are available on the Web at no cost. For more information and back issues go to <http://www.ascilite.org.au/ajet/ajet.html>.

COMPARISON OF SCHOLARLY PRINT AND E-JOURNAL EDITORS

Using examples from the library publishing field, Julie Banks and Carl Pracht examined the roles of editors of traditional print journals and newer electronic journals. The authors findings, reported in "Movers and Shakers in the Library Publishing World Highlight Their Roles: Interviews with Print and Electronic Journal Editors - A Comparison" (*E-JASL*, vol. 6 no. 3, Winter 2005), show that the two formats were "more similar than different from each other in terms of the editors' and editorial boards' roles, relationships, work loads, and utilization of peer review." The paper is available online at http://southernlibrarianship.icaap.org/content/v06n03/banks_j01.htm.

E-JASL: The Electronic Journal of Academic and Special Librarianship [ISSN 1704-8532] is an independent, professional, refereed electronic journal dedicated to advancing knowledge and research in the areas of academic and special librarianship. E-JASL is published by the Consortium for the Advancement of Academic Publication (ICAAP), Athabasca, Canada. For more information, contact: Paul Haschak, Executive Editor, Board President, and Founder, Linus A. Sims Memorial Library, Southeastern Louisiana University, Hammond, LA USA; email: phaschak@selu.edu; Web: <http://southernlibrarianship.icaap.org/>.

For another publishing viewpoint, see:

"The Shift Away From Print"

By Eileen Gifford Fenton and Roger C. Schonfeld

Inside Higher Ed, December 8, 2005

<http://insidehighered.com/views/2005/12/08/schonfeld>

NEW JOURNAL COVERING PLAGIARISM IN THE UNIVERSITY COMMUNITY

The recently-launched, refereed *International Journal for Educational Integrity* [ISSN 1833-2595] intends to provide a forum to address educational integrity topics: "plagiarism, cheating, academic integrity, honour codes, teaching and learning, university governance, and student motivation." The journal, to be published two times a year, is sponsored by the University of South Australia. For more information and to read the current issue, go to <http://www.ojs.unisa.edu.au/journals/index.php/IJEI>.

GOOGLE LAUNCHES NEWSLETTER FOR LIBRARIANS

In December Google launched a free, online publication, the *Google Librarian Newsletter*. The newsletter was conceived at the 2005 American Libraries Association conference in Chicago as a way to answer questions raised by librarians and others who use Google for reference and research. The first issue discusses a frequently-asked question: "How does Google index the web, and, more important, how does it rank the results?"

To read *Google Librarian Newsletter* or to subscribe to the email version, go to

http://www.google.com/newsletter/librarian/librarian_2005_12/newsletter.html.

WIKIVERSITY

The organization that maintains the online encyclopedia Wikipedia (<http://www.wikipedia.org/>) proposes the creation of Wikiversity, an "electronic institution of learning that will be used to test the limits of the wiki model both for developing electronic learning resources as well as for teaching and for conducting research and publishing results." Still in the initial startup phase, Wikiversity could, at the least, be an open repository for educational materials. Some Wiki board members also think it could serve as a host to online courses, which, in turn, could lead to degree-granting programs. For more information about Wikiversity, go to <http://meta.wikimedia.org/wiki/Wikiversity>.

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.

"The Internet Is Broken"

By David Talbot

Technology Review, December 2005/January 2006

"Over the years, as Internet applications proliferated -- wireless devices, peer-to-peer file-sharing, telephony -- companies and network engineers came up with ingenious and expedient patches, plugs, and workarounds. The result is that the originally simple communications technology has become a

complex and convoluted affair. For all of the Internet's wonders, it is also difficult to manage and more fragile with each passing day."

Online version of the article is in 3 parts:

Part 1: http://www.technologyreview.com/infotech/wtr_16051,258,p1.html

Part 2: http://www.technologyreview.com/InfoTech/wtr_16055,258,p1.html

Part 3: http://www.technologyreview.com/InfoTech/wtr_16056,258,p1.html

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