Editorial

The annual conference of the Association for Learning Technology (ALT-C) has become a key forum for all those with an interest in the use of learning technology in tertiary education. It brings together like-minded people and enables the collaboration that is so important to effective design, development and implementation of computer-facilitated learning.

ALT-C 99 was organized this year by some of the key players in the area of learning technologies in UK higher education: the CTI (Computers in Teaching Initiative with ten years of expertise in the provision of discipline-specific support, information and advice) and the Institute for Learning and Research Technology (a leading national centre of excellence in the development and use of technology-based methods in teaching, learning and assessment). It was sponsored by the Joint Information Systems Committee (the body which oversees the strategic development of information systems and information technology within UK HE).

Information and communications technology now plays an undeniable role in learning and teaching as evidenced by the record-breaking number of delegates attending ALT-C 99. We welcomed 460 delegates from around the world to the City and University of Bristol and received over 300 proposals for presentations (another record).

The philosophy at the core of the conference, whose theme was Design, Practice and Outcomes, lay in bringing together a discipline-specific and a generic focus, and developing greater opportunities for participation. This was achieved by including a day of subject-specific presentations, led by the CTI, in collaboration with other projects and programmes and introducing longer themed discussion sessions. Interactive presentations (short 'rolling show-and-tell' sessions) were also a new feature of this conference and provided a chance to listen and discuss a wide range of topical issues. These proved to be popular with delegates offering opportunities to exchange ideas and opinions with fellow delegates.

Also introduced was a greater number of keynote presentations which slotted into the different focuses of each day, based upon each element of the conference theme. Another

'first' for ALT-C was involving some of the UK's leading commercial players in this field in the academic programme who participated in the Work in Progress sessions.

The following papers are a selection given at the conference beginning with that from Carmel McNaught, one of the keynote speakers, 'The staff development at RMIT: bottom-up work serviced by top-down investment and policy'. These papers illustrate the range of topics covered and the depth of discussion that took place at the conference, from issues of staff development and initiating change, to case studies of Web-based learning and costing the life cycle of networked learning. They provide stimulating reading, and certainly reflect well the conference itself as well as the increasingly important and evolving role of learning technologies.

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