

RSC Newsletter

Issue 21 – March 2009

Stimulating and supporting innovation in learning

It's a Library, Scottie – but not as we know it!



So say the staff at Belfast Metropolitan College in connection with the college's online service called MyBelfastMet. Based on a MS SharePoint platform that has been greatly enhanced by the college's web designer, MyBelfastMet is a facility that is exclusively for use by students.

Debates rage about whether online resources and other information services should be called Learning Resource Centres, Learning Centres or Resource Centres but Fred Robb, head of the library team, says "We have taken our lead from one of the biggest such institutions in the world. They too have a wide range of electronic user services alongside their paper-based stocks but they are proud to be known as the New York Public Library. Our vision is encapsulated in the description ' a library as a digital space for students'."

Fred's view is strongly supported by colleague, Stephen Murray, and the many other members of the team who have contributed to the building of the service. Says Stephen, "the library is no longer a face to face business for our students – but we have set out to make the new service as close as

possible to that experience of guidance and support".

When any one of the college's fifty thousand students log on to the main website they are taken directly to MyBelfastMet and a one-stop shop where they can access the services of the Students' Union; Guidance, Support and Advice; and Disability Services – as well as the Library. This service is available both on and off campus. This front page also displays connection to the student's email account, to the library catalogue and to their course materials on Blackboard – in those cases where their teachers have enrolled them onto the VLE.

Once inside the Library tab of the site, the user can then see which items they have on loan and college news items – one of which always focuses on a library issue. Cultural diversity is actively catered for through library user guides in 8 different languages ranging from Chinese, through Romanian and Polish, to Ulster Scots.

Further support comes in the form of podcasts and video guides to the facilities available on each campus and to ways of accessing e-books and other online resources. The library team are constantly working to expand the range of student services and have already developed a customisable 'My Links' space in which students can build their own collections of web

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Award Winners to Speak at RSCNI Annual Conference

**'Getting to Embedded –
It's about the Learning',
2nd April 2009, North
West Regional College**

RSCNI are pleased to welcome BECTA Award Winners, Geoff Rebbeck and St Columb's College Derry, to their 2009 conference. Geoff was awarded this prestigious prize for his innovative work within teaching and learning in Further Education and St Columb's College received the ICT Excellence Whole School Award for their approach to Embedding ILT.

This is just a sample of the excellent speakers attending this year's conference. This year's theme is 'Getting to Embedded: It's all about the Learning' and delegates will have an opportunity to discover the innovative work that is occurring within Northern Ireland in such areas as; multi-media, second life and sustainable ICT.

For further details please visit RSCni website www.rsc-ni.ac.uk.

e-Books for FE: Thanks for Your Magnificent Response

The Project Board for e-Books for FE met in London on 25th February to consider the responses made in the community consultation on the potential titles for inclusion in the core collection. They were astounded to find that there had been over 94,000 inputs to the consultation – ranging from the smallest to the largest colleges in the UK.

Extra staff had to be drafted in to help project manager, Anna Vernon, sift through the responses and to match them against the offerings from each of the bidders for the

£1.5M tender. An exhausted but happy Anna commented on how pleased she was to see this massive vote of confidence in the interest in e-books from the FE world and passed on her thanks to all college staff.

Final decisions on the successful bidder will result in a contract being signed in March 2009 and the licence details being finalised in May.

Anna Vernon will be at the **RSCni Annual Conference** at NWRC on **2nd April 2009** to tell you more about the e-books.

ILT Health Check Lite

This year sees the introduction of a new follow up support service provided by RSCni.

The ILT Health Check Lite will be offered, by the RSCni, to those colleges who have previously had a full ILT Health Check prior to the current academic year.

The purpose of the ILT Health Check Lite is to assist colleges in

identifying what progress has been made with the implementation of ILT in Teaching and Learning in the time intervening since the full ILT Health Check, and to help the college prioritize the future development of ILT within Teaching and Learning.

For further details please contact support@rsc-ni.ac.uk

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sites and the 'Ask A Librarian' email service. Fred says that this is mainly used by those students working off

campus and enables them to get an answer to their questions without having to come into college.

What's Happening?

Date	Title	Location
2nd April 2009	RSCni Annual Conference	NWRC, Derry Campus
13th May 2009	Senior Management Briefing	TBC
15th May 2009	Open Source Workshop	SRC, Portadown
19th May 2009	ILT Staff Development Forum	Belfast, Riddel Hall

Planning for Effective Learning (PEL)

A Structured E-Learning Approach

PEL is a new approach that the RSCni has developed to assist lecturers understand and develop the pedagogy of e-learning within their teaching. PEL achieves this by focusing on the interaction between lecturers and their students, when involved in the learning process and on the human element of teaching and learning.

