# Experiments and pedagogies

## Activating the student
## Analysis of assignments and activating methods in the
## Finnish Virtual University of History (FVUH)

Sirkku Anttonen
University of Turku

### Introduction

The purpose of this analysis is to examine the variety of assignments and activating methods that are used in the web-courses of the Finnish Virtual University of History (hereafter referred to as the FVUH). Unfortunately, there are only a few tools for analysng e-learning in History. In contrast there are many tools for analysing e-learning as a whole. Because of this lack, the present analysis deals with a more general tool, called eTutorPuzzle, which is designed for planners of web-based learning.

eTutorPuzzle was created by TutoringAdultsOnline@duline in a project under the Socrates Grundtvig 1 programme. Materials were created by the Centre for Extension Studies at the University of Turku, the Open University in Portugal (Universidade Aberta) and the University of Tartu.[1] eTutorPuzzle consists of 75 different types of activation method arranged under 20 separate search-words. They include: Awaken interest, Develop communication, Develop critical thinking, Develop learning strategies, Develop argumentation skills and Develop problem-solving skills. The web material in eTutorPuzzle helps users to prepare their own

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[1]  http://www.tkk.utu.fi/aduline.

tutorial plan. The material is not just confined to text but contains many interactive elements.

Since 2000, the The FVUH[2] has created over 30 web-courses for history. There are courses using Finnish, Swedish and English. Most of the courses are run by a tutor although there are a few self-study courses. There is no separate pedagogy specific to e-learning, as argued by. Satu Nurmela and Riitta Suominen, for instance. Planners make their own decisions on this for their particular courses.[3] Course planners at the FVUH are usually PhD-students, who create courses on their own research topic. Others are university staff who are interested in e-learning. In general, course planners do the technical implementation themselves. Each year the FVUH organizes an evaluation seminar, where feedback is given on new web-courses. However they have not so far offered any courses to help with actual course planning.

Out of over 30 history courses six have been chosen, at random, for closer examination. They are: the Cultural history of stimulants (Nautintoaineiden kulttuurihistoriaa), Finnishness in popular music (Suomalaisuus populaarimusiikissa -kurssi), Everyday history (Arjen historiaa – 1900-luvun suomalainen koti -kurssi), Introductory course to history, (Historian johdantokurssi), Sources of interpretation (Tulkintojen lähteillä) and Travelling as a cultural phenomenon (Matkailu kulttuurisena ilmiönä -kurssi).[4] All the citations are from these courses.

## 2. Assignment types: written and group-discussion tasks

There are two kinds of assignment in the courses of the FVUH: written work and discussions.[5] They are generally based on study materials. One of the major challenges in creating study material for use on the web is to understand that simply transfering a traditional book into web format is not a viable option. Web-texts should be short and compact and should include links, hypertext and multimedia-elements.[6]

[2]   About Finnish Virtual University: see the article by Tapio Onnela on p. 27-32.

[3]   In the history of the web-courses, according to Nurmela and Suominen, five different development stages can be found. In the first stage study materials were put on the web as they were. The web was only an instrument for supplying knowledge. In the second stage all kind of tools (assignment boxes, quizzes, tests etc.) were widely used. That meant that more effort was put into the tools than into the content. In the third stage unnecessary tools were removed and the focus was again on the study process. According to Nurmela and Suominen we are now in stage four where multimedia possibilities have been widely used. They argue that, in the future, web-courses will move towards a so-called semantic web where an intellectual search-agent will provide different kinds of study material depending on the needs of the student. Nurmela & Suominen, page 11, 2005.

[4]   All the courses except "Cultural history of stimulants" have been planned by a team of researches and teachers. Courses last from 8-10 weeks and they are aimed to students in the late first or early second cycle. The extent of the courses varies from 2-6 credits.

[5]   Four different study models can be found: 1) Students carry out every week/ phase discussion and written assignment. 2) Students carry out every week/ phase either discussion or written assignment. 3) There are few discussion assignments because most of the assignments are in written form. 4) There are few written assignments because most of the assignments are discussion assignments.
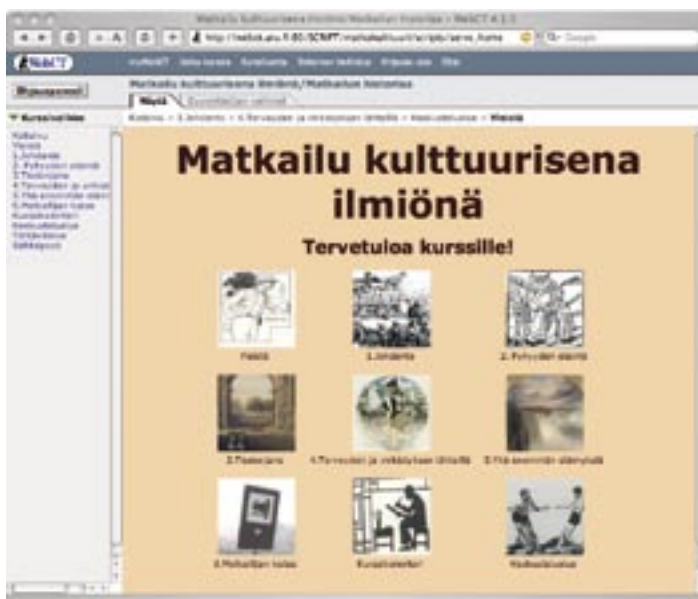
## 2.1. The written character of history

In the courses being examined the most common types of written assignment consist of essays, from half a page to 8 pages in length, study diaries and information-search tasks. In some cases it is obvious that course planners have simply transferred tasks from face-to-face teaching onto the web, with assignments requiring rather lengthy essay-like answers. Writing essays is not very interactive. However the very nature of History as a humanist discipline requires exact essay-like consideration.

Students are usually required to carry out many small written assignments in a course. The question must be asked whether it is better for effective learning to do many different tasks or to do just one big assignment. Based on many small tasks it can be hard to measure the students' workload – or that of the tutor. The question of workload should always be addressed when thinking of course assignments.

## 2.2. Interaction through group discussion

Interaction and dialogue are one of the most important aspects of e-learning. At its simplest, interaction takes place in synchronous or asynchronous discussions using the platform. The best messages are short, concentrating on one or two topics.[7]

Academic group discussions play a major part in the courses of the FVUH. In general, students are required to submit 2 or 3 comments on each discussion topic. In some courses there are also informal course areas, such as "cafés" but discussions in these do not count towards the student's grade. Different discussion forums,

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[6]  Nurmela & Suominen, 2005 page 57.

[7]  Nurmela & Suominen, 2005 page 46.

from cafés to more academic ones, enable students to express, and hear, different viewpoints and ideas in their course discussions. Absence from a discussion needs to be made up by written work. A virtual classroom enables discussions to take place regardless of time and space. A virtual environment also makes it possible to create various kinds of sub-groups.

It has been argued that on-line discussions help more students learn better. Discussions place them in an intellectual environment that encourages active, equal and thoughtful participation.[8] A discussion also leaves a printed record that can be referred to later by the student for information. It can also be analysed afterwards.[9] Wu Dezhi & Hiltz argue that on-line discussions motivate students to be more engaged in the course on a continuous basis and to reflect issues more thoroughly, because they need to express them in their own words. They also say that on-line discussions, that are student- dominated rather than instructor-dominated, should be enjoyable for students. They should make learning more active and more fun.[10]

There has been much talk about how discussions can be assessed. There is no right or wrong answer in the field of history, so assessing the discussions using a matrix could be difficult. However, it is important that taking part in discussions is seen by students as a duty, because it would scarcely be motivating if discussions did not count towards their grades. Some criterion for assessing needs to be explained to students.  In many courses at the FVUH it is claimed that active participation and good arguments by the student can raise their grade. This is a very weak criterion; but a qualitative criterion is better than a quantitative one, because the number of messages does not indicate student learning, as Jan Brace-Govan has said.[11] Unfortunately there are also courses at the FVUH, where no mention is made of how discussion arguments or assignments as a whole are assessed.

## 3. Activating methods – analysing the assignments using eTutorPuzzle

When talking about e-learning, it is essential to understandthe importance of student motivation. Students need to be well motivated when studying on the web so as to avoid drop-outs.  Studying on-line requires more active involvement and students need to be more committed than in traditional teaching. So assignments should be so interesting that they create a real desire to study. As Nurmela and Suominen say, it is not advisable to have a lot of similar tasks in a row if one wishes to maintain the student's interest.[12]

[8]　See for example JALN vol. 8, issue 2, page 140, April 2004.
[9]　Meyers, 2004, 12.
[10]　JALN vol 8, issue 2, page 142, April 2004.
[11]　Jan Brace-Govan, 2003, 313.
[12]　Nurmela & Suominen, 2005, page 48.

Though eTutorPuzzle offers 20 different search-words[13] and 75 activation methods, it is not necessary to use all of them. Clearly it provides great possibilities for developing many different kinds of assignment.

The assignments used by the FVUH will be studied using the following eTutorPuzzle search-words: motivate participation / awaken interest, support individual learning, develop learning strategies, evaluate learning. These search-words give an overview of the most common assignments and activation methods that they use.

## 3.1. Motivate participation / awaken interest

As with organizing seminars, the grouping of students is very important so it has to be thought about carefully when planning the course. At the beginning of the course "ice breakers" are important. When using eTutorPuzzle, tutors should be open to new ideas and novel experiences. They should be participating as one of the students or stay in the background. Tutoring should also be informal and occasional.[14] Students can be motivated by fun activities such as virtual cocktail parties and virtual Christmas parties. It is essential to allow enough time at the beginning for students to introducte themselves and getting acquainted with each other. For example, in the Everyday History course students introduce themselves using the place they like best (their home) in the forum called "House-warming party".

> Tell other students your thoughts about the word home – which is probably your favourite place. Why is it so important to you?

In the course "Travelling as a cultural phenomenon" students are asked to reflect upon their own travelling experiences:

> Introduce yourself and explain the reasons you have had to travel, and what travelling has meant to you.

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[13] All the search words are: awaken interest, develop communication, develop critical thinking, develop learning strategies, develop argumentation skills, develop problem-solving skills, develop content-related knowledge, evaluate learning, facilitate understanding, motivate participation, produce new ideas, promote research, promote theories into practice, promote self-direction, promote use of the Internet, support community building, support individual learning, support joining a group, support networking and support small group interaction.

[14] http://momu.utu.fi/aduline/.

In some courses students are activated by asking them to think of the meaning of the course content, like in the "Introductory course to history".

> Introduce yourself in the discussion forum "Me and history" and tell us what history means to you. Tell us how you became interested in history – and why. How do you see yourself in history?

## 3.2. Support individual learning

At the FVUH most of the course assignments support individual learning and information-searching from the internet and from on-line libraries. The length of the essays varies from half a page to 8 pages. All the material is available on the web though some of the assignments may require visiting on-line libraries. For example in the course "Everyday history" students are asked to write a mini-essay using old cookery books.

> Go to the library and find an old cookery book, or look for old magazines for recipes, and pictures of place-settings. Choose an example and compare it with modern recipes or place- settings. Write a mini-essay, 1 or 2 pages long, about the changes.

In future, use of digital libraries is going to increase. As a result, problems may well occur because universities have different licencing arrangements with the digital journals. Fortunately open access to journals is increasing all the time.

Preparing a longer essay is usually the final work done on the courses. On some courses students can choose whether to do a wider-ranging essay or a shorter one depending on the grade needed. The final work on the "Everyday history" course is more specialized than writing a traditional essay. The course was run in conjunction with YLE, Finland's National Public Service Broadcasting Company. Some of the final work was published on their web-site.[15]

> Final work will be an analysis based on some primary sources, in which research literature will be used. It can be an essay or you can use multimedia: pictures, audio elements or moving picture.

## 3.3. Develop learning strategies

On-line learning diaries support the student's own self-evaluation. They stimulate further thinking and new ideas. In the "Cultural history of stimulants" course, an on-line diary is combined with writing a  mini-essay and introducing new ideas:

[15]  YLE is Finland's national public service broadcasting company. It operates five national television channels and thirteen radio channels and services complemented by 25 regional radio programmes. Look at the published final works: http://www.yle.fi/teema/ylenavoin/artikkeli.php?id=231.

Read the chapter "Coffee and protestant ethic" in Schivelbusch´s "Tastes of Paradise. A Social History of Spices, Stimulants, and Intoxicants". Write a short comment, about half a page long, on the popularity of coffee. Why has it been popular since the 17th century?

Learning strategies and teamwork are also developed by team presentations. In the "Sources of interpretation" course students are asked to work as a group, to compile their individual essays in such a way as to combine the ideas expressed in their separate efforts.

On some courses students are offered different study paths, where they can choose the particular assignment that interests them, such as in the "Finnishness in popular music" course.

There are three discussion forums. You can take part in all the discussions if you want to, but you are only required to take part in one group.

Using different study paths allows students to make decisions about what they study, but  the different content involved increases the tutor's workload.

## 3.4. Evaluate learning

In many courses there is the possibility to give feedback on the course and to provide open evaluation of it. It must be remembered, however, that revealing their identity can  can discourage students from giving totally honest feedback. So the possibility should be offered of giving anonymous feedback. In the course "Sources of interpretation" giving feedback is compulsory. However it is stressed that this does not affect the grade.  Students are asked to answer the following questions:

- Did the course meet your needs?
- What was the most important theme in the course for you?
- What would you have liked to know more about?
- Give your opinion about the study methods: group discussions and group work.
- How did you find the study material? Was there too much to read?
- How would you evaluate the tutoring?
- Have you any comments on the course planning team?

