

Forthcoming EVENTS

October

7th	Using ILT in Performing Arts
19th	ILT Forum
26th	Specialist College Forum
Date TBC	HE Forum
Date TBC	MIS Forum

November

2nd	Netskills workshop: Personal safety, security & privacy on the Internet
3rd	Netskills workshop: Detecting & deterring plagiarism
4th	Netskills workshop: Web pages from scratch
9th	LRC Forum
16th	Using ILT in History (to be confirmed)
18th	FPP Forum
25th	Athens workshop
29th – 30th	Becta /Ferl Post 16 E-Learning Practitioners' Conference 2004

December

7th	ILT & Accessibility
9th	Technical Forum

January

Date TBC	Microsoft Technology Day
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For further details see our website www.rsc-east-midlands.ac.uk

Many colleges and other learning providers have taken advantage of the staff development which the RSC provides by asking us to run sessions on their premises. We can design sessions on whatever topic you need. However, we have also been asked for a list of the short courses that we offer, so we have compiled a selection of 2 – 3 hour long courses we think many of you will find useful.

Courses on offer include:

- getting started with ILT for curriculum teams
- finding copyright free images
- making learning materials accessible for everyone
- using e-mails for learning
- using on-line discussion

Support with ILT tools

The RSC is now equipped with a good range of ILT tools, including: -

- a visualiser – like an overhead projector but with a camera instead of mirrors
- a digital camcorder

We are currently producing a briefing sheet for each tool, with information about key features and ideas for its use. We can run practical workshops for you where you get the chance to try out the tool and explore what it can do. If you come to one of our events you will experience the tools in use – the RSC has to demonstrate good practice not just talk about it!

So if you have a digital camera that sits in the cupboard and want to make better use of it, or are thinking of buying a set of voting pads, contact us.

Contact us at: support@RSC-east-midlands.ac.uk to discuss what you need.

Hints and Tips: Using Digital Video (DV) in the Classroom

What equipment do I need for DV?

You need a miniDV or Digital 8 camera with 'DV in' and a computer with an IEEE 1394 (FireWire or i.Link) input and editing software. Useful accessories are a tripod, headphones, and an external microphone. Be aware that not many camera manufacturers provide a firewire cable to connect camera to PC, this usually has to be purchased separately.



Possible Uses:

- create an induction film either on CD-ROM or streamed from web
- prepare educational segments on safety issues and independent life skills (e.g. catching a bus, or safety at home)
- assist in a variety of ways with the learning of other languages
- preparation of mini documentaries, interviews or news reports
- record students role playing difficult social situations
- record excursions & field trips
- increase student awareness of manipulative techniques used in advertising, particularly useful in media studies
- view difficult, dangerous or expensive experiments
- assist in the introduction of disabled students into mainstream classes
- show skills that are quicker to learn by observation
- record and analyse student or teacher presentations

Curriculum Benefits:

- students today live in a multimedia world and expect audio and visual information as part of their blended learning experience
- learning is more stimulating when a mixture of text, still images, sound and video are used
- digital media can provide many more opportunities for learning within the classroom
- the bandwidth provided by JANET means that videos can be stored and streamed from a central repository onto web pages that can be accessed anywhere within the college and even from home
- DV gives the practitioner the opportunity to film something and then play the tape back without conversion; the process between capture and the finished product is at last a quick and easy one.

Chris Bell, Specialist Colleges Advisor

More services from your RSC

Select from our menu of courses delivered on your site

- resources for HE students in FE colleges
- meeting individual learner needs through ILT
- being ILT ready for inspection

Contact us for a copy of the full list. If the course you want is not there, we can probably design it for you.

- a digital camera
- a set of voting pads
- Moodle – a free virtual learning environment
- the Mimio portable interactive whiteboard
- network analysis tools
- tablet computer

Chris Hill, RSC Manager

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Autumn 2004

Volume 3 • Issue 1

Welcome from the Editor

As I sit down to write this, I do so with a sense of reflection, as this is to be my last missive as editor of this newsletter. After seven editions and over 2 years of nagging, wheedling, pleading and press ganging my colleagues, and sometimes some of you, into submitting articles for the newsletter, I have decided to stand down and let someone else assume the role.

