

Editorial

Ed Wood

itsnbioscience@bmb.leeds.ac.uk

LTSN Centre for Bioscience, United Kingdom

Mary Peat

maryp@bio.usyd.edu.au

UniServe Science, Australia

Gunilla Jacobsson

CRHE, Sweden

In our last editorial we stressed a need to be aware of what is occurring at the cutting edge of science teaching. This is still true today. We must share our ideas of good practice, our experiences and our insights. Today, even more so than five years ago, teaching must cater for an increased diversity of academic backgrounds, for just-in-time training needs and for the part-time on-campus students who have difficulty fitting in all their classes.

From Sweden we have a paper discussing how occupational therapists and other health care workers assess the living needs of patients who have mobility problems. In particular a methodology, based on qualitative survey measures analysed by specific software, is being trialed in undergraduate teaching programs to determine what can be addressed to help the client.

From the UK is an interesting discussion of how a virtual mangrove field trip is being developed, with an accent on comparing mangrove habitats from around the world. Also from the UK is a paper on the development of a web-based tool for formative assessment. This tool was developed at the Computer Assisted Assessment Centre at the University of Luton. Along with other products from the Centre, its development is based on sound pedagogic principles giving it an edge over other commercial assessment tools.

From Australia we offer you an interesting slant on teaching statistics to biology students, which others might like to consider. In a virtual environment, students measure biological parameters develop an understanding of statistics. Also from Australia is a paper on the use of

videoconferencing for the supervision of health care professionals in rural areas. This is an important study in that it is endeavoring to develop an online supervision model that will incorporate best practice. To do this, the ideas associated with best practice in face-to-face supervision need to be transferred to the videoconferencing medium.

We asked the developers of EcoBeaker to give us a run down on their latest range of biology software and the resulting paper by Eli Meir is entertaining and informative.

Lastly, as with our previous issue, we have chosen for inclusion in this edition of CAL-laborate a paper from The China Papers, <http://science.uniserve.edu.au/pubs/china/>, to showcase our colleagues in the People's Republic of China. The paper chosen looks at the way the curriculum for a general pharmacy course can be adapted to use a problem based learning approach. Reforms in China are moving at a rapid pace and it is a pleasure to be involved in one tiny aspect of them.

Ed Wood, Mary Peat, Gunilla Jacobsson