Distance Teaching and Learning without Walls:
Developing academics’ skills in video-conferencing in the CREO Project at The University of Sydney

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Background

• **Orange Campus, The University of Sydney**
  - Faculty of Rural Management: UG & PG
  - now offering UG courses in Pharmacy, Liberal Studies, Computer Sci.
  - Sem I 2003: 9 units w/ enrolments: 9 - 49 students

• ‘**Partnership project**’: the University, the Western Institute of TAFE, the NSW State Department of Education & Training, the Commonwealth Department of Education, Science & Training.

‘**Centre for Regional Education, Orange**’ = CREO
Teaching and Learning at a Distance

• A technology-facilitated curriculum:
  - video-lecturing
  - online and print materials
  - online communication and activities
  - other: labs, computer-based learning
    ...plus local tutors
    ...and lecturers’ visits
Pharmacy Lecture Theatre
Arts Videoconferencing Room

Web Link:
http://www.artsit.usyd.edu.au/labguides/servicesvc.htm
Orange Videoconferencing Room
Academic development in video-lecturing

• Why a training & development program?

• Who would facilitate it...?
  Director LearnTel: Carol Daunt

• Survey: The CREO lecturers preferred 2 x half-day Intro. workshops
  (∴ normally a 2 day program!)
Workshops

• Structure: 2 x half days, 3 hrs each
• Timing: Nov 02, Feb-Mar 03
• Content:
  - v’conf equipment, systems, add-on equip’t
  - thinking visually
  - learning (& teaching)
  - ‘hands-on’: mini-lessons
The CREO lecturers...

• English: 8  History: 2
• Pharmacy: 3  Psychology: 9
+ Library: 2
+ other staff attended…

• 19 / 22 participants indicated very little or no experience of video-conferencing.
Lecturers’ early concerns...

...as revealed in brainstorming notes:

- How is it different? (vs. chalk ’n’ talk)
- How do we interact with remote site?
- What about engagement of all students?
- Is it user-friendly?
- What about technical support?
- What will the Uni. get out of it? (!)
Lecturers’ Evaluation
Workshop 1  [n = 22]

• **content**: the workshop had met their needs well or very well [20]

• **relevance**: the workshop had met their needs well or very well [20]

• **presentation**: the workshop had met their needs well or very well [21]
Workshop 1 -
Open-ended comments:

• **most useful**: hands-on focus, practical tips, seeing the equipment and set-up,
  - ’demystification’ and ‘dispelling ignorance’
• **least useful**: equipment failure (11.11.02); poor system functioning
• **requested**: more interactivity, more hands-on, practice in combining various media
Lecturers’ Feedback on Workshop 2 (March 03, ‘hands-on’)

- Most useful: learnt from watching others, eye contact, interaction with students, doc.cam

- Other useful aspects: good to be a student, to see or be at ‘the other end’, being up close to the equipment

- Early experiences: ‘Really good! I’m enjoying it!’; technical problems with synch. local and remote video-lecturing, great technical support at both ends

- T & D suggestions: more practice sessions, Orange students’ feedback, several satisfied: ‘enough’.
Workshops: Observations & Implications

1. **Infrastructure**, local & ‘remote’:
   - equipment: lighting, microphone placement, dial-up system, doc. cam. needed
   - v’conf-equipped teaching spaces are either too big or too small
   - more information needed on booking spaces, equipment, personnel
Workshops: Observations & Implications

- **Introductory workshop structure**: the most effective way is not the ‘remote-local’ model…

- **University-wide workshop program**: organisation and management

- **Advanced workshops and networking activities** - and using the technology to share expertise and ideas
Collaboration is essential...

... the technology demands it!

- Carol Daunt, LearnTel Pty. Ltd
- Simon Carlile, Assistant PVC (IT), in 2002.
- Stephen Crump, Exe. Director, CREO Project
- Jim Ward & staff, Room Bookings
- Rafik Razzouk, Ian Trevena, Doug Kohlhoff, Russell Cook, Information Technology Services (ITS)
- Tim Hughes, Tom Coble, ITS, Faculty of Rural Management, Orange
- Janusz Tydda, Bala Muralee, ITS, Faculty of Health Sciences
- Nicholas Clarke & staff, Audio-Visual Services, Fac. Mgt. Office
- Chris Aquilina & staff, AVIT unit, Faculty of Medicine
- Marie-Thérèse Barbaux-Couper, Paul Blackbee, ArtsIT Unit, Faculty of Arts
- Academic Reps.
- Mary Jane Mahony, Faculty of Health Sciences
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