

RSC Newsletter

Issue 20 – November 2008

Stimulating and supporting innovation in learning

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No More Sore Backs!!

Lecturers delivering and assessing NVQs and other competence-based qualifications have long suffered from the problems of transporting heavy portfolios. One benefit of using an e-portfolio is the minimising of the possibility of ending up with a sore back!

Childcare Learning and Development and Health and Social Care lecturers in the North West Regional College have decided to use an e-portfolio for the assessment of their qualifications. Over 20 lecturers have been involved in the pilot project to date, with the support of the college and RSCni.

Advantages of e-portfolios for Assessors include:

- Candidates and Tutors/Assessors can upload or access evidence from anywhere with an Internet connection
- Incremental assessment/marketing and verification is possible
- Immediate feedback is available
- Reduced administration /less paper

as units and elements are already uploaded for the qualification.

Additionally, e-portfolios help to prepare learners better for the world of work, where summative assessment of qualifications and CPD are increasingly being recorded electronically.

Helena McVeigh, an e-portfolio user from Health and Social Care agrees:

"This development in using e-portfolios is exciting. Staff and students' workloads, particularly referencing, should be reduced and students should gain their NVQ Awards more efficiently."

Samantha Traynor, Head of School for CCLD in NWRC commented that "e-portfolios have presented staff and students with a progressive way of managing the assessment and learning process in NVQ Children's Care, Learning and Development, Playwork and HSC. The project is equipping students with skills required for life and work in the 21st century."



The picture shows Helena McVeigh, project leader HSC, Samantha Traynor, Head of School project leader CCLD Angela McConnell who is leading the project on the Strabane Campus.

e-Books for FE – JISC Wants to Know Your Needs

Last year JISC funded a project (<http://www.jiscebooksproject.org/>) to make e-book titles available to HE students in the UK and funding is now available to make a similar collection available to FE colleges.

The project board is seeking to create a collection of more than 100 titles covering various topics. The views of teachers, librarians or anyone involved in supporting students will be useful in determining the composition of the Scottish, Welsh and NI collection: an extensive response will provide a more valid final selection.

Due to their electronic nature, e-books have many advantages; teachers can link learners with specific chapters rather than giving general references; they can be linked to materials in VLEs; they are more amenable to text searching than paper-based alternatives.

Please forward your nominations **immediately** to

m.moran@rsc-ni.ac.uk or
PHoyle@belfastmet.ac.uk.

Please provide:

- Title, author and publisher;
- Applicable subject areas;
- Reasons why they are of special relevance to teaching and learning in Northern Ireland and are unlikely to be covered in the core UK collection.

For further information or enquiries concerning any of the information in this newsletter please contact:
b.stewart@rsc-ni.ac.uk

New Look MIS Rolls Out

The roll out of the upgraded Management Information System (v4) has just been completed at Southern Regional College and will be coming to all colleges over the next few months.

Colin McAuley, Manager of ANIC's Business Support Unit, who is managing the implementation of QL Version 4, is upbeat about the potential additional benefits colleges can accrue from the new software. "Version 4 comes without pre-set data input screens. This allows colleges much greater flexibility in designing their own customised data-entry screens, enabling the crucial task of data input to reflect business processes that pertain in the individual colleges. The new front end has the potential to improve data quality, if associated business processes are reviewed and refined", said Colin.

A further welcome feature of Version 4 is that data-entry screens are web-based, meaning for example, that enrolment data can be captured from any location in a college where there is internet access. This enhancement means that the data can be collected in locations that are more accessible to learners.



The underlying database used by the MIS is the same as previous versions meaning that report structures and queries which are currently used in colleges will still be usable with the new version.

With installation of Version 4 completed at one college and the other 5 scheduled to upgrade over coming months, colleges can look forward to greater flexibility and control of this vital resource.

Are you wired or tired?

Getting buried in information? No PA to help you? To help combat interruptive texts, IM and status update messages to emails, phone calls and television – there are 10 suggestions for a less cluttered

desk and more serene state of mind.

You can find them at –
<http://www.jisc.ac.uk/news/stories/2008/09/infooverload.aspx>

What's Happening?

Date	Title	Location
22/10/2008	Training - Introduction to Web 2.0	NRC (Antrim Campus)
24/10/2008	Training - Multi-media Workshop	NRC (Antrim Campus)
27/10/2008	Training - SENDO Lecturers	SRC
06/11/2008	Training - Web 2.0 Workshop	BMC
06/11/2008	LR Forum	NWRC
07/11/2008	Training - e-Resources Workshop	NRC (Antrim Campus)
12/11/2008	Training – SENDO for Lecturers	NRC
13/11/2008	Multi-media Workshop	SRC (Armagh Campus)
19/11/2008	Training – SENDO for Lecturers	NRC
27/11/2008	Training – iPods and MP3s	BMC
28/11/2008	Technical Forum	NWRC
17/12/2008	Learning on the Move	BMC

newsfilmonline and, finally

Those familiar words from the end of the ITN evening news over the past 50 years, and more, herald the start of an extensive new service from JISC – Newsfilm Online. The resource consists of more than 60,000 individual items drawn from Pathé News from more than 100 years ago; from Reuters filmed news reports; and from the archives of ITN from its inception in 1955.