Looking back at the first newsletter, I have been struck by how far our support for you has evolved and changed. Back then the Regional Support Centre (RSC) was still establishing itself and the emphasis was all about building relationships with colleges and finding out what support you required. The forums, which are now an established and valued source of support, were in their infancy and we had just undertaken our first round of introductory college visits. At the time, RSC support was for the further education (FE) sector only.

Since then, of course, our remit has expanded to encompass specialist colleges, small Higher Education Institutes and HE in FE colleges and the adult and community learning sector. The range of support we offer has also grown and developed to suit your changing needs. Evidence of these changes is reflected in this edition of the newsletter, in the articles written specifically for the different sectors and in the comprehensive events programme we now offer. We are also, increasingly, taking part in individual college staff development days, delivering training tailored to the specific requirements of the college.

During the coming academic year, we aim to continue, and to improve, our support for all of you and although I shall no longer be editor of the newsletter, I will be continuing with my role as ILT Advisor for FE and look forward to meeting colleagues in the sector again soon.

Judi Millage, ILT Advisor

National Learning Network (NLN) Part-funded Technical Support Officer for Specialist Colleges

In February of this year the Learning and Skills Council (LSC) sent letters to all 68 Specialist College principals inviting medium-sized colleges to submit a bid for funding for a part time technical support officer. The budget, totalling £225,000, allocated for this project made provision for the appointment of 15 members of staff. The deadline for submission was given as March 2004. In total, 9 bids were received.

After all the bids had been submitted and marked, it was decided that because the East Midlands region had an above average number of specialist colleges, two colleges from this region could receive funding for the new post. These colleges were Whitegates Further Education Unit (FEU), Worksop and Homefield College, Loughborough.

The new posts will, however, provide support for all the Specialist Colleges in the East Midlands. The part-time technician appointed at Whitegates FEU will be available to provide support for half the week at the following colleges:

- Landmarks
- Linkage Specialist Residential College
- Doncaster College for the Deaf (Yorkshire & Humberside region)

Similarly, the technician appointed at Homefield College will be available for:

- Portland College
- Hinwick Hall College of FE
- RNIB Vocational College

The main purpose of this appointment, other than carrying out routine technician duties, is to help colleges implement and advance the recently submitted ILT Strategy. It is with this in mind that the technician will be expected to spread good ILT practice around the region, working with everyone from practitioners to principals to make sure that all staff are given practical advice and guidance on ILT, including specialist software or assistive technologies, that can help with staff development and the use of e-learning in the classroom.

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The RSC will help support this aspect of the role by providing the newly appointed technician with the necessary communication tools to engage with other specialist colleges and technical contacts both across the region and nationally. The RSC will also encourage the technician's attendance at and participation in team meetings and any relevant forums and events, again both regional and national.

If the current recruitment process is successful, both technicians should be in place by the end of September. Operational details will then be co-ordinated between the host college and outreach sites, facilitated by the RSC.

Chris Bell, Specialist Colleges Advisor

A busy time of year for Adult & Community Learning (ACL)!

The beginning of September is without doubt one of the busiest times of the year in ACL and this year you also have your full ILT/e-Learning strategies to focus on, ready for submission in January 2005. At the RSC we have been supporting LEAs and we hope to continue to do so in ways that you want, both in the development and the long term implementation of your strategies.

Support so far from the RSC

When I began as ACL advisor for the East Midlands it was a case of making contact with you all and to begin to understand the huge diversity in ACL delivery across the region. I did have a list of names, the odd person on that list having left years ago or not existing at all! So initially I've worked towards meeting as many of you as possible, and my contact list is now made up of real people! In addition to meeting as many of you as possible, the RSC has:

- Offered specific support on writing initial strategies
- Met to explain and discuss the NLN partnership and the extension of this to ACL
- Had discussions with Local Education Authorities (LEAs) and UKERNA about the JANET offer
- Delivered the NLN learning materials (If you haven't had your set please ring or email)
- Helped organise the first NILTA forum
- Informed the ACL sector in the East Midlands of national initiatives related to ILT/e-Learning strategy
- Jointly run the ILT/e-Learning strategy workshops with NIACE

Support over the next few months

I'm hoping that you will be happy to ask for support which is specific to your needs, but some of the support we will provide is outlined below:

Strategy support sessions

As you begin to write your full strategies I would like to set up a series of meetings to visit and support you with this. If we haven't finalised any dates for this please ring or email. This support can be an opportunity to talk through any concerns, ask for ideas or support for your E-Guides.