On the same course students are encouraged to practise opinion-forming and argumentative skills with peer evaluation. Students are asked to comment, as a group, on  other groups' presentations:

- Compare the presentations. Which of them are similar and which are different?

- How is the context handled?
- How does the group treat the researchers´ position and their ethical approach?

## 4. Conclusion

The purpose of this analysis has been to examine the variety of assignments and activating methods that are used in the web-courses of the FVUH. There are two types of assignment in the courses: written tasks and group discussions. Written assignments are usually essay-like tasks. Group discussions play a major part in almost all the courses. On-line discussions help more students learn better. Discussions encourage active, equal and thoughtful participation. Different discussion forums encourage students to express differing viewpoints and alternative ideas.

Fostering motivation to study is very important in e-learning. Without proper motivation students easily drop out of courses. Assignments should be so interesting that they tempt students to study. When analysing the assignments and activating methods of the FVUH, it can be seen that more activating methods and assignment types could be used. The grouping of students has been well addressed; and individual tasks are in general well planned. On many courses there is also the possibility to give feedback and to provide open evaluation of the course. A lack of variety in tasks often occurs because many course planners have had no previous experience of on-line teaching. Consideration should be given to offering courses on "planning a web-course".

In general, existing web-courses form a solid foundation on which it is easy to build new methods of studying history on-line.

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# Mediaeval History course at ICoN

Enrica Salvatori and Giada Marcazzani
Pisa University
http://www.italicon.it

## 1. Introduction

ICoN is a consortium of 24 Italian universities set up in January 1999 in partnership with the Office of the President of the Chamber of Deputies and with the support of the Office of the Prime Minister and the Ministry of Universities & Scientific & Technological Research. It operates in agreement with the Ministry of Foreign Affairs.

The IcoN Consortium has a complex structure with a president, an Assembly of Consortium Members, a Board of Administration, an Executive Committee, a Scientific Teaching Council, a College of Auditors, and an operating team complete with secretariat.

The Consortium is a group of universities and enterprises with a common organization and a common aim, which is, in this case, the promotion and spread of Italian culture and the image of Italy worldwide using the Internet. It offers a degree course on Italian Language & Culture for foreign students as well as two separate Italian language courses and a course on Written Italian for Special Purposes.

The ICoN consortium is extensive, well-financed and supported by the Ministry of Education, University and Research.

Every member of the Consortium takes part in financing the organisation. They each allocate an agreed amount annually to pay for IcoN for its tutors and its technical tools. Some things do not need to be paid every year, such as creating the course

materials. Tutors work under contracts which depend on the number of students enrolled and on the courses that they select..

ICoN web-site visitors can register as simple users. Registered users can read and download all the material available in the Digital Library and receive information about the Consortium's activities.

An annual subscription is charged to registered users, schools and universities. This allows access to all the texts in the teaching modules, the material in the Virtual Museum and all the Encyclopaedia entries.

Three different forms of yearly subscription are available:

— an individual subscription  costs 140 Euros
— a subscription for high schools and ICoN partners costs 650 Euros
— a subscription for foreign universities costs 1000 Euros

The courses in Italian Language for Foreigners, Written Italian for Professional Purposes and Italian for non-EC citizens can be accessed only by those that have paid the approriate subscription.

Students enrolled on the degree course have access to all the teaching & learning resources, the Community section and the forum pages. Access to the virtual classes and interaction with the tutors is reserved for students who have enrolled on the tutored degree course.



*Image 1: ICoN home page*

## 2. Thematic viewpoints

### Pedagogy

Students are not required to go on-line at fixed times. Messages from their tutors are sent to the student's mail-box or stored in the forum area, until the student has time to download them and send a reply. The modules and the accompanying material are available at all times. Whenever students are ready to resume work, all they have to do is to log-on to the web-site and start again where they left off.

At the time of enrolment, ICoN students can choose between two different paths: a course with tutorials or a self-guided one.

### Tutoring

Tutors enrolled in the tutoring system are sub-divided into classes corresponding to the subjects. For each class, a discussion forum is created where students can take part in discussiona led by a tutor.

#### Services provided by the tutoring system

Students have the opportunity to take part in a debating area reserved for their class, for each of the subjects followed, and also in a debating session open to all students enrolled in the tutoring system. This is the ICoN Café. They can get help and guidance from their tutors and expect answers within three working days, provided it is within the tutors' specific field of competence. They can also contacting the site management team for technical support and the tutoring co-ordinator on questions relating to teaching. They have the option to do two pieces of written work assigned by the tutor on topics forming part of the course subject. The work will be marked by the tutor using the same criteria that will be used for the final examination.

#### Vouchers for tutorials

The ICoN tutorial "voucher" guarantees access to a subject forming part of the degree course. At the beginning of each semester all students who have completed the enrolment procedure receive a number of vouchers equal to the number of subjects they are required to take in that semester. It is generally five. A student who decides not to take all the proposed subjects can, through the options available in the enrolment or re-enrolment procedure, opt to retain one or more vouchers for subsequent semesters, in order to study those subjects at a later date. At the end of the course all unused vouchers will be automatically cancelled.

**Self-guided study**

On the basis of the credits associated with each syllabus within the degree course on Italian Languge and Culture for Foreigners, students who opt for self-guided study work entirely on their own, studying the modules, grouped together by subject, that are specified for the semester in question. They do the self-assessment tests at the end of each unit and at the end of each module.

Teaching activities are divided into two semesters: September-December and March-June. The first examination session is held in January and February, the second in June and July.

All teaching is done on-line. Students use the interactive teaching materials, complete the automated-answer exercises, and consult the library, museum and encyclopaedia. They can take the self-guided, self-access course, or make use of tutoring services for each subject taught during the semester.

Enrolled students who make use of the tutoring service take mid-term tests and interact, in a virtual classroom with other students, who may be anywhere in the world. At the end of each semester, all students take written examinations at institutions that have an agreement with IcoN. These are located throughout the world: at Italian Cultural Institutes, Italian schools abroad and foreign universities. At the end of the course, students must prepare a written project, a computerised fact-sheet or an audio-visual project on a subject related to their studies.

At IcoN, students work asynchronously, which means that they are not required to go on-line at set times. Messages from their tutors are stored in the forum rooms or in the students' e-mail boxes until they have time to download them and send a reply. The modules and the accompanying material are always available. Whenever students are ready to resume study, all they have to do is to identify themselvselves on the web-site, and then  start again where they left off.


**History courses**

Courses in history and in the humanities that are offered on the platform include
- Medieval History: 10 courses;
- Modern History: 10 courses;
- Contemporary History: 10 courses;
- Demographic and ethno-anthropological disciplines: 5 courses;
- Sociology: 4 courses;
- Economic History : 7 courses;
- History of Science and Technology: 4 courses;
- History of Christianity and the Churches: 5 courses;
- History of Political Thought: 7 courses;
- History of Games and Sport: 1 course;

- Archive-keeping, bibliography and librarianship: 5 courses;

To see how history is taught on an IcoN degree course, it will be helpful to examine one of the courses, for example the one on Medieval History. The other history courses follow a similar pattern.



*Image 2: The History and Social science area*

The Mediaeval History course, which is part of the degree programme in Italian Language & Culture, aims to give students an overview of mediaeval culture and history in Italy. The course is open to enrolled students, although other users can access some of the lessons.

The course is split into 10 lessons written by different people. Each lesson consists of 8-10 units and provides a presentation and a guide. At the end of each lesson the students have to do an exercise. This is open only to enrolled students.

The themes are really traditional. There are two units on the quality and use of sources (without practical examples) and lessons on the different chronological phases of the Middle Ages: High, Central and Late. They also include lessons on particular subjects such as Institutions and Religion.

Units appear set in stone with no sign of the materials being developed or extended.. Students have to read the texts of the lesson, then do the exercises – if necessary consulting the library, the virtual museum and the encyclopaedia. They can follow the entire course in a self-guided, self-access way, or they can make use of tutoring services.

Each unit includes a number of exercises that student have to complete within a fixed time, which is normally half an hour. These are generally tests with a single choice.



*Image 3: An example of a test in the Medieval History course. Students have half an hour to answer several questions. The entail choosing between two possible answers.*

## Materials

The study materials look like traditional lessons written by the tutor, split into convenient chunks and put on-line in html. The learning units are original texts written by tutors fom the consortium universities. There are very few images, or links to other texts. Each course has its own bibliography. There appear to be no external texts that students have to read. Bibliography at the end of each single history course sometimes includes links to other on-line texts which students are free to download. Students can also find material in the ICoN digital library which consists mainly of works of Italian literature.

Material is almost entirely in the form of texts, though there are some images in the Archaeology courses and the History of Art courses. Tutors conduct mid-term tests and they can interact with their students in a virtual classroom, if students want

this. It is not clear from the web-site what the course objectives are or what results are achieved. The texts are fixed and unchanging, and the course seems rather inflexible and not very well balanced.

The on-line Library, Museum and Encyclopaedia are accessible from the IcoN home-page.

The Library gives access to 318 works of Italian literature written by 104 leading authors. The Museum contains images of Italian works of art from antiquity to the 20th century. The Encyclopaedia offers a wide range of items from the Piccola Enciclopedia Treccani covering the main areas of Italian culture. Texts and images can be studied on-line or downloaded.

There is no on-line access to literature or journals, apart from a journal produced by ICoN itself, and short extracts from articles chosen by the tutors and included in the teaching units.

Copyright issues are dealt with in commercial agreements between ICoN and the authors or between ICoN and the other institutions that participate in the consortium – such as Treccani Publishing and the offices of Monuments and Fine Arts (Soprintendenza ai Monumenti e alle Belle Arti). Authors give ICoN the copyright in the material that they put on line.

Little use appears to be made of primary sources. Secondary sources appear as short quotations. ICoN exploits few of the on-line tools available for e-learning. Apart from the exercises, there is little that is interactive, and no sign of quizzes, games or other learning devices. The bibliographical database is wholly internal so the course appears as a closed unit. Students are neither required nor encouraged to look for material elsewhere on the Internet.



*Images 4 and 5: The digital library*

## Administration

Since ICoN is a consortium of many Italian universities, it has a complex structure. This includes the Assembly of Consortium Members, the Board of Administration, the Executive Committee, the Scientific Teaching Council, the College of Auditors and the operating team with its secretariat. The Mediaeval History course appears to be totally integrated into this complex structure and seems to have no special audience of its own.

## Platforms

Lessons and materials are available only as web pages. The technical requirements are therefore: a computer with a sound card and Windows Media Player, an internet connection with a speed of at least 28.8 Kbps (56 Kpbs is recommended) and an internet browser: Internet Explorer 5.0 (or higher) or Netscape Communicator 4.7 (or higher).

## Language

As the Mediaeval History course is part of the Italian Language & Culture programme, lessons and materials are all in Italian. Primary and secondary sources, when used, are translated, or they are quoted in the original language with an accompanying translation.



*Image 6: The learning units on sources of the High Middle Ages*

## Intercultural issues

ICoN courses are for foreign students who want to improve their knowledge of Italian culture and language. Though the students that enroll on ICoN courses are from many countries around the world, each with different teaching traditions, the teaching methods used by ICoN take no account of this.

## Quality

Feedback on the ICoN degree courses, including the Mediaeval History course, is extremely limited and comes only from students enrolled each year and those that complete their degree. Students can study when they want to, without any time constraints. Interaction between teacher and students is limited and there is no real exploitation of the tools and methods now available for learning on-line.

## Student assessment

In order to be assessed, students doing the self-guided courses must complete a set of exercises by 27th December, for the semester beginning in September, and by 17th June for the semester beginning in March.  These exercises are available at any time of the year within each course.

## Assessment by means of the tests

This is based on the average of the final tests in the obligatory modules. 50% of the total, with the possibility of rounding up to the next whole number in the case of odd numbers, eg. 4 final tests out of 7, three out of 5, etc.). This applies to the modules indicated at the beginning of the semester. A bonus of 3 points is given for each of the remaining modules taken by the student as an option..

Below 50%, the exercises are assessed at 1 (inadequate, "fail") regardless of the mark actually achieved. The board of examiners will be informed if technical difficulties arise, provided they have been properly documented,. For the subjects in which the student intends to take the examination, the exercises are assessed on the last day before the deadline. The result of the final assessment is indicated by a letter: A, B, C, I). For the final mark, expressed out of thirty, the Board of Examiners may assign:

o   up to 3 points (with distinction) for an overall result = A
o   up to 2 points for an overall result = B
o   up to 1 point for an overall result = C

At the end of each semester, all students do a written exam which they take at one of the  institutions laid down by agreement with IcoN located around the world. They are generally held at an Italian school or a foreign university. At the end of the course, students must prepare a written project, a computerised fact-sheet or an audio-visual project on a subject related to their studies.

## 4. Conclusion

As its aims the Consortium has the promotion and spread of Italian culture and of the image of Italy worldwide and the organization of course degrees in Italian culture and language, ICoN achieves these aims very well. Through the ICoN website Italian students abroad, and foreign students who want to study the Italian language and learn about Italian history and culture, find plenty of fine material. From a historical point of view, it provides a fair picture and gives students a valuable start. It is a good formula, but only for the particular purposes laid down.

It does not seem appropriate for use in other fields and for other aims and it is not suitable for lifelong-learning programs or for institutional history degree courses, delivered by European universities. The learning materials are too fixed: It is possible to change them of course, but this means that teachers would have to re-write their own original texts, and change the whole course structure, and this would entail a great deal of time.

