

This utopian vision is a non-escapist and non-fantastic constructive guide to the future. Such a vision struggles against alternative visions and dark sides, which are many and various. There is a real possibility that pedagogical initiatives will not be implemented or will be mismanaged. For example, the existence of vast electronic learning resources can only be fully utilised when students are given the incentive to explore widely and deeply. They do not have such incentives if curricula remain constrained both in terms of content and assessment methods. There is the danger of a decadent parallel of intellectually destructive technologism – in which information and communications technology perverts the intellectual values of learning, resulting in learning factories in which students are trained by computer boxes with very little computer or human interaction. A proper education requires a restructuring of the technological and human components in the interests of creative and reflective learning. The simple substitution of one component by another is likely to be dysfunctional.

Alternatively, Leila's day represents a constructive vision based on the primacy of educational values. She learns independently not only legal rules but the holistic experience of law. She is a global learner, yet does not ignore local legal culture. She is a distance learner but not a 'distanced' alienated learner, as she keeps actively engaged with her personal contact learning group and her personal tutor, as well as being in active communication through her course groups.

'Community without propinquity' - teaching legal history intercontinentally

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At the cusp of the twenty-first century, law teachers find themselves in another unprecedented period of technological change. Available means of presenting and distributing information are daily transforming. Newly developing commu-

nication technology ('DCT') collapses both time and space. It holds forth the promise of liberating researchers, teachers and students from the normal constraints of our materiality. DCT offers the hope of developing both inter-institutional and intercontinental teaching exchanges and of fostering student community across huge spaces, cultural differences, and, perhaps eventually, languages. Huge resources of pent-up pedagogical creativity might be unleashed when we transcend the constraints of the printed page and the bricks and mortar of our classrooms.

There is a danger that DCT may not merely fail to attain its potential but might actually be subversive of both the scholarly community and of quality, imaginative education. There is indeed something about DCT which threatens to consume our lives with the relatively pointless work of adding 'bells and whistles' to that which we already do through traditional, and arguably equally effective, educational methods. Moreover, the possibility of reducing all higher education to neatly pre-packaged modules of information, presented and evaluated in uniform ways, foretells an undesirable bureaucratisation or routinisation of the educational process, as well as a 'proletarianisation' of the professoriate.

Yet even taking full account of the possible dangers and leaving aside possible pedagogical advantages, there are compelling reasons to explore the use of DCT in law teaching. The first is simply that, in an era of globalisation, aspiring lawyers should have some exposure to the global legal community during the course of their university training. DCT can make this a basic part of legal education much more fully and routinely than in the past. Secondly, in an era of shrinking faculty resources, DCT opens opportunities to draw on a vast, yet disperse, pool of expertise to provide outstanding instruction in an array of fields that no faculty could on its own provide.

An international course in legal history was developed by faculty members and student research/teaching assistants at the Australian National University and

British Columbia's University of Victoria and the University of British Columbia during 1997. Students in all three courses received web-based instruction and were required to participate in web-based discussions. The resulting course was unique in several ways: first, four faculty members and a graduate teaching assistant at three institutions separated by many thousands of kilometres created the course; second, collaboration produced an innovative course which explored comparative legal history between two former British dominions, that would have been unlikely or impossible without the spur of collaborative teaching; third, the three classes were linked through the internet, with students from each institution participating in the learning process as a single group.

What emerged was a web page containing all the course material including text, pictures, maps, links and the course readings in various formats. Throughout the process, and on the advice of distance education experts at each of the universities, the lowest possible level of technology necessary for any particular teaching purpose was used. Rather than replacing teachers, classrooms and books, it was hoped that the internet would provide a unique medium to inform and engage students, not only through teacher-led instruction, but also through student to student communication.

These contextual modules provided students with rich multi-media exposure to a substantive knowledge base. They represented the bulk of intellectual labour involved in developing the course, and a necessary baseline from which a productive trans-Pacific interactive seminar could build. The core of the course, however, was the development of a 'virtual seminar', focussed on specific problems or issues in comparative legal history.