ACL discussion list

We have set up an ACL discussion list for heads of service and senior managers. This is to provide an effective way to communicate with all LEAs in the East Midlands. Important information will be posted to this list and any queries relating to strategy can be posted to the list.

Events

Please visit our website to see events organised by the RSC, some of which will be ACL specific.

www.rsc-east-midlands.ac.uk

Supporting your E-Guides

NIACE have developed The E-Guides Programme to support Adult and Community Learning staff in embedding the use of e-learning across the curriculum. The first of five E-Guides events in the region has now taken place. Full details can be found here:

www.aclearn.net

NILTA ACL forums

The first forum was a great opportunity to meet, discuss and find out more info about the various aspects of the NLN-ACL initiative. We are waiting for NILTA to confirm the date for the next forum but it is likely to be early October.

Well, once the hectic first few weeks of enrolments have settled down I'll look forward to meeting up with you all again.

Sharon Hutchings, ACL Advisor

RSS and Blogs


Could RSS newsfeeds and weblogs be the answer to information overload, or will they just add to it? They are intended to help by bringing together information on any particular topic in the form of news feeds, headlines and links.

You go to blogs, while RSS feeds come to you.

RSS

RDF Site Summary, Rich Site Summary, or Really Simple Syndication.

RSS feeds provide a digest of news to your website. The source might be a blog, a web site eg. BBC news, or an email list.

In order to read an RSS feed you will need an aggregator or newsfeed reader. This saves you the job of having to check all your sources one at a time for anything new. If you see a little box, like this  in the navigation column of a site saying XML or RSS you will be able to click on this to receive their feed.

The Ferl RSS feed contains a combination of news, information and latest resources from the Ferl website. The feed is updated every 48 hours to ensure that you are always up-to-date with the latest e-learning intelligence for the FE sector.

<http://ferl.becta.org.uk/display.cfm?page=794>

Blogs

Blogs are like diaries with the latest item at the top. They can be personal or professional or any shade in between. For educational purposes they could be used to provide news items, handouts, receive comments from students, or create a subject community.

Blogging has become so popular that commercial uses are now being seriously addressed. The personal and amateur feel of blogging is fast being overtaken by more corporate uses.

A local example of a (personal) e-learning blog is from Josie Fraser, who works at a 6th form college in Leicester

<http://fraser.typepad.com/>

For more information on RSS go to:

<http://www.freepint.com/issues/170604.htm#feature>

For more information on weblogs go to:

<http://www.ariadne.ac.uk/issue36/search-engines/>

Martin Cooke, ILT Advisor



It's about increasing choices: using ILT in teaching

Using ILT in practical teaching doesn't mean you have to abandon all the teaching and learning strategies you have used previously. For example, lots of subjects ask a learner to sort things – putting things into categories or into the correct order.

At the "Using ILT in Teacher Training" event that the RSC ran in May, we considered why you might do this using cards, and why you might do it on computer using a Word document with each idea in a separate text box that can be moved around on screen. Here's a shortened version of the lists the group came up with.

Do it by card sorting because: -

- some learners dislike computers
- kinetic learners like moving things physically
- you don't have to have a computer available
- cards are portable
- cards are easy to create
- sorting generates good discussion for learners
- cards are durable
- cards add variety
- cards are easily storable
- you like using cards

Do it on computer because: -

- some learners like computers
- learners can access the activity at different times
- learners can access the activity at different places
- you can easily make improvements
- different colours, images and fonts make the display more interesting
- using a computer adds variety
- you can easily change the document to create new activities
- learners can work at different speed
- different colours and fonts are easier for dyslexic learners
- you like using computers

It's easy to come up with why you shouldn't use a particular teaching method, but these are 10 positive reasons for using cards and 10 positive reasons for using ILT. You can use either. Good teachers have more choices in the learning and teaching strategies they use. The skill comes in choosing the best one for each learner.