The materials are mainly in text form. The use of multimedia and of web tools is too limited  and the learning objects appear to be too circumscribed and too inward-looking.

## Members of the Consortium

The IcoN Consortium comprises the following universities: Bari, Cassino, Catania, Florence, Genoa, Milan State University, Padua, Parma, Pavia, Perugia for Foreigners, Pisa, Rome "La Sapienza", Rome "Tor Vergata", Roma III, Salerno, Siena for Foreigners, Teramo, Turin, Trento, Venice; the Free University of Language and Communication IULM of Milano, the Oriental University Institute of Naples, the Superior School for Academic Studies "S. Anna" in Pisa and the NET.T.UNO Consortium.

# E-learning in History. Two Case-Studies in Switzerland
## Preface to the Swiss case studies

Christian R. Raschle
for Università degli Studi Bologna

> "Learning activities are the verbs of learning. They put people in action. They elevate learning from passive reading and watching to active seeking, selecting and creating knowledge. (...) Interactivity boosts learning. People learn faster and develop more positive attitudes when learning is interactive."[1]

Designing an online course does not only mean looking for appropriate material, such as text and images, and simply putting them on the web. The designer also has to think how to motivate the students to learn. In most online courses these motivational aspects are central because they give the students added value in comparison with conventional classroom teaching, or using text-books for reading and memorizing. In my two case studies I have therefore concentrated on the activities that they require to the students to do. We will look especially at activities that do not involve the course designer himself, nor tutors using the course-material for their students (so called *stand-alone applications*).

## Formats of activities

In his seminal book on designing web-based training, William Horton sets out fourteen common learning activities that are usable for online course-design. He

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[1] William Horton, Designing Web-Based Training, New York – Chichester – Weinheim – Brisbane – Singapore – Toronto (Wiley) 2000, 191.

explains in detail how one can use them in an appropriate way. Of these 14 activities the following are regarded as best practice in designing activities that users can do on their own without consulting a tutor or fellow students:

*Presentation sequences* (Horton 2000, 199-202)

Learners read, watch and listen to carefully-crafted explanations in a Web-browser. The aim is to provide a consistent high quality explanation to all learners. This activity should only be used in combination with other teaching methods, because it is not at once easy to appreciate itsvalue compared with using a good text-book.

*Drill and practice activities* (Horton 2000, 202-204)

Learners repeatedly practice applying specific knowledge or using a particular skill. This helps learners to memorize facts and procedures that they must be able to recall without hesitation. One encounters this sort of activity especially in language-training programs, where it is highly successful. In history courses they take the form of different types of multiple-choice test that concentrate on facts and figures rather than on procedures.

*Guided analysis* (Horton 2000, 211-218)

Learners analyse data in order to evaluate its validity, to spot trends and to infer principles. This activity teaches the skills of formal analysis technique or helps learners to discover trends and principles for themselves. When used in a history course, the analysis of different types of sources is one of the key skills that can be developed. It may involve sorting, classifying or ranking items according to defined procedures.

*Case studies* (Horton 2000, 226-231)

Learners study a detailed example from an event, process or system in the real world, in order to abstract useful concepts and principles. The aim is to teach complex knowledge that cannot be reduced to a simple formula, and to use concrete examples to teach abstract, general principles.

*Virtual Laboratories* (Horton 2000, 242-246)

Learners conduct experiments with simulated laboratory equipment. This activity helps learners to operate real laboratory equipment or to guide them to discover principles and trends on their own.

## Taxonomy of cognitive skills

One of the core skills seen in stand-alone applications is the capability of their interactive format to broaden and improve the students' cognitive skills. It is therefore of major importance, when evaluating an on-line history course, to take a closer

look at the level of cognitive objectives of the individual activities. The background of this lies in the fact that university teaching has different aims and schedules from edutainment and infotainment programs. The learning objectives and outcomes must have a higher abstract level in university courses, and be directed towards more theoretical and methodological goals, than would be appropriate for the general public. We therefore propose to use Bloom's widely- known and recently-adapted Taxonomy of Educational Objectives[2] in order to analyse the cognitive learning objectives of the various activities and to assess their real level.

In 1956 Benjamin S. Bloom published a short article in which he stated that people acquire knowledge in a way that they had *thought the things through* and so made them part of their personal knowledge. His "taxonomy" is based on the belief that remembering is a prerequisite for understanding, and that understanding is a prerequisite for application. The scheme consist of six levels:

| Level | Skills | Example |
|---|---|---|
| 1 | Knowledge (remember) | Memory can reproduce facts, figures, methods, concepts, etc. |
| 2 | Comprehension (understand) | New information can be integrated in a broader context. So the learner is able to transfer, further interpret, and extrapolate old and new information. |
| 3 | Use (apply) | Rules and principles guide us in defined situations |
| 4 | Analysis (analyse) | Analysis of elements, of relations of organisational principles |
| 5 | Synthesis (create) | Parts and elements are transformed into a new unit. |
| 6 | Evaluation (evaluate) | Present and defend opinions by making judgments about information, the validity of ideas or the quality of work based on a set of criteria. Judgments in terms of internal evidence and / or external criteria. |

The learner has to go through the lower ones to reach the higher ones. A good scheme would be to present this taxonomy as a pyramid, with level 1 as the basis and level 6 as the peak, because to reach level 6, the highest possible point of abstract cognitive knowledge, one has to go step by step up each level, because each one is the basis for the next one: only by knowing facts and figures (1) am I able to integrate new information (2) and combine it with old information to reach the possibility to use rules and principles (3) that lead to an analysis of the whole subject (4). In teaching history this could mean that students learn facts and chronology and other basic concepts before they are confronted with new sources or statistical material that they have to integrate into their existing knowledge of a specific situation, guided by the principles of analysing and treating this new material. Only

2    Benjamin S. Bloom (Ed.), *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives: The Classification of Educational Goals,* David McKay Company, Inc. 1956, pp. 201-207

The chart is a technical mess: I will repair it, don't worry!

when the students have reached this level are they able to create their own model of the chosen historical topic and transform it into new knowledge (5) and finally be able to evaluate their own and new knowledge (6) to reassess their own position in the chosen topic.
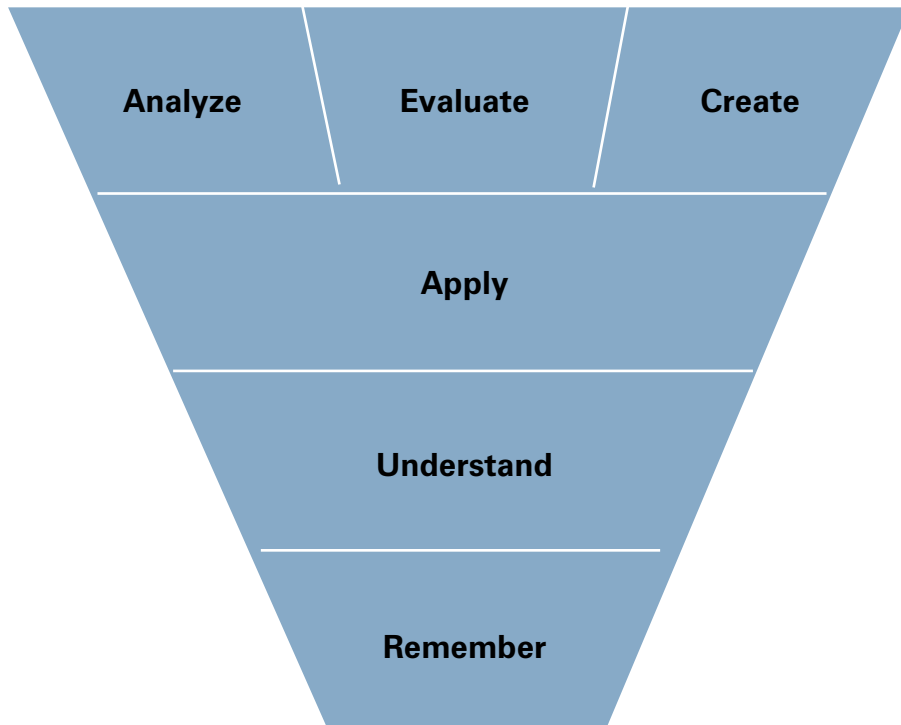


Anderson and Krathwohl[3] recently published a revision of Bloom's taxonomy. The key change lies in the fact, that level 4 (analyse), level 5 (creation of new knowledge) and 6 (evaluation) are no longer a prerequisite to each other on the way up. Instead they share the highest level and each is only applied, if the chosen topic particularly demands one or other of them. The main concept, however, remains: that remembering is a prerequisite for understanding and that understanding is a prerequisite for application.

Finally one can also say, that teachers have to share their own methodology, their knowledge and their expertise with their students in order to help them create their own knowledge of a topic. Therefore on-line activities should follow the task that

3   Anderson, L. W., & Krathwohl, D. R. (2001). A taxonomy for learning, teaching, and assessing: A revision of Bloom's taxonomy of educational objectives. New York, USA: Addison-Wesley Longman. Figure above token as well of this publication

the students have the possibility to learn facts, figures, procedures, principles and strategies to analyse, produce and evaluate new knowledge.

Bloom's approach has had a major impact on educational sciences and the way that learning objectives and outcomes have been defined in the last fifty years in the US and in Europe. can His model is often cited in books about e-learning.[4] It therefore seems valid to use his taxonomy to analyse the learning outcomes, both planned and actual, in the two case-studies demonstrating Swiss experience in teaching history by means of computer-based learning.

From a technical point of view the individual activities, in the formats mentioned above, normally consist of the following exercises. Each focusses on one or more levels of cognitive objectives.

1. Exploring: the student can search an interactive area, an image or a graphical scheme to discover facts and concepts. (Level 1 and 2)
2. Drag and Drop: After the student has acquired basic information in the electronic book, he can improve his knowledge by sorting out graphic-based riddles (Levels 1 to 3)
3. Text comprehension / quiz: students are presented with a text or an image that they have to analyse. To achieve this analysis the student is guided by a quiz-like questionnaire. The individual questions are formulated as Fill-in-the-Blanks, Multiple-Choice, True-False-Unknown or Matching-Lists. (Levels 1 to 4)
4. Open question: the student has to write an essay based on a question formulated in the module. The teacher will mark it or put it into a forum to discuss with other participants. Writing assignments could also be included in this group. (Levels 1 to 6)
5. Essay: free essay writing. The instruments on the web are the guidelines or the tools to elaborate the essay. The teacher will be available by means of e-mail, PTP-Communication or chat-room, and he will finally mark the essay.

We will be paying considerable attention to these points in the case studies and will analyse the level of activities and the inter-activite elements in general.

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[4]  e.g. M. Kerres, Multimediale und telemediale Lernumgebungen. Konzeption und Entwicklung. 2nd revised edition, Vienna and Munich 2001.

M. Kerres is one of the leading and most-influential teachers and researchers in Germany on this topic. The project "adfontes" relied heavily on this approach as stated in the Dissertation of the project members and the article they published.

See Andreas Kränzle, Gerold Ritter: *Das Archiv im Netz. Zur Didaktik des virtuellen Archivbesuchs*.

Angelika Epple and Peter Haber, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil des Internets für die historische Erkenntnis*. Version 1.0 (Geschichte und Informatik 15), Zürich 2004, p. 183–199

A. Kränzle / G. Ritter, Ad fontes, *Zu Konzept, Realisierung und Nutzung eines E-learning-Angebots*, Diss. Zürich 2004 (PDF file from: http://www.k-r.ch/index.php?id=9)

# Case study Antiquit@s – Universities of Fribourg, Zurich, Berne and Lausanne  www.antiquitas.ch

Christian R. Raschle
for Università degli Studi Bologna

## Context

The 'Antiquit@s project' was created in 2001-2003 as part of the Swiss national e-Learning initiative SVC (Swiss Virtual Campus). In line with SVC-requirements Antiquit@s was designed as independent modules in French and German. The main aim of Antiquit@s is to present e-learning material for basic courses in ancient history at university level.

## Choice of content / Pedagogy

A number of objectives guided the project partners in their choice. One group of authors felt the need to give a general introduction to the content of ancient history. In particular the CD-ROM and the introduction modules were designed to meet the needs of tutors and students in preparing for exams using e-learning materials.[1]

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[1]  In this case study we focus on the on-line modules. The CD-ROM has been developed by partners at the university of Zurich and is designed to complement the widely-used students' book by H.-J. Gehrke, H. Schneider (ed.), *Geschichte der Antike. Ein Studienbuch*, Stuttgart/ Weimar 2000.

For the CD-ROM see B. Näf et alii, *Geschichte der Antike. Ein multimedialer Grundkurs*, CD-Rom. Version 1.  Mac OS 9/X and Windows. Stuttgart/Weimar (J. B.Metzler) 2004.  ISBN 3-476-02007-X (picture: antiquitas_12.jpg).

For a review see Monica M. Bontty, Loyola Marymount University, BMCR (Bryn Mawr Classical review) 2005.06.06: http://ccat.sas.upenn.edu/bmcr/2005/2005-06-06.

A second group insisted on students in their first year at university learning practical skills in analysing and contextualising historical documents and sources. This was achieved by creating activities that provide training in how to approach ancient Greek and Roman inscriptions and coins.

A third group wanted to exploit new ways of teaching ancient history through the choice of themes that student manuals covered less fully. Their main aim was to enrich the student's historical vocabulary through research-guided topics, such as historical anthropology.