The workshop has been designed in two sections. The first section helps lecturers reflect upon their current practices in relation to their use of

ILT within teaching and to identify where ILT can help. The second section uses materials from the University of Ulster's Hybrid Learning Model to assist in the production of structured lessons which incorporate e-learning.

By the end of the workshop lecturers will have a clear understanding of the pedagogy of e-learning and how to employ ILT effectively within their teaching and learning.

For more information contact us at support@rsc-ni.ac.uk

So Long, Farewell, Auf Wiedersehen, Good Bye

RSCni would like to take this opportunity to pass on our best wishes to Martin Peoples in his new post within North West Regional College. Martin stepped down as the RSCni Manager to take up this new post at the end of 2008. We would like to thank him for all his years of hard work and devotion within the RSC, from its earliest days in 2000, up to his departure at the end of 2008.

Hello to the New

The RSCni team would like to welcome our new Manager, Catherine (Kate) Guy. Kate has been with the RSC since 2001 and is well known and respected throughout the FE/HE sector - we wish her well in her new post.

ALT/JISC Funding Workshop

Aware of the particular needs of HE in FE staff, the RSCni have organised a JISC funding workshop for HE and HE in FE staff, to take place after the Easter break.

For more information contact Catherine Gormley at:
c.gormley@rsc-ni.ac.uk.

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

The 'Greening' of ICT in Education

Further and higher education establishments could save thousands of pounds and thousands of tonnes of CO₂ emissions just by introducing simple measures.

The recent JISC Green Technology report, outlines ways in which the intelligent use of technology can create substantial cost savings: Liverpool University's self-developed 'PC PowerDown' software is already saving the institution £64,000 a year and over 500 tonnes of CO₂ emissions. The report also offers decision-making guidance for ICT staff and senior managers within FE and HE institutions.

Peter James, Professor of Environmental Management, University of Bradford, and head of the JISC-funded SustelT project said, "The sector must do more to make its ICT use more sustainable, and this report raises awareness of the issues facing ICT planners and senior institutional management. It also highlights a range of cost-effective measures that are already being taken in some institutions that could easily be introduced in others."

JISC commissioned the SustelT project to help educational institutions meet the increasingly stringent environmental demands placed upon them by government. For further information, please visit www.susteit.org.uk or www.jisc.ac.uk/publications. For details of JISC's other green technology projects, visit the green ICT blog on <http://greenict.jiscinvolve.org>.

Support for HE

In 2006-2007, over 11,500 students were following full-time or part-time higher education courses at Northern Ireland Further Education Colleges. HE managers and lecturers teaching on HE courses often have additional concern to those of FE staff in delivering the HE curriculum. Recently the RSCni sent a short online survey to HE in FE staff to help determine how the RSCni could help support them.

Quality improvement is the major issue for the respondents and, in particular, managing the QAA developmental review. There is a perceived need to demonstrate to the university that the HE students' learning experience is equal to that at a university. The RSCni can help organisations record the students'

learning experience using technology such as, online questionnaires and evaluations. We are also one of 13 RSCs throughout the UK and have helped NI colleges draw on other UK colleges' experience of QAA through links with other RSCs and the colleges in their regions.

Another concern is the development of blended learning for HE courses. Many HE courses use blended learning to maximise and enhance the learner experience. RSCni can also support the colleges in the development of this strategy.

For more information or support on any of these topics please contact Catherine Gormley at: c.gormley@rsc-ni.ac.uk.

RSCni Security Testing Service

Colleges' Internet and corporate networks are becoming an ever more important function in their day-to-day business. Consequently, it is vital that networks should only be used for their intended purposes. Hacking, attack or abuse of these systems can lead to leakage or loss of valuable data, loss of teaching contact and/or loss of college reputation in the community.

All IT systems (servers, application programmes etc.) and even information security systems, are created and maintained by people, and are therefore vulnerable in some ways. When an organisation fails to take the right precautions, or the precautions do not keep pace with the threats in the outside

world, it runs the risk of being a target for network intrusion. This can originate from outside the organisation, but also internally, even when you have implemented controls such as firewalls.

To be proactive in mitigating against threats, such as the above, the RSCni are involved in ongoing discussions with commercial providers in relation to a security pen testing and vulnerability audit service. The aim of this service will be to provide colleges with a cost effective way of ensuring they have complete confidence in their security implementations.

For further information please contact Noel McDaid on n.mcdaid@rsc-ni.ac.uk.