The experience of teaching the course has provided an opportunity to reflect on the utility of distance education technology in relation to legal education. Three lessons have been learned through developing and offering this particular course and the experience opens the space

for some modest reflection as to the possible impacts of this technology on legal education in the longer term.

As with all new academic ventures, there were design flaws in the course. Some of the contextual modules looked and read too much like lecture notes with only occasional forays into other forms of communication. When this happened we failed to take advantage of the uniqueness of the web teaching environment. This lesson about the need to construct a website so as to balance the need to communicate information with an immediacy of intellectual challenge so as to draw students into active engagement with the material presented has been taken to heart by the contextual module designer. Work has been under way to reduce the length of the expository sections.

With respect to workload issues, it is important to note that the creation of a course of this sort is labour intensive, involving significant investments of time by both academics and technical support personnel. Once the website is built, technical assistance is required to ensure its ongoing proper functioning and students require technical instruction on the use of the site and communications software.

A number of strategies might be employed to make better use of the interactive component of the course, even within the constraints of a seminar with 70 participants. Though formal structuring of discussion groups in advance of the interactive phase of the course would detract from the spontaneity of discussion, it might improve the intensity of exchange without overwhelming the limits of the medium. One possibility would be to construct groups including students from each of the partner schools, each of which would have the assigned task of focussing on one specific historical them.

Although the course was not designed to probe the limits of legal education in any fundamental way, a widened horizon of legal education is nonetheless discernible from our new perspective 'on the other side' of distance education, as it were. DCT promises, too, to enhance the quality and experience of graduate ed-

ucation in law through a pooling of resources. At the other end of the educational spectrum, DCT can also provide a means of teaching undergraduate courses to classes of almost limitless size and in more effective ways than the continuous play video-taped lectures of urban myth ever could. Some big questions remain and, obviously, we cannot know clearly where trends are heading until such time as we know more about both the future of the legal profession and emergent technology. An unbounded university education does seem to be on the horizon.

Legal education in the technology revolution: the evolutionary nature of computer-assisted learning

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The wider community's rapid assimilation of computer-based tools in the 1990s has given rise to calls by students for parallel integration of these innovations into their education. This call has been intensified by the provision of computer hardware infrastructure and of Computer-Assisted Learning (CAL) programs.

As students have become increasingly familiar with and dependent on computer technology, the boundaries of what constitutes a comfortable, stimulating, flexible and varied learning environment have altered. This inevitably adds to the demands placed on those individuals who have painstakingly developed, programmed, tested, and refined unique computer packages for student learning. Keeping materials updated is of particular importance in legal education and this maintenance function alone can consume substantial resources. The task of adapting an existing program to incorporate textual changes and new technologies on an ongoing basis, while concurrently developing new programs, is a particularly overwhelming one. Collaborative planning, development and resourcing of Australian CAL programs for legal education is necessary to achieve widespread support and acceptance by students, faculty and the legal profession.

The importance of pedagogical goals as the starting point for CAL development has been well documented. When planning a CAL program, establishing whether pedagogical aims are attainable using a standardised package is obviously a precursor to using such a template. For those of us considering converting an existing program into a standard form, the extent to which both systems are likely to achieve pedagogical goals must be reviewed and compared.

The very nature of CAL development is evolutionary. Whilst every case will be determined according to the required balance between time, resources and program features, the speed of development of technology requires CAL program designers to factor anticipated changes into their planning. That is, the sacrificing of desirable program features, such as integrated email and conferencing, can be considered temporary and should not necessarily be used to reject adoption of a standard template.

If we accept CAL has a continuing role to play in legal education in the new millennium, countries which do not take a coordinated approach to its development are in danger of becoming increasingly isolated backwaters. Technology has an important role to play in campus-based legal education.

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