As a result of these diverse aims the project partners finally decided on the following list of strictly independent modules:

A) Transversal Modules: a General Introduction (History of the Subject), a Chronological Overview, and an Inter-active CD-Rom in addition to a History Manual.

B) Methodological Modules: Roman Epigraphy, Greek Epigraphy, Numismatics

C) Thematic Modules: Written Sources in Ancient Egypt, Women and public life in the Hellenistic period, Greek Democracy, Family and Community in the Homeric World, War on land and Sea in Classical and Hellenistic Greece, Prisoners in Ancient Greece, Greek and Roman Religion (Methods and Themes), Birth and Childhood in Ancient Rome, The Roman Army, Living in Imperial Aventicum (Avenches), Family genealogy in Ancient Rome, Late Antiquity, and Pagan and Christian Senators in the Later Roman Empire

## The didactic presentation

The presentation of the content modules follows a common pattern: classical instruction or, as Horton put it, "presentation sequences". Each module is structured in three chapters, each chapter divided into 5 to 7 pages. The chapters make up the so-called 'electronic book' by means of static HTML-pages. These text-based pages provide the theoretical framework of the chosen module. The texts are short enough to fit onto a single screen and deal with ready-made key concepts. Each page provides additional material which is grouped in categories: 'written sources', 'images', 'notes' (e.g. a deeper scientific commentary on the theories mentioned above) and 'links' with additional bibliography.

The additional material in these categories is not exhaustive but illustrates the concepts covered in the main text of relevant page of the electronic book. For this reason the number of items in each category has been limited to five. But simply putting text and images onto the web does not make full use of the possibilities that on-line learning offers. In contrast to this rather passive form of teaching, one activity illustrates and enhances the content of the text-pages in each chapter. The main burden of work for the project members therefore lay in the development of 'activities', which are the core feature of this course. In some chapters additional quizzes, 'open questions' for essay-writing, and further essay themes are available. In addition to motivating the students and making them responsible for the success of their own learning, the activities help students to understand, practise and master the key concepts that they read about in the static HTML-pages. Especially in the methodological modules and in some thematic modules students have to make use of their freshly-acquired knowledge in order to achieve good marks. The activities

are also designed to improve the different skills in handling, analysing and fully understanding the sources of ancient history that they are presented with.

The following table gives an overview of all the activities in the on-line version of Antiquit@s. It provides a short description of the theme, the technology[2] used and, where possible, the type of activity – based on Horton's classifications (his typology). We also show the cognitive learning objectives using Bloom's *Taxonomy of Educational Objectives* cited in the introduction to the two Swiss case-studies.

[2]   The project members relied mainly on Macromedia's Shockwave technology for CD-ROM (Director) and the Web (Flash) that require Plug-In for the Web-browers. In view of the wide-spread use of these plug-ins (up to 95%) the argument for best practice was ignored, namely that one should never use proprietary technology or plug-ins on the web, but common standards. The first prototypes (such as Latin epigraphy) were created using HTML and Javascript.

## Overview of activities[3]

| Module | Chapter | Name of Activity | |
|---|---|---|---|
| *Transversal Modules* | | | |
| **General Introduction to Ancient History** | Some basics for beginners | Names of ancient and contemporary cities | |
| | | Open question | |
| | | Quiz | |
| | The sources of ancient history: the ancient historians | Ancient historians and their subjects | |
| | | Open questions | |
| | | Quiz | |
| | A scientific view of ancient history | Famous scholars in Ancient History | |
| | | Open questions | |
| | | Quiz | |
| **Chronology** | Chronology | Chronology | |
| *Methodological Modules* | | | |
| **Numismatics** | | | |
| | General introduction: money and coins | Ancient forms of money | |
| | | Brief chronology of ancient coinage | |
| | Basics and basic skills | Combination of dies (obverse & reverse) | |
| | | The manuals for Roman numismatics (5 activities for 5 manuals) | |
| | | Coin-description (5 examples) | |
| | Roman Numismatics | Analyze and categorize Roman coins (12 examples) | |
| **Greek inscriptions** | The principal types of Greek inscriptions | Classify a Greek Inscription | |
| | Study and publish a Greek inscription | 6 activities to analyse Greek inscriptions | |
| | How to date and comment on an inscription | The variations of Greek Letters | |
| | | 4 case studies of Greek inscriptions | |
| | Complete treatment of a Greek inscription | 3 case studies | |
| **Roman Epigraphy (prototype)** | Beginners | 7 case-studies on Roman inscriptions | |
| | Advanced | 12 case-studies of Roman inscriptions | |
| **Written sources on the History of Ancient Egypt** | | Essays | |
| | | | |

[3]   All the French or German titles have been translated into English.

| | Type of activity (Horton) | Technology | Taxonomy (Bloom) |
|---|---|---|---|
| | | | |
| | 'Matching-List' on a graphical basis | Flash | 1,2 |
| | Write an essay or a proposal for a thesis | HTML | 3,4,5,6 |
| | 'True / False' questionnaire | Flash | 1,2 |
| | Simulation using 'Drag and Drop' | Flash | 1,2 |
| | | | 3 |
| | 'Multiple-Choice' / 'Matching-List' | Flash | 1,2 |
| | Simulation based on 'Matching-List') | Flash | 1,2,3 |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | 'Exploration / Interactive Map' | HTML | 1,2,3 |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | 'Exploration / Interactive Map' | Flash / HTML | 1,2 |
| | 'Exploration / Interactive Map' | Flash / HTML | 1,2 |
| | 'Drag and Drop' | Flash / HTML | 3,4 |
| | 'Exploration' and 'Guided-Analysis' using 'Fill-in-the-Blank' | Flash | 1,2,3 |
| | 'Exploration / Interactive Map' | Flash | 1 |
| | 'Guided-analysis' using 'Multiple-Choice' and 'Fill-in-the-Blank' | Flash | 1,2,3,4 |
| | 'Guided-analysis' using 'Multiple-Choice' | Flash | 1,2,3 |
| | 'Guided-analysis' using 'Multiple-Choice' and 'Fill-in-the-Blank' | | 1,2,3,4 |
| | 'Drag and Drop' | Flash | 1,2,3,4 |
| | 'Guided-analysis' using 'Multiple-Choice' and 'Fill-in-the-Blank' | Flash | 1,2,3,4 |
| | 'Guided-analysis' using 'Multiple-Choice' and 'Fill-in-the-Blank' | Flash | 1,2,3,4 |
| | 'Guided-analysis' using 'Multiple-Choice' and 'Fill-in-the-Blank' | HTML and Java-Script | 1,2,3,4 |
| | 'Guided-analysis' using 'Multiple-Choice' and 'Fill-in-the-Blank' | HTML and Java-Script | 1,2,3,4 |
| | Essay | HTML | 1,2,3,4,5 |
| | | | |

| Thematic Modules | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| **Women and Public life in Hellenistic Greece** | Introduction | Analysis of an Inscription | |
| | | The female priest of Epie | |
| | | The queen | |
| | | Profiling by profession | |
| | | A quiz can be done after each chapter | |
| | | One quiz at the end recapitulates the content of the entire module | |
| **Greek Democracy** | The Birth of Athenian Democracy | Attic Demes (hamlets) | |
| | | Attic Tribes | |
| **Greek and Roman Religion: Methods** | | Definition of Religion | |
| | The Term: religion | Ethnic and revealed religions | |
| | Polytheism and anthro-pomorphism | Aphrodite – Venus | |
| | Myths and mythology | Oedipus | |
| **Greek and Roman Religion: Themes** | Location of cults & peoples that practise them | Location of cults & peoples that practise them | |
| | Ritual acts / cults | Greek sacrifice | |
| | Contact with the gods | Nullify bad omens through rituals | |
| **Family and Community in Homer's World** | | No activities / only text and images | |
| **War on Land and Sea in Classical and Hellenistic Greece** | | No activities / only text and images | |
| **Being a Prisoner in Classical and Hellenistic Greece** | | No activities / only text and images | |
| **Birth and Childhood in Rome** | Entry into the community | Passages | |
| | Death of the child | Different aspects | |
| | Being born different | Normal / abnormal | |
| **The Roman Army of the Empire** | The standing Army in the Empire | The Roman Army at War (still incomplete) | |
| **Avenches and its inhabitants in the Roman Empire** | Gallo-Roman / Helvetian Society | Gallo-Roman and Our Swiss Society | |
| | | Quiz | |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | 'Multiple-Choice' | Flash | 1,2 |
| | 'Guided-analysis' using 'Drag and Drop' | Flash | 1,2,3,4 |
| | 'Guided-analysis' using 'Drag and Drop' | Flash | 1,2,3,4 |
| | 'Guided-analysis' using 'Drag and Drop' | Flash | 1,2,3,4 |
| | 'Multiple-Choice' | Flash | 1,2,3 |
| | 'Multiple-Choice' | Flash | 1,2,3 |
| | 'Guided-analysis' using an explorative map sub-activity | Flash | 1,2,3,4 |
| | 'Exploration' / 'Multiple-Choice' | Flash | 1,2,3 |
| | 'Matching Colours' | Flash | 2,3,4 |
| | Analysis of text using 'Drag and Drop' | Flash | 1,2,3 |
| | 'Guided-analysis' using 'Textfield' and 'Multiple Choice' | Flash | 1,2,3 |
| | 'Guided-analysis' using 'Textfield' / 'Matching-List' | Flash | 1,2,3 |
| | Analysis of texts using 'Fill-in-the-blank', 'Multiple-Choice' and 'True-False' | Flash | 1,2,3 |
| | Analysis of texts using 'Fill-in-the-blank', 'Multiple-Choice' and 'True-False' | Flash | 1,2,3 |
| | Analysis of texts using 'Fill-in-the-blank', 'Multiple-Choice' and 'True-False' | Flash | 1,2,3 |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | | | |
| | 'Drag and Drop' | Flash | 1,2,3 |
| | Guided-Analysis' using Text combined with 'Multiple-Choice' / 'Drag and Drop' / 'True-False' | Flash | 1,2,3,4,5 |
| | 'Drag and Drop' | Flash | 1,2,3,4 |
| | Guided Analysis using 'Drag and Drop' / 'Fill-In-the-Blank' / 'Multiple Choice' | Flash | 1,2,3,4 |
| | Lay a table | Flash | 3,4,5 |
| | 'Multiple-Choice' | Flash | 1,2,3 |

| | | | |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Social Classes at Aventicum (Avenches, Switzerland) | The Portraits of Flavius Camillus and Togirix | |
| | Women and Children in Aventicum (Avenches) | The portrait of Iulia Censorina | |
| | | Quiz | |
| | Society and the Economy | Archaeological Data | |
| | | The Theatre at Avenches | |
| | | Quiz | |
| **Family and Relatives** | Genealogy of the Cornelii and Aemilii | | |
| **Late Antiquity** | The Period | Overview of masterpieces of modern historiography on the subject | |
| | | Quiz | |
| | Chronological Framework | The invasions of the Barbarians | |
| | | Quiz | |
| | Structures of the Late Empire | The Notitia dignitatum | |
| | | Quiz | |
| **Pagan and Christian Senators in the Later Roman Empire** | Senators in the Late Roman Empire | The Christian Nobilitas in the Later Empire | |
| | | Quiz | |
| | The Pagan Senator | The Funerary Monument of Praetextatus | |
| | | Quiz | |
| | The Christian Senator | Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus | |
| | | Quiz | |

## Examples for activities

We will describe in detail five examples of valuable activities with illustrations highlighting the strengths of the didactical approaches chosen.