Made possible by Lottery Heritage funding in 2004, the vast collection will give teachers and students access 'in perpetuity' to digitised video, sound and script materials free of copyright for educational uses. JISC has also funded the final product in terms of its delivery so that it will be free to users until 2012.

Each of the items will be found using a portal that will be hosted by

Edina and – like all JISC services – will be available to colleges that are members of the UK Access Management Federation. Once downloaded, the materials can be stored locally by users in colleges and universities and can be edited as desired to form new learning materials.

Because news stories on television and newsreels pick up on all of the issues of the day – all human life is there – and teachers can find materials on themes from fashion to politics and from bricklaying to science. And of course, Northern Ireland items are well represented, with over 1800 objects with that tag.

The official launch took place in London on 3rd October 2008 and we will be in touch with you again soon with more details of the site and its tools.

Interested in Mobile Technology? A Date for your PDA

On the 17th December 2008 the RSCni are hosting Learning on the Move at Belfast Metropolitan College. This is a forum that explores the potential for using a range of low-cost and easily usable mobile technologies in learning and teaching.

Delegates will be given opportunities for hands-on experience in using some of the most popular mobile technologies, as well as opportunities to listen and observe lecturers who actively use these in their everyday teaching. This will also give you a chance to consider how such technologies could be used to enhance learning for your students.

Each delegate will be able to take away the forum's learning materials so that these can be used by colleagues in their course teams and elsewhere in their colleges and they will also be able to keep some of the equipment that they used throughout the day.

Each college will have a limited number of places available and invitations will be issued mid-November. In the meantime if you have any queries you can contact c.guy@rc-ni.ac.uk. We look forward to seeing you there.

New Version of Netsight Brings More



The new version of the JANET network monitoring tool service, Netsight, is in the process of being rolled out to the network and will provide a much richer level of detail and flexibility to the JANET community.

The original version of Netsight has been widely used here in Northern Ireland since its launch in 2002 and has provided College ICT departments with a view of the JANET connection bandwidth usage and basic performance details, which has been very useful to diagnose network problems.

Highlights of what the new service will deliver:

- Flexible graphing ('click and drag') selection of time scales
- Ability to drill-down into the performance data, via graphic mapping
- Users can be sent alert e-mails based on pre-defined test conditions
- Flexible management of user permissions, allowing fine grained control of the operations users can perform and the data they can access.
- Netsight systems resilience features will be released on an incremental roll out basis.

The Northern Ireland implementation is planned for early 2009, and will be managed by NIRAN. No additional work will be required by college staff during this phase.

Is Your ICT Sustainable?



The spotlight of energy efficiency has increasingly shone on ICT in recent times. At a UK government conference in September, Government IT Goes Green, a succession of Ministers confirmed that the UK public sector has a role to play in reducing the 2% contribution to global carbon omissions made by ICT.

The Carbon Trust's figure of 15% of electricity used in public offices, estimated to rise to 30% by 2020 indicates the potential scale of the sustainability problem. Two thirds of office electricity consumption typically emanates from computers.

If you are considering how your college can make its own contribution to its ICT-induced carbon footprint then help is at hand from a JISC-funded project, SUSTE-IT. The year-long project has four stages:

- Stage 1 is a scoping study that will produce 15-20 'mini cases' of sustainability innovations;

- Stage 2 (cases) explores design of new and refurbished ICT spaces; automatic switching off of PCs; virtualisation, especially with regard to servers; thin client approaches; integration of environment into procurement; end-of-life for computes; and peripherals;
- Stage 3 (tools) is likely to have three broad outputs, focusing on high level awareness; decision-relevant support; and specific advice and guidance; and
- Stage 4 will produce a final report and recommendations, drawing from information and lessons learned in the previous 3 stages.

A number of events facilitated by the project have already taken place with a final event, **Green IT in Further Education**, scheduled for January 2009, venue tbc. A project website, www.suste-it.ac.uk will host case studies, when available, and other project outputs that will assist educators in making their organisation make its contribution to a greener ICT world.

Tech online!

The first in a series of online technical e-meetings, focusing on security, recently took place and was a resounding success, according to feedback from attendees.

This e-meeting, using technology RSCni have adopted for its team meetings, featured an exploration

of vulnerability assessment and penetration testing.

This has proved so successful in its implementation that we decided to expand its use to include some support elements during this academic year. If you would like to discuss the technology we have deployed contact Noel McDaid on n.mcdaid@rsc-ni.ac.uk