Chris Hill, RSC Manager

More JANET Bandwidth – The Sequel

In last term's newsletter there was an article on LSC plans to increase the funded JANET bandwidth of FE Colleges in England to either 4Mbps or 10Mbps depending on current usage. In order to keep everybody up to date with the latest developments, this article will again focus on the bandwidth upgrades.

Since the last newsletter was published, the LSC has now provided UKERNA with official confirmation that funding for the increased bandwidth is in place. As a result of this, UKERNA and the RSC are working together to bring the upgraded JANET connections into service as soon as possible.

For those colleges where a physical 10Mbps circuit already exists (with rate limiting controlling the available bandwidth), the rate limiting parameters have been changed to allow the allocated upgraded bandwidth. These configuration changes have already been completed, with the revised bandwidth levels available to colleges from 1st August 2004.

In some cases, colleges have already been paying for extra JANET bandwidth. For these colleges, the recurrent costs associated with the extra funded bandwidth now allocated by the LSC, will be paid for by UKERNA from 1st August 2004.

For those colleges that do not fit into either of the above categories, new, higher bandwidth circuits will need to be installed. The EMMAN, RSC and UKERNA are working together to arrange for these circuits to be installed at the first possible opportunity, although it should be noted that it takes quite a considerable period of time from the date of order for the telecommunications companies to make new circuits ready for service. Obviously, the EMMAN, RSC and UKERNA will work with the telecommunications companies to ensure that the installation periods are kept as short as possible.

As part of the bandwidth upgrade programme, the UKERNA supplied Cisco 2621 routers, that were provided as part of the initial JANET connection, will be replaced by new Cisco 2691 routers. These routers are being purchased by UKERNA and will be installed in colleges by staff from the RSC as soon as they are available.

If you have any questions concerning the additional funded bandwidth available to your college, or queries relating to the bandwidth upgrade programme in general, contact the RSC by telephone on 01509 618110 or by email support@rsc-east-midlands.ac.uk

James Higham, Network Specialist

Higher Education (HE) in Further Education (FE): Sharing electronic resources

The delivery of HE courses in FE colleges has been taking place for many years, yet its value has often been overlooked and the sector has received little practical support. Now, finally, HE in FE has been recognised as one of the most important means of expanding sub-degree higher education, to achieve the government's targets to involve 50 % of the 18-30 population in higher education by 2010. Try doing a Google search on "HE in FE" and you'll see that this section of our community has attracted an enormous amount of attention. Advice is offered on all aspects of HE in FE from organisations such as the Association of Colleges (AoC), the Higher Education Funding Council for England (HEFCE), the Learning and Skills Development Agency (LSDA) and the Higher Education Academy. Of course, the RSC also offers support in this area and we now employ an e-Learning Advisor to support HE staff in regional colleges.

One of the common difficulties faced by HE in FE providers is the creation of an "HE environment", providing an equivalent experience to that encountered by students in Higher Education Institutions. Issues including funding, student support and the sharing of electronic resources are fundamental in ensuring that HE in FE students aren't

disadvantaged. The RSC can help you to tackle some of these issues by offering advice on the use of Virtual Learning Environments (VLEs) to share electronic resources between institutional partners.

JISC is now taking the concept of sharing VLE's between institutions one step further, through the distributed eLearning programme. Throughout September and October, JISC are holding regional meetings to discuss plans to pilot a technical architecture to provide better opportunities for lifelong learners. Each pilot project will consist of a regional collaboration of Higher Education Institutions, Further Education Colleges, the RSC and, where appropriate, HE Academy Subject Centres. Other partners may be included at a local or regional level. Through the use of appropriate learning tools, easier access to personal learning information and access to greater quantities of quality assured learning materials, boundless opportunities for learners and teachers can be created.

For more information on the Regional e-Learning Pilot Projects, visit http://www.jisc.ac.uk/index.cfm?name=event_regional_pilot_projects

Rachael Stacey, e-Learning Advisor (HE)