## Ancient Historians and their Themes

This activity is in the form of a simulation in three steps. First, students find themselves in the situation of applying for a job as assistant librarian in the famous library of the learned Roman emperor Hadrian. To get the job applicants have to prove that they are able to put a series of the scrolls, of famous Greek and Roman historians, that lie on the front desk in the atrium (yellow space), into the right

| | Guided Analysis using 'Drag and Drop' / 'Fill-In-the-Blank' / 'Multiple Choice' | Flash | 1,2,3,4 |
|---|---|---|---|
| | Guided Analysis using 'Drag and Drop' / 'Fill-In-the-Blank' / 'Multiple Choice' | Flash | 1,2,3,4 |
| | Multiple Choice | Flash | 1,2,3 |
| | Guided Analysis using 'Drag and Drop' / 'Fill-In-the-Blank' / 'Multiple Choice' | | 1,2,3,4 |
| | 'Drag and Drop' | Flash | 3,4,5 |
| | | | |
| | 'Drag and Drop' / 'Matching-List' | Flash | 3,4 |
| | 'Matching-List' | Flash | 2,3 |
| | 'Multiple Choice' | | 1,2 |
| | 'Exploration' combined with 'Drag and Drop' | Flash | 3,4 |
| | 'True / False' | | 1,2 |
| | 'Exploration' combined with 'Drag and Drop' | Flash | 2,3,4 |
| | 'True / False' | Flash | 1,2,3 |
| | Simulation with 'True / False' concept | Flash | 3,4 |
| | 'True / False' | Flash | 1,2,3 |
| | Guided Analysis using 'Drag and Drop' / 'Fill-In-the-Blank' / 'Multiple Choice' | Flash | 1,2,3,4 |
| | 'Matching-List' combined with 'Multiple-Choice' | Flash | 1,2,3 |
| | Guided Analysis using 'Drag and Drop' / 'Fill-In-the-Blank' | Flash | 1,2,3,4 |
| | | | |

room and onto the right shelf. If the student clicks on a scroll. the name of the author appears in the yellow field. Having read the electronic book carefully, the student can now drag and drop the scroll into the Fields "Latin" or "Greek" in the right room, as shown in the picture. If the student, as assistant librarian, completes the task successfully, they go a step further to phases two, then to phase three. As the student proceeds, the simulated story continues. The complexity of the task increases with each step. In level two the assistant librarian has to find the right scroll after a client has asked for a particular content. In level three the student has to match anonymous original quotations from the works with the scrolls that bear the name of the correct author.
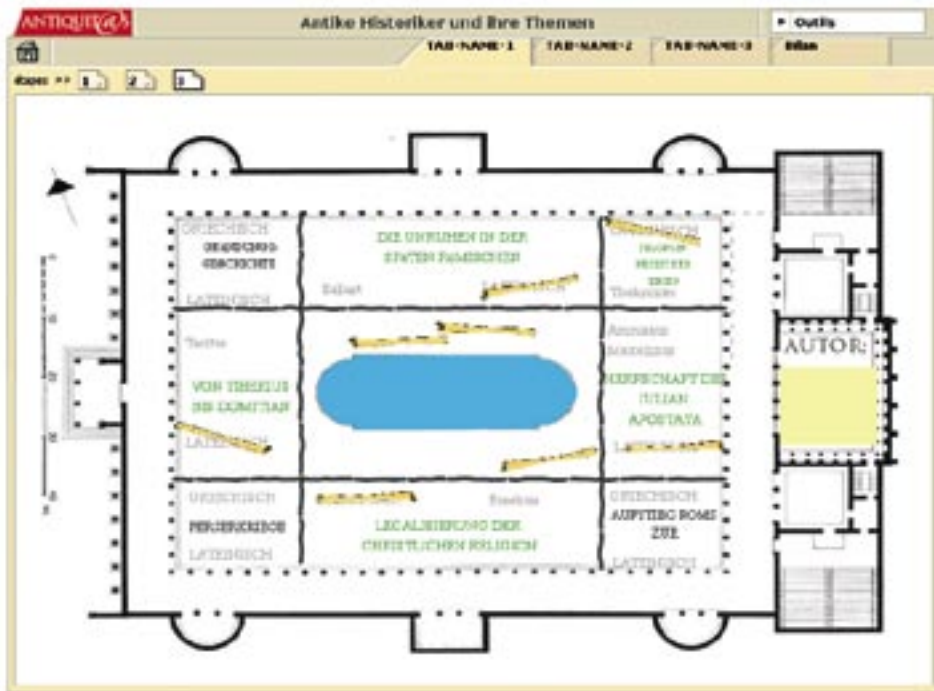
This is a good example of how to use simulation as a learning device at university level. The story behind the activity is well chosen and is able to motivate the student. The drag-and-drop technique (matching list) is designed to make the task user-friendly for the student.

## Roman Coins

The methodical modules for Greek and Roman Epigraphy and Roman Numismatics are based on the same concept. The objective of each module is to teach the student how to describe and analyse original historical sources correctly. Students have to start with the object itself, such as an inscription or a coin, which is presented without comment. They then go through a "question-guided analysis", in which their analysis is guided by a series of questions. The analysis in these three modules strictly follows real-world procedures, which documents undergo after their discovery. For instance, 12 activities in the numismatic module reproduce step by step the categorization of an ancient coin, as is done in museums. First, students have to describe the physical aspects of the coin. Then, as the second step, the wording written on it. As the third step they must describe the symbols on both sides, before being able to classify the coin, as the fourth step, using the standard databases for the Roman Republic or Empire. For all three methodological modules a different set of tools has been developed to assist the students in their work. These

Münzen der römischem Kaiserzeit: Nr. 1

Metrologie | Legende | Ikonographie | Kommentar

▶ Hilfsmittel

**INVENTARKARTE**

**METROLOGISCHE WERTE**

Metall:

Gewicht (g) : 13,183g

Durchmesser (mm) min.:
max.:

Achs Abw. Obv./Rev. (°) : 120

Transkribieren Sie die Legenden der Vorder- und Rückseite, sofern vorhanden. Die Buchstaben, die Sie lesen können, schreiben Sie in Grossbuchstaben. Beginnen Sie von oben nach unten und links nach rechts. Wenn Sie wollen, können Sie auch die Abkürzungen ergänzen. Beispiel: **CAES(ar)**

1. AVERS

| IMP | ✔ | ⇒ Richtig ! IMP | 1 / 8 | OK |
| CAES(ar) | ✔ | ⇒ Richtig ! CAES | 2 / 8 | OK |
| VESPASIAN | ✔ | ⇒ Richtig ! VESPASIAN | 1 / 8 | OK |
| AUGustus | ✘ | ⇒ Falsch ! | 1 / 8 | OK |
| COS | ✔ | ⇒ Richtig ! COS | 1 / 8 | OK |
| VIII | ✘ | ⇒ Falsch ! | 1 / 8 | OK |
| PP | ✔ | ⇒ Richtig ! PP | 1 / 8 | OK |

0°

5 10 15 20 25 30 35 40

**Suchfunktion**

corona | OK | << | 4 | >> | Deutsch ▼

**Strahlenkranz**

Die corona radiata, die Nero als Attribut des Sonnengottes als erster Kaiser für sein Münzporträt übernommen hat, findet sich auch bei den späteren Kaisern meist auf den Dupondien. Deshalb geht man davon aus, dass man mit diesem Symbol bewusst den Unterschied von As und Dupondius ikonographisch verdeutlichen wollte.

Motiv 4 von 6

v-2005

tools are not exhaustive in themselves but give the information necessary to resolve the student's particular task. So one finds in the numismatic module a glossary with technical terminology and a database storing iconographic symbols on the coins and their significance. There is also an overview of the commonest abbreviations of coin-legends, and a chronology of the honorific titles of the Roman emperors of the first two centuries. These help students to date most of the coins precisely. A general and specific introduction to the manuals has already been given in the chapter before the exercises. Even these books are explained to students in a combination of text, exploration and guided-analysis activity. So the students have all the material at their finger-tips.

The principal strength of the module on numismatics, and the other methodological modules in general, lies in the fact, that students learn basic skills for interpretating original historical documents by methods that the scientific community has accepted as standard. A secondary strength lies in the fact that students can exercise their skills on objects they normally cannot get access to without a professor or a tutor. In the case of the numismatic module in particular, students can manipulate a quantity of coins which they generally can only touch in specialized facilities and in small numbers.

The main weakness of these modules is that work with the genuine article, particularly in touching coins and handling the object in a way the computer is never able to simulate, could provide extra motivation for students and enhance their interest in the subject. Using the books that students have to consult is even more limited. They can never really simulate physically handling the coins. Another problem with books is that students find only a single copy in the university library.

## Greek Inscriptions

Ignorance of Latin and Greek is a major problem that Ancient History has to face in academia over the coming years. Whilst many important texts of Greek and Latin literature have been translated and are available in books, the important documentary texts surviving in the form of papyri and inscriptions on stone are very often not available in translation. Latin and Greek epigraphy – papyrology too – are the core themes in studying ancient history, so that every student has to master the basics of classifying and interpreting these sources. Whereas source-books with translated inscriptions can give basic information about content, and say what the inscription means, it is far more important for students to learn how to do a proper analysis of the inscription. Knowing the content is not enough. Students must understand the process by which they can create information and make it accessible to everyone. That this is even possible in the field of Greek epigraphy with students who have little or no knowledge of the Greek language is the main teaching issue of this module.

The main aim of the module is to acquaint students with the main types of inscription (such as honorific, dedicatory, religious, and state pronouncements), to learn how to study and describe an ancient inscription in a technically correct way, how to date it, and what a scientific commentary on it should say.

The activities of the module consist in analysing 13 original Greek inscriptions grouped into three different levels of complexity. There are also two introductory activities that deal with the categorization of inscriptions and the forms of the written letters – the latter being one of the few non-textual elements for dating ancient inscriptions. The overall design of these activities is the same. As in the module on numismatics, there are three or four main steps, each step being divided into a number of smaller steps. The student is guided through the inscriptions by a question-and-answer analysis. A further group of five tools is available for students who want to undertake a number of specific tasks. The five tools are these: a technical glossary concerning epigraphy, a Greek-French vocabulary of significant terms, the Leiden system of diacritical signs, a list of the archons of Athens in a basic chronology, and a list of important personal names.

In the first group of six inscriptions the student has to transcribe short Greek inscriptions. Students needs to know which Latin letter on the keyboard corresponds to which Greek letter, because text will will dispaly automatically in Greek letters during this exercise. After a little trial and error, even those with no knowledge of the Greek alphabet will be able to carry out the task. After transcribing the text, its

analysis is a more demanding step. Here too the student with no knowledge of Greek can rely on the design of the activity: by clicking on the inscription itself the undivided words will appear as they would in a current text-book. It is only for the last step that the project team couldn't find a solution because you cannot translate a text from a language that you don't know. However, in the commentary – the last step of the activity – the newcomer too finds an adequate answer to the question.

In the second group of inscriptions the student has to learn to sort out the relevant information provided in the inscription and described by its archaeological context. Without having to translate the text itself, the student can learn how to analyse the script and the content of the text in a scientific way. The didactical approach (using a guided analysis) is to split each step into several sub-steps – mostly in the form of question-and-answer text-fields – so that the student can complete the entire task in a slow but comprehensible way, using the tools available on the tool bar of the interface. After these preliminary exercises, the student comes to the third and final group of three inscriptions. Here students have to analyse, on their own a complete inscription combining all the steps that they did separately in the earlier activities.

To sum up: the strength of this module lies in combining two things: the use of real historical documents and the analysis-guided question-and-answer technique, that reduces complex historical information into manageable bits. Even students with little or no knowledge of Greek will be able to carry out 80 % to 95 % of each exercise. The only task that the project team weren't able to resolve is the translation of texts in the first and second groups of activities.

## The Attic Demes (hamlets)

The thematic module on Greek democracy shows an interesting way to teach a core subject in ancient history. Every student of ancient Greek history has heard the story how Cleisthenes' partitioned the territory of Attica to ensure that every free male citizen of at least 20 years could participate in the political decision-making of the Athenian *polis*. But instead of only learning the results of the research into Cleisthenes' partitioning, the student can reconstruct the concept using and analysing not a literary but a documentary inscription. Students learn by means of an example not only the results of historical research but also how it is achieved. In this case students can also practise the skills they acquired in the module on Greek epigraphy.

Students start from an inscription that they have to analyse by a question-guided analysis. A French translation of the inscription is provided in a second window. Students must identify on a map of Attica which demes (hamlets) a list of dead soldiers came from. They are all members of an Athenian tribe (phyle) called Leontis.
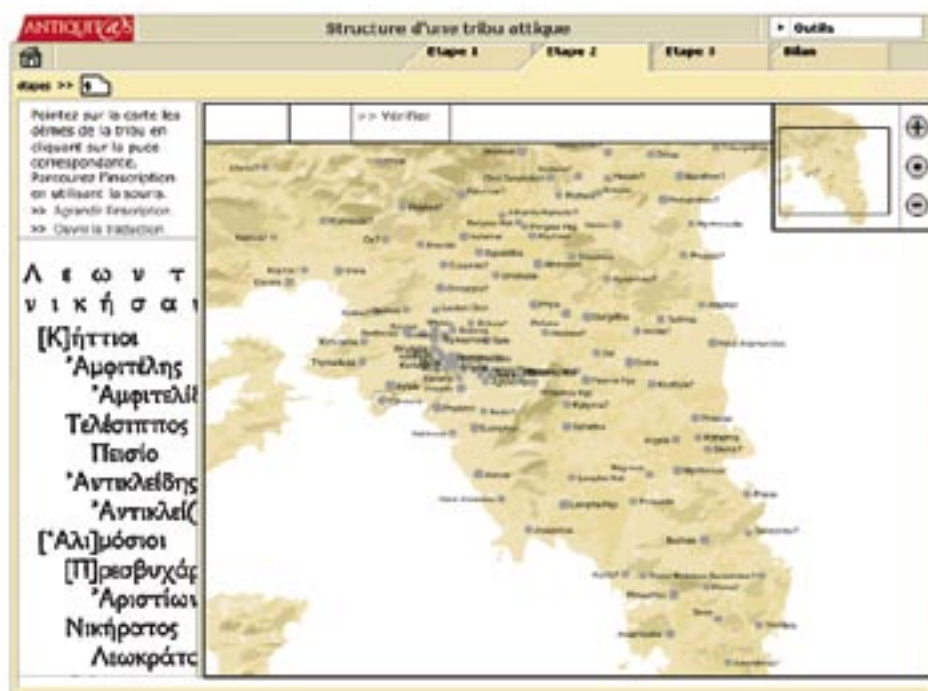


The didactical concept, of guided analysis, is already known from the methodological modules. The result shows (picture: blue points), that the demes of the Athenian Leontis tribe lie in three different locations: in the city, on the coast and in the main area of the country. There needn't be any topographical connection between them.
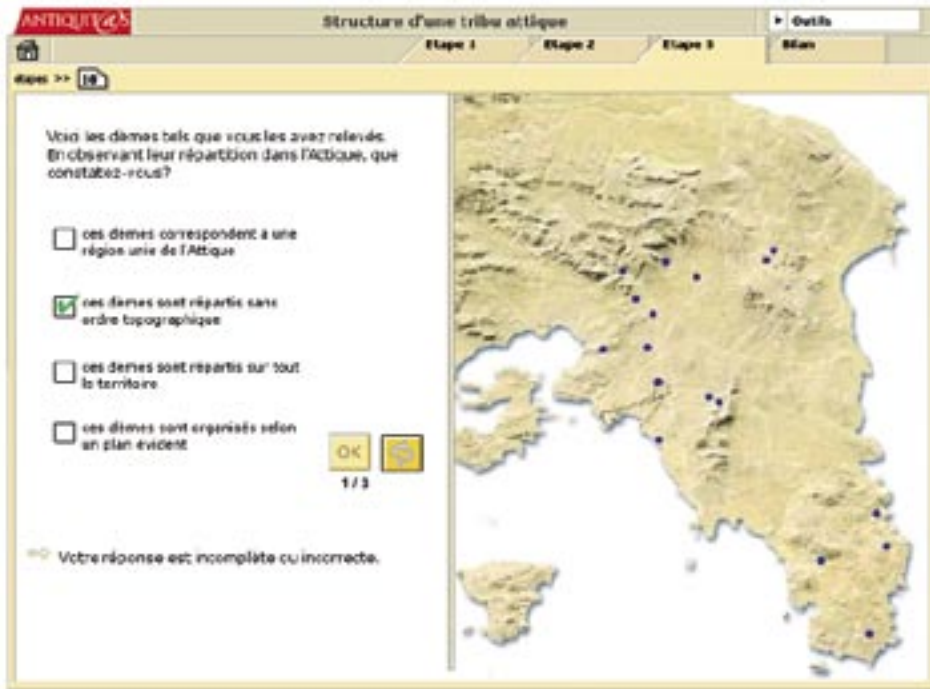
This was one of the key factors in the political structure of democratic Athens: each region had the same access to power and the same opportunity for day-to-day political activity.

Besides its document-centred approach, the value of this activity lies in combining the analysis of different types of media, such as maps and inscriptions, and the use by students of authentic procedures to verify and widen the results of historical research.

### The Death of a Child – Different Approaches

"Family and childhood" is one of the innovative thematic modules, with content that one hardly ever finds in textbooks on ancient history. Taking the example of the death of a child the author combines four different views of the same event. In this way students get the opportunity to learn how the child's death, and its consequences, are treated in four different ways by four separate people: a philosopher, using a text of Seneca, a lawyer immersed in the ancestral laws of the mythical Roman king Numa, an archaeologist excavating a child's tomb and an epigraphist describing a funeral monument. At each step students have to analyse a typical historical source, related to the subject, before they can get a clear view of the matter. The activities, which are mostly drag-and-drop, focus on comprehension of the relative chapters in the electronic book. But they also provide new insights. The individual steps not

only reiterate information in the static HTML-pages but also enhance the student's interpretative skills.

This activity combines a study of historical sources of differing character and quality with the interpretative skills that students have to develop if they want to deal with problems relating to historical anthropology. Students learn how to discover historical information and how to interpret it – and how the people who found the sources interpreted it. So students highten their awareness of different historiographical view-points at various periods and in differeent fields of historical research. They also increase their awareness of, and develop respect for, differing points of view deriving from other methodological and theoretical approaches.
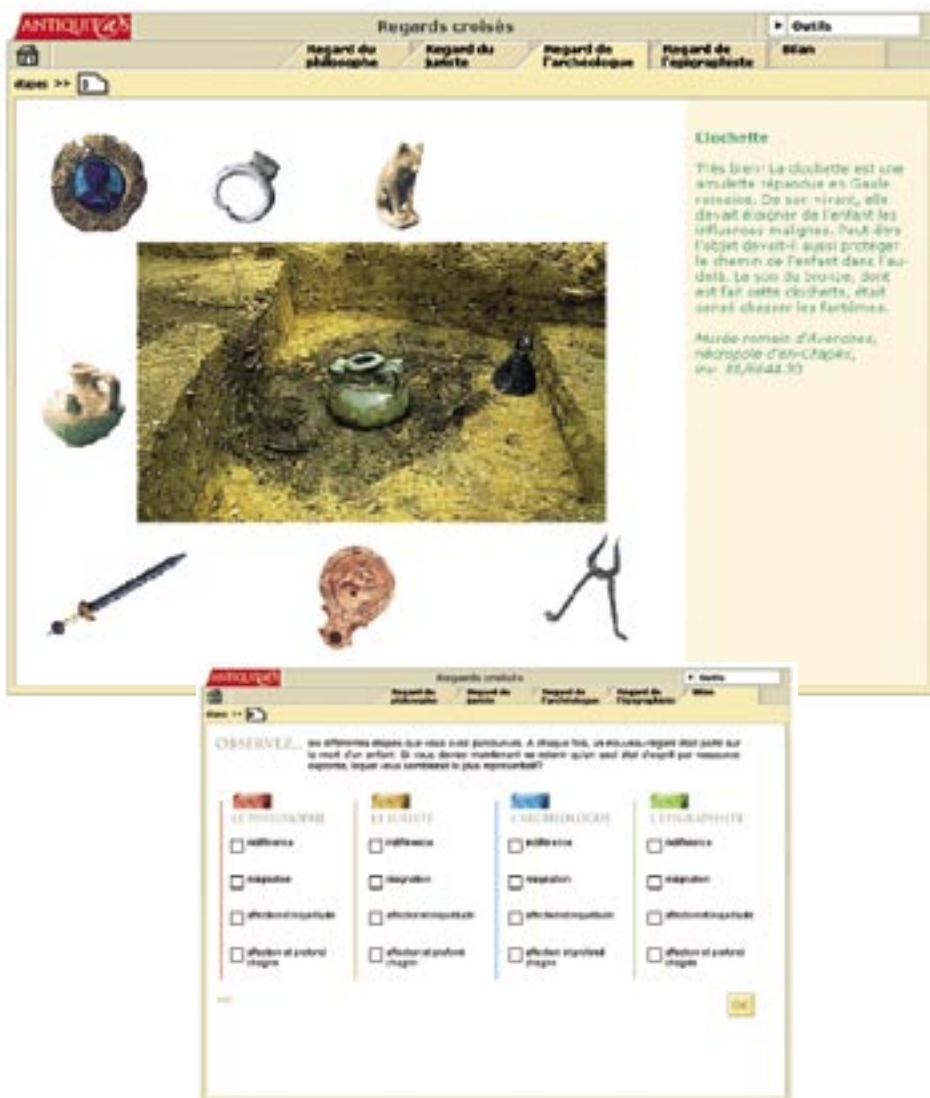
## Platform and Administration

To take account of different e-learning strategies adopted by the particpating universities, the project partners didn't opt for an LMS (Learning Management System) but preferred a CMS (Content Management System). So everyone can access the various modules without being bothered by authentication routines (see http://www.antiquitas.ch).

The project members made it clear that they wanted to provide training material and illustrative content for their class-room participants working in a blended learning environment, and so had no use for advanced tools like student-tracking. By the same token they didn't want to use assessment and testing tools either – the quizzes being used simply for practice. Students still have to take their exams in the traditional ways. The advantage of this policy is that, till now at least, everyone can access the course on the Web.

# Case-study Adfontes: An Introduction to the Analysis of Archived Sources: http://www.adfontes.unizh.ch

Christian R. Raschle

## Context

One of the major skills that a historian needs, is to understand and analyse written historical sources. This not only covers printed extracts from original texts in published books. The most important part of a historian's training is the ability to handle original sources found in archives and manuscripts.

Whereas the historian of Antiquity has to learn to work with inscriptions on stone, with papyri and with coins, the mediaeval and modern historian's interest lies in parchment and paper manuscripts – to study primary tax records for instance. Because mediaeval and modern sources are in a better state of preservation not only the advanced researcher but also the undergraduate student can easily access material first hand and undertake research on material not yet published. For this reason, undergraduate students in their third, fourth and fifth year at university have to be taught how to analyse these often hand-written documents. Professors and students at the university of Zurich were
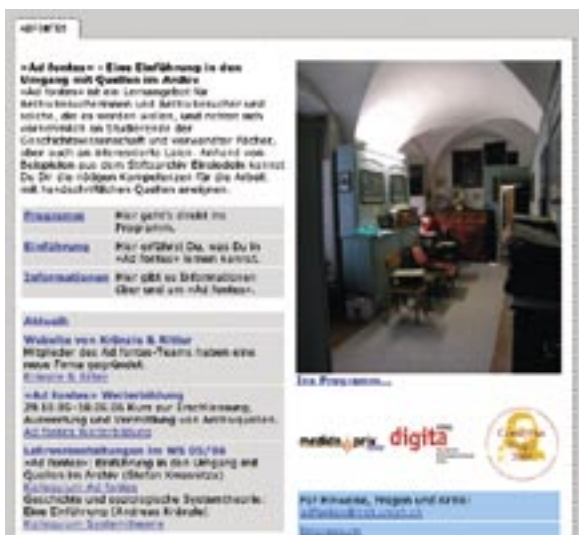
convinced that the basic skills to transcribe and date these sources and start histori-
cal investigation into them, had been inadequate and were in no way up to the level
needed in academic courses for advanced students.

At the same time the *curriculum* of the University of Zurich's history courses had
to be revised in line with the BA / MA model proposed by the "Bologna-Declara-
tion". Politicians as well as decision-makers in the university administration wanted
to promote more virtual / e-learning courses rather than create new face-to-face
courses for first-year and second-year students for teaching basic content and skills.
Fortunately the money to develop e-learning courses was available from the local
ICT-Centre of the university.

Andreas Kränzle and Gerold Ritter (developers and main programmer) decided
in 2000 to develop an on-line course to teach the fundamental skills of transcribing,
understanding and analysing hand-written medieval and early modern sources. The
course was intended to help students who needed to acquire these skills, as well as
students who already possessed some skills but wanted to improve them or to learn
new ones.

## Learning goals

After analysing in depth all the possible learning goals in this field, the developers
defined the following requirements:

Students must

… be able to locate any given document in an archive using existing search tools
… be able to read, transcribe, date and describe manuscripts written between
     the 13th and the 18th century
… know the fundamental rules for creating "critical texts" and their related
     problems
… be able to make effective use of the various handbooks and research tools to
     read hand-written documents.
… improve their ability to understand and interpret a written source correctly,
     relating it to a concrete historical question
… have a basic idea of the scientific terminology of these special subjects, so that
     they encounter no problems in understanding the scientific literature relat-
     ing to manuscripts and knowing how they should be written
… be able to find the tools and resources to improve their knowledge, even if
     the face-to-face courses do not cover all the details of a subject.

If we compare these requirements with the subject-specific skills that history
students are expected to acquire, as proposed by the CLIOHnet/Tuning group, this
course centres on the following skills:[1]  (the numbers refer to the those of the Tun-
ing Group)

10 Ability to read historiographical texts and original documents in one's own language; to summarise or transcribe and catalogue information as appropriate.

11 Ability to read historiographical texts and original documents in other languages; to summarise or transcribe and catalogue information as appropriate.

14 Knowledge of and ability to use information-retrieval tools, such as bibliographical data-bases, archival references and e-references.

15 Knowledge of and ability to use specific tools necessary to study documents of particular periods (e.g. palaeography and epigraphy).

16 (only of limited application) Ability to use computer and Internet resources and techniques handling historical or related data (using statistical, cartographic methods, or creating data-bases)

26 Ability to identify, and utilise appropriately, sources of information (bibliography, documents, oral testimony, etc.) for a research project.

29 (not actively but passively): Ability to comment on, annotate or edit texts and documents correctly according to the critical canons of the discipline.

## Potential users

The developers made an analysis of the potential users of their course and identified two heterogeneous groups. The first group consisted of students in the history department at the University of Zurich, who had to acquire these skills to improve their ability to handle historical documents. The second group consisted of a mix of interested students in other departments, high-school students and people employed in handling archives who wanted to update their knowledge and skills – as well as other interested people. The course was therefore based on independent modules, so that the user could make their own individual path through the material on offer. The purpose of Adfontes is to concentrate on real-life examples of research that one has to do in an archive. The theoretical content found in the manuals is not covered in depth but only as far as it helps the actual research work in an archive.

## Platform and Pedagogy

The project team developed their own platform, blending a Content Management System, based on PHP and MySQL-technology, with open-source modules – also in PHP and MySQL for the Forum.[2] They did not include other components, like assignments, calendars, and student-tracking, such as one normally finds in

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[1] See the overview in: *CLIOHnet Tuning. Educational Structures in Europe*. The History Subject area, Pisa University Press 2005, 45.

[2] The same framework has now been adapted to host a new on-line course for ancient history and classical philology at the University of Zurich. It is called Fundamenta: www.hist.unizh.ch/fundamenta, mainly for Latin epigraphy and papirology.

Learning Management Systems. This is because the course was designed for use as either a stand-alone application, for personal use, where students have to find their own way through the course material without a tutor to help them, or as an additional tool in a blended-learning scenario that provides face-to-face meetings of all participants every week. The activities have been developed using Macromedia's Shockwave technology generated by *Director,* one of the leading tools for producing CD-ROMs.

## Presentation
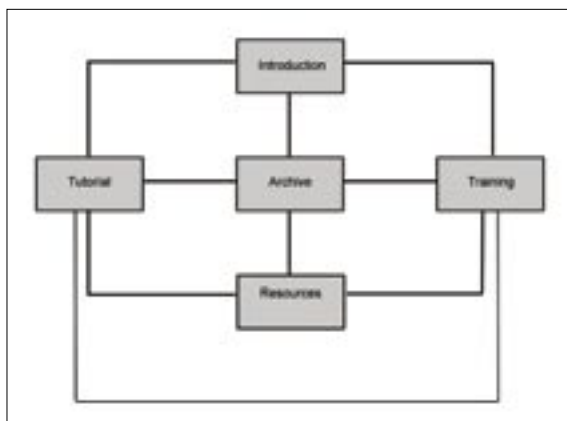


*Adfontes* concentrates on the teaching of theoretical and practical skills for historians that have to work in archives. So the development team chose the metaphor "archive" as the guide-line for the learner. After a welcome-page, that gives a well-balanced introduction to the different parts of the course, students access a page which leads to the four main learning areas. These learning areas are designed following the exploration model of on-line courses whereby each part of the course is linked to every other part, thus making full use of hypertext. Students can find their own way through the course material.

The **Archive** consists of four assignments. To reach each assignment the student must make use of the full range of tools provided, as well as of the Tutorial and Resources pages. Each assignment requires two to four hours of individual work.

Students generally advance in a linear manner, but they always have the possibility to choose a sub-topic, a tutorial or a resource to improve knowledge or strengthen skills which may be weak. Each exercise is self-correcting, so there is no need for a tutor. The real strength of the assignments lies in the fact that students can choose their own way through the material offered in order to carry out the task successfully. All the tasks consist of static web pages with information and pictures to be learned by the students, and activities that exemplify different aspects of the theme of each task. In most cases students have to analyse pictures of original archive-documents, before they can carry out each activity. Here is an example. After an introduction to the ordering of documents in three particular archives (Einsiedeln, Pfäffikon and Eschenz), students have to sort out what document belongs to which archive. The

only way to succeed is to have a good knowledge of the document-codes that they have just learned.

The **Training** Area offers a range of possibilities for developing skills in recognizing the different scripts used in archives from the 13th to the 20th century (transcription and dating of documents). This space is activity-centred. In the following example students have to decipher a pre-Carolingian text from the 8th century,which is a sermon of St. Pirmin († 755). After a general presentation of the text (picture 3) there follows part of the manuscript to be transcribed by the student. The image of the manuscript is re-sizeable to make the text easier to read. Students can find

tips, for resolving less-simple ligatures for instance. A key feature is the ability to correct the transcription word by word. The right letters appear in black, whereas the incorrect ones are displayed in red (picture 4), so that students even with no knowledge of Latin can carry out this task successfully.

The **Tutorial** consists of approx. 200 pages with no inter-active elements. It is structured hierarchically in seven chapters, each with 3 to 6 sub-sections. The texts provide as much information as is necessary, but no more. Each page is linked to other material and to training elements of the course. The Tutorial covers material relating to all aspects of archive work, such as the basic concepts of classification and scripts. To give an example: in order to carry out successfully the task mentioned previously – the transcription of a pre-Carolingian text – the student can consult a tutorial on scripts as shown in the screen-shots below. However, students can also improve their knowledge in another way, because every Tutorial page is linked to its related training pages and vice versa, so users can choose their own path through the material. This flexibility is one of the strongest points in the way the course has been designed.

The **Resources** provide checklists, dating tables, bibliography, lists of links, some with comments, rules for transcription, etc. The Resources have the same structure as the Tutorial with which its pages are linked

**MyAdfontes** is a service area where students can do all their personal administration related to the course. To ensure a high level of communication in the Adfontes area, the developers recently integrated a **Forum**. The addition of a Help facility "**?**" and a search-engine make the user feel comfortable.

The user can also contribute to different forums, subscribe to a mailing list or use the list of links.

*Adfontes* can be used as a stand-alone facility. The course language is German. Students can get their own username and password, or they can register anonymously. Extensive testing and use in different types of courses at the university of Zurich has confirmed that *Adfontes* is best used in-house for blended learning, where the authors of the course are involved as tutors or external specialists. The people doing the testing got better results in courses built exclusively using *Adfontes* than in those that used it as one of many tools for learning or doing exercises. The forum has been used for collaborative assignments in these courses as well. Face-to-face meetings and the final papers assess the quality of the student's contribution. Sometimes the tracking device has been used to monitor the student's progress.

Up to now no international, multilingual or inter-cultural approach has been made. Other universities in Germany and Switzerland have tested parts of *Adfontes* on their own or told their students about this valuable tool.
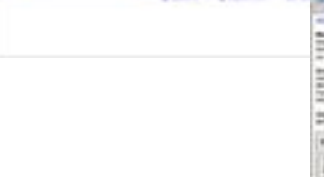
## Detailed evaluation of activities

The aim of the course is to give users the necessary skills to transcribe, analyse and classify mediaeval and modern documents. Our objective in evaluating it should therefore focus on the proposed activities of *Adfontes*, where students can acquire, practise and improve their skills. A. Kränzle and G. Ritter (project developer and programmer) used as the general reference book *M. Kerres, Multimediale und Telemediale Lernumgebungen. Konzeption und Entwicklung 2* – completely revised edition, Vienna – Munich 2001.[3] We should see if the activities meet their aims. The following table deals with the activities of the first task: Archive Nr. 1: Classifying the Archive (Scripts from the 18th century). The entire task is structured like an instruction. This means the user has to follow the order of texts, pictures and activities to reach the goal of the task. But at each step the user can follow a link to find further information, consult resources or access the tutorial or training facilities. We will focus on these additional features only as far as they relate to the activities. To rate the degree of cognitive learning achieved in the activities we will also use the "taxonomy" developed by Bloom, as explained in the preface.

Task 1: Classifying the Archive (Scripts of the 18th century: The Archive of the Monastery of Einsiedlen.

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[3]   For more information on the author see now: http://mediendidaktik.uni-duisburg.de/kerres

| Name | Kind of activity | Description | Tax. |
|------|------------------|-------------|------|
| Organisation of an Archive and a Library | Drag and Drop | Where can I find what sort of document? Looking at the title of a document, you are able to classify it, whether it belongs to an archive or a library | 1 |
| Recognize the different documents of an archive | Match-ing-List (by Drag and Drop) | The student has to sort out a picture, the right title and the right definition of documents he finds in an archive | 1 |
| Ordering of an Archive of the 17th century | Text-field | The student has to read an ancient text based on the old classification of the archive and fill in, in the text fields, the key words for the classsification system of the archive | 2 |
| Problems of this Order | Text-field and multiple choice | The student has to read an ancient text based on the old classification of the archive that caused some problems mentioned in the text. The student has to detect where the problem occurred. | 2 |
| Solution of the previous problem | Text field | Read a text based on the new classification to resolve the problem. | 2 |
| The new order of the archive | Drag and Drop | The student has to sort out 9 documents, indicated only by their archive code and classify them correctly | 3 |
| Finding means and content lists | Text field | The student has to transcribe a content list of documents of an archive | 3 / 4 |

| | Training / Tutorials / Resources | Picture |
|---|---|---|
| | Tutorial: Archive / Library / centre for documentation: the differences<br>Res.: PDF-doc on Archive- Library and centre for documentation | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | | |
| | Res.: Ordering Principles of Archives | |
| | Tut: The Archive of the Monastery of Einsiedeln: Today's order<br>Res: The Einsiedeln classification | |
| | Tut.: Rules for Transcription | |

The value of this approach can be seen in the example from the monastery of Einsiedeln. Students have the possibility to perform, in advance, on their computer, each task that they will need to carry out on the archive so that they will be better prepared when they visit the actual archive, and will better understand and be able to use it advantageously for their research work. The design of this archive task is well balanced, starting with simpler activities, where students only have to remember what they have read beforehand, and ending up with really demanding activity.

## Literature:

*M. Kerres, Multimediale und telemediale Lernumgebungen. Konzeption und Entwicklung.* 2nd revised edition, Vienna and Munich 2001

A. Kränzle / G. Ritter: *Das Archiv im Netz. Zur Didaktik des virtuellen Archivbesuchs*: Angelika Epple and Peter Haber, *Vom Nutzen und Nachteil des Internets für die historische Erkenntnis*. Version 1.0 (Geschichte und Informatik 15), Zürich 2004, p. 183–199

A. Kränzle / G. Ritter, *Ad fontes, Zu Konzept, Realisierung und Nutzung eines E-learning-Angebots*, Diss. Zürich 2004 (PDF see: http://www.k-r.ch/index.php?id=9 )

# The use of weblogs in teaching. "La compagnia del sigillo"

Enrica Salvatori, University of Pisa
(http://splinder.sigillo.com)

## Description

*The Sigil Company* was an experimental course in historical methodology using a blended form of traditional, face-to-face teaching combined with e-learning. It was launched as part of the graduation course in Humanities and Computing at the University of Pisa in the academic year 2005-2006 (http://infouma.di.unipi.it/). The course used both methods equally: the former as direct lessons given by the tutor and by statements made by the students; the latter on the web using a weblog.

The course was organized as a piece of fiction or role-play suggested by the tutor at the beginning of the course. The tutor pretended to be a famous writer of historical books, like Ken Follet or Umberto Eco, and she asked the students to join her "research team".

The introductory page of the blog:

The plot was proposed, set up and gradualy expanded by the tutor, who asked the team (i.e. the *company*) to help her in building and refining the historical setting.

For all practical purposes the team had to develop the historical scenario of a novel-in-progress, set in the Middle Age. The *company* members had to read, study, report and find relevant information (text, books, pictures and sources). They had to be inquisitive, and they had to ask, and to suggest, effective and practical questions in order to build up a good plot.

*Writer* and *company met in* two locations. The first, three days a week, was in the traditional classroom. Here, the *writer/tutor* gave her team the basic elements of the course and the plan of work, and suggested what books to consult. She also answered questions and resolved doubts, and listened to students' reports. The second location was entirely virtual: a weblog opened by the writer/tutor and available 24 hours a day just for the students and the tutor.

The story, suggested by the tutor/writer, was set in 12th century Pisa and was based on a murder and its ensuing investigation (see below: The plot).

By asking the students to construct the plot and make their personal contributions in developing the story, the tutor wanted to get the students to conduct real historical research, with the aim of transforming them into authors aware of "history".

The main idea was to make the students aware that in developing the story they had to understand the mentality, customs, traditions, language, beliefs and social behaviour of people living in mediaeval Pisa. In the real world, the writer of historical novels normally works in two ways: by reading widely about a particular historical period or event, and by analysing primary sources. The students in the *company* had to do the same: to read a variety of history books by different authors and to comment on sources used in them. The specific purpose of helping the writer/tutor to create a historical novel was to provide a tool to stimulate students and encourage their active participation and involvement.

The most interesting aspect of this approach was precisely the involvement of the students: they became an integral part of history-in-the-making and therefore were forced to think.


## The plot

*Pisa 1186*. A few years after the start of a new Consular administration, there is a murder in the highest spheres of the municipal government. A rich ship-owner, a past member of the Consular board, has been killed in mysterious circumstances.

Charged to solve the mystery is one of the new Consuls, Gaetano di Burgundio, a famous judge and jurist, son of the most famous jurist and teacher, Burgundio di Pisa.

Gaetano asks for help from a young student, Jacopo Della Croce.

Investigations take Jacopo into the ship-yard, the docks, the city law-school and obviously into the untrustworthy city government. Jacopo is then caught up in an international intrigue, involving a fake document, a golden seal and a lost copy of Giustiniano's *Corpus Iuris Civilis*

## Pedagogy

The course was planned for a maximum of 15 students involving 30 hours of face-to-face meetings. At the beginning of the course the tutor gave some lessons by way of historical introduction and provided technical information about the weblog. She then gave out 15 themes that the students had to study and work on. These were:

— Sea trade
— Navigation
— Crime and Justice
— Clothes
— Food
— Work
— Holidays and social events
— Sacred and secular calendar
— Religious beliefs
— Sex
— Marriage and family
— Hospitality and Travel
— Culture
— Political-institutional history of Pisa in the late 12th century
— Political-institutional history of Europe in the late 12th century

The list of themes was then posted in the blog:



Pursuing the course and developing the story, the students had to post their work in the blog and provide descriptive data. So the list was continuously changed and extended.

We can see it in this picture:

After this the tutor gave each student a theme and one or more reading lists. She then set up a preliminary calendar in which every student had to summarize for the others the research they had done, and at the same time post a summary of their work in the blog, selecting the most useful data.

Agenda and bibliography:

## CATEGORIE

abbigliamento
alimentazione e cultura nel medi
criminalità e giustizia
cultura medievale
droghe nel medioevo
famiglia
home
il corpo nel medioevo
il tempo
introduzione
istruzioni
la donna nel medioevo
legislazione medievale
libri
lo studente medievale a pisa
luoghi
magia
medicina
medioevo nell'islam
mentalità
mestieri
mezzi di trasporto
navigazione
omosessualità
ospitalità
personaggi
pisa
prostituzione
protagonista
religione
scienza
società
spiritualità
storia
superstizioni
teatro e spettacolo
trama

GIOVEDI, 10 NOVEMBRE 2005

### Calendario delle lezioni

10 novembre: inizio e distribuzione incarichi (vedere anche nella voce "libri")
14 novembre: incontro con Maria Soriani Innocenti e Catia Renzi

17 novembre: relazione Pucci, Coscia
21 novembre: relazione Borzillo, Bianchi
23 novembre: continua relazione Borzillo, anticipa Bruno
24 novembre: relazione Bruno, Maranca
28 novembre: relazione Ceccarelli, Casciola
30 novembre: relazione Bani (e forse Manzi)
5 dicembre: relazione Sgherri, Ascari
7 dicembre: relazione Guidi, Calcagno
12 dicembre: relazione Orrù, Accarino
14 dicembre: relazione Ricci (e forse Palmieri)
19 dicembre: riassunto della situazione e discussione

### Incarichi

Quelli che seguono sono i compiti di ciascuno. Le variazioni sono sempre possibili. Se non trovate il volume, oppure non lo ritenete adatto avvisate.

| --> cucina, alimentazione, conservazione degli alimenti, usi alimentari, attrezzi di cucina | Montanari, M. Alimentazione e cultura nel Medioevo collana: «Quadrante Laterza», [18] 2005⁹, pp. 236 | 12 dicembre |
| --> calendario religioso e laico, divisione del tempo, gestualità | Schmitt, J.-C. Il gesto nel Medioevo collana: «Biblioteca Universale Laterza», [512] 1999, pp. 414, con ill. | 5 dicembre |
| | Gabriella Rossetti Pisa nei secoli XI e XII: formazione e caratteri di una classe di governo, 1 vol., 379 pp., XXX tavv., Pisa, Pacini, 1979. Ricerche dirette | |

The summary and posting by each student were not just a passive form of learning. On the contrary they represented active participation in the team, because

1. there were discussions in the class-room at the end of each summary
2. they had a chance to participate using the "comment" tool, which allowed anyone to add comments and ideas at the foot of the page.

Here is one student's comments:

## il tempo della storia

Su un sito Internet ho cercato notizie sull'anno 1186. Ho trovato che in questo anno la Pasqua cade il 13 aprile e quindi se vogliamo far partire il romanzo da aprile, ci troviamo in pieno periodo pasquale. Sennò se vogliamo invece spostare lo svolgimento della storia nell'autunno dello stesso anno, a novembre ci troviamo nel nono mese del calendario musulmano, quindi nel mese del Ramadan. Quindi, se ci troviamo ad aprile, sullo sfondo avremo la preparazione per la Pasqua, invece se ci troviamo a novembre si dovrà tenere un po' più in considerazione la cultura dell'arabo.

Commenti

#1

Va bene il periodo pre e post pasquale. Ottima la notizia sul ramadan... che non riguarda il nostro arabo. I mercanti pisani però devono saperlo per regolarsi. Devono venire via dai porti del Maghreb prima di novembre.
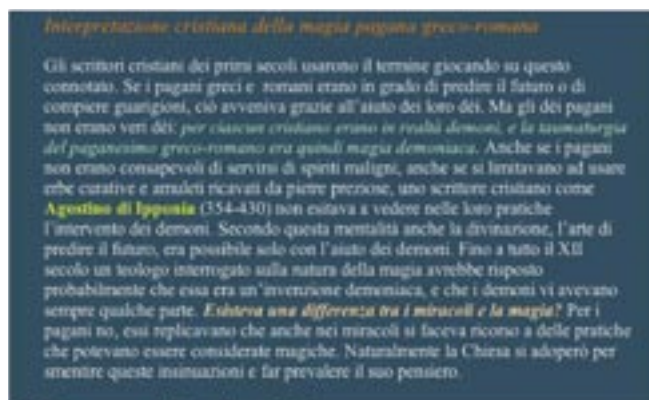
## Materials

At the beginning of the course the tutor allocated individual tasks to the students, such as texts to read and themes to develop. All this was provided on-line.

In this way the story was developed by the students themselves, because each of them read, wrote and searched for material of all kinds and made it available to the others, who had to read and comment on it. The course and the blog itself thus generated learning materials.

Different students posted :
— maps
— text and bibliographic comments
— images



Bibliografia

* Gabriela Garzella, "Pisa com'era. Topografia e insediamento dall'impianto tardoantico alla città murata del secolo XII", Napoli, Liguori, 1991.



### Interpretazione cristiana della magia pagana greco-romana

Gli scrittori cristiani dei primi secoli usarono il termine giocando su questo connotato. Se i pagani greci e romani erano in grado di predire il futuro o di compiere guarigioni, ciò avveniva grazie all'aiuto dei loro dèi. Ma gli dèi pagani non erano veri dèi: per ciascun cristiano erano in realtà demoni, e la taumaturgia del paganesimo greco-romano era quindi magia demoniaca. Anche se i pagani non erano consapevoli di servirsi di spiriti maligni, anche se si limitavano ad usare erbe curative e amuleti ricavati da pietre preziose, uno scrittore cristiano come **Agostino di Ippona** (354-430) non esitava a vedere nelle loro pratiche l'intervento dei demoni. Secondo questa mentalità anche la divinazione, l'arte di predire il futuro, era possibile solo con l'aiuto dei demoni. Fino a tutto il XII secolo un teologo interrogato sulla natura della magia avrebbe risposto probabilmente che essa era un'invenzione demoniaca, e che i demoni vi avevano sempre qualche parte. *Esisteva una differenza tra i miracoli e la magia?* Per i pagani no, essi replicavano che anche nei miracoli si faceva ricorso a delle pratiche che potevano essere considerate magiche. Naturalmente la Chiesa si adoperò per smentire queste insinuazioni e far prevalere il suo pensiero.

## Platforms and technical aspects

The blog was hosted on a public web-site because, during the preparation phase of the course, the computing staff at Pisa University had not yet installed appropriate software. From a technical and graphics view-point there were minimum difficulties in building up a blog on a public web-site.

During the progress of the course a number of positive and negative side- effects became apparent resulting from this choice of web-site.

Positive effects:

1) a chance to sort into groups the postings created during the work-in-progress: this helped navigation
2) a chance to insert into the blog: music, images and links, as with any other web-site
3) a "comment" function, allowing the creation of comments at the foot of the same posting thereby allowing strong thematic "mini discussions" to be built up.

Negative effects:
1) the blog's structure, which gives prominence to the latest posting, rather than the most important ones

2) the chronological publication of the comments, and the consequent rapid turn-over of comments resulting in the "virtual" loss of the earlier ones (see the following image)
3) the lack of a true platform, which could include a forum or chat

**COMMENTI RECENTI**

Olidammara86 in Trame- capitoli 1-4
casci in Trame- capitoli 1-4
casci in Il tempo della stori...
Marcoban in La strega
alhguidi in La strega
Olidammara86 in Prostituzione tra pi...
casci in La strega
Olidammara86 in La strega
Olidammara86 in Prostituzione tra pi...
Olidammara86 in TEATRO E
SPETTACOLO

In conclusion: the blog revealed itself to be a not very suitable tool for a course conceived and designed in this way. On the one hand it is more flexible for sharing opinions and themes not dictated by the tutor, but spontaneously generated as the story progresses. On the other hand reading and surfing a "rich" blog can be hard work and may not be very effective.

Possibile solutions, for courses such as this, could be:

1) insert the blog into a more complex e-learning platform
2) use several tools in combination such as wiki, chat and forum

Another important consideration must be the number of students. In order to be stimulating and effective, using this structure, the course cannot extend beyond 15 students, involved over a period of 30 hours of face-to-face meetings during a six-month period. To exceed these limits it would be difficult to manage the students, and the blog-format would appear to be neither useful nor effective.

## Intercultural issues

The interaction between cultures, though not a topic specifically dealt with on this site, permeates it throughout and is constantly suggested as a subject of thought and motive for analysis.

It is not possible to define briefly the intercultural significance of the subjects dealt with in "La compagnia del sigillo". We can simply underline the fact that this project was carried out in Italy, using only the Italian language.

Two separate cultural and research areas, Italian and French, were inherent in participation in the blog itself and in the bibliography proposed for the course. To study and discuss these different approaches, students had to be aware of the broad outlines of the national traditions of historical studies in Italy and France, know what kind of sources the different historical traditions normally use, and understand what problems are encountered when using these sources for original historical research.

**Quality assessment – of the course**

The course was evaluated by the students filling in a set of questions anonymously about the course topic, about the knowledge and skills obtained and about technical matters. The outcome was very positive indeed.

**Quality assessment – of the students**

Assessment of the students, which was announced at the start of the course, was made on the following basis:

1) the quality of the speech each student had to make about their own particular task
2) the quality of postings to the blog and of material contributed by students
3) the frequency and quality of participation during the face-to-face meetings
4) the frequency and quality of participation in the blog
5) individual comments.

# Networking and e-learning in Gender Studies in Germany Pilot programme VINGS (Virtual International Gender Studies)

Raphaela Averkorn
University of Siegen

## Description

During the past few years e-learning has became more and more fashionable in Social Sciences and the Humanities at German Universities. An official study published in 2002 showed that, at institutions of higher education, only about 34 % of students in that year were aware of the possibilities of e-learning. 19 % had never heard of it. By contrast, two thirds of the students that knew about it thought that e-learning was very useful.[1] A follow-up study based on students' opinions in the year 2003 showed a much better result. About 85 % of students had heard about e-learning at their universities. However, they thought that it just offered something extra such as additional material provided in an existing face-to-face course. Nevertheless, in the field of Humanities and Social Sciences, the use of virtual seminars and courses was in fact increasing. The percentage had gone up slowly from 9 % to 12 %.[2]

The use of e-learning is still not wide-spread, but it is growing steadily.[3] Academic discussion does pay some attention to e-learning in History, the Humanities and the Social Sciences where quite a few programmes are now available, either as

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[1]   Computernutzung und Neue Medien im Studium. Ergebnisse der 16. Sozialerhebung des Deutschen Studentenwerks (DSW), Bonn 2002, 62s.

[2]   See Kleimann, Bernd / Weber, Steffen / Willige, Janka, E-Learning aus Sicht der Studierenden, Hannover 2005, 3, 13ss. (downloadable http://his.de/Abt2/Hisbus/HISBUS_E-Learning10.02.2005.pdf.

single courses or as modules. Many institutions have acquired a variety of learning platforms and are starting to widen the courses on offer and give training to their tutors. More and more institutions realise that e-learning is a powerful teaching and learning tool. Universities are now in the process of revising their curriculum and restructuring their programmes in line with the demands of the Bologna Process. At the present time, new teaching and learning methods are being introduced which offer a valuable opportunity for e-learning. Most institutions are opting for blended e-learning. At the Distance Learning University of Hagen they are now in the process of restructuring their programmes in accordance with the Bologna Process. E-learning in History is also given some prominence in the pilot project Tuning Educational Structures in Europe.[4]



In this paper we shall concentrate on an interdisciplinary pilot project in the field of Gender Studies. In 2000 the German Federal Ministry for Education and

3   Cf. especially Kleimann, Bernd / Wannemacher, Klaus, Es geht nicht mehr ohne. E-Learning als Element der Hochschulentwicklung, in: Forschung & Lehre 7, 2006, 372-374; Arich-Gerz, Bruno, Der Galatea-Effekt, in: Forschung & Lehre 7, 2006, 378-380; Kleimann, Bernd / Wannemacher, Klaus, E-Learning-Strategien deutscher Universitäten. Fallbeispiele aus der Hochschulpraxis. Hannover 2005; downloadable http://his.de/Service/Publikationen/Kib/pdf/kib200504.pdf; Kleimann, Bernd / Wannemacher, Klaus, E-Learning an deutschen Hochschulen. Von der Projektentwicklung zur nachhaltigen Implementierung, Hannover 2004 concerning the changing attitudes towards e-learning in German institutions of higher education. Arich-Gerz highlights the importance of the teacher in traditional courses. Kleimann and Wannemacher stress the fact that some institutions more than others will in future focus on the e-learning process in teaching but that nevertheless all institutions of higher education will have to provide adequate basic structures for e-learning.
4   Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. The Subject Area History, ed. by Cliohnet, Pisa 2005. See information in general about the Tuning Project http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu. For further details about this project, see below in the section "Pedagogy".

Research ("Bundesministerium für Bildung und Forschung" – BMBF) initiated a campaign to promote the use of new media in institutions of higher education, and to promote its development and its integration into their teaching.[5] One of the approved projects of particular interest for our research is in the field of Gender Studies. It is called VINGS.[6] This was funded for 33 months by the Ministry to the tune of 2 million euros and was for "New Media in Education". The project combines two sub-projects: "VINGS-Studieren" ("VINGS-Studying") and "VINGS-Qualifizieren" ("VINGS-Qualifying"). The first was aimed at university students, the second at those wishing to qualify as equal-opportunities officials working in a variety of institutions.



The project was developed by the universities of Bochum, Hanover, Bielefeld and the Distance Learning University of Hagen. Specialist staff at Bochum and Hanover, together with other staff members, were responsible for overall curriculum development. Special courses were created at each partner institution. The Distance Learning University of Hagen worked on its own to develop "VINGS-Qualifizieren".[7] Since the focus of this book is to present case-studies in fields related

to the teaching of history in universities, the present study will concentrate on the "VINGS-Studieren" project.

The "VINGS-Studieren" project was carried out at universities where there has been a special emphasis, for many years, on Gender Studies. The universities of Bochum, Bielefeld and Hanover in particular offer programmes on Gender Studies which, in some cases, lead to a degree or a certificate.[8] The "VINGS-Studieren" programme was developed by staff working as tutors and researchers at the core universities of Bochum, Bielefeld, Hanover and Hagen and specialising in the field of Gender Studies in a variety of departments: History, Social Psychology, Sociology, Political Sciences, Philosophy, Media and Communication Studies, Literature and Law. They invited colleagues teaching at a number of universities abroad to collaborate in the project. These were mainly from Austria, Switzerland, Sweden, Russia, the United States, and Japan – and also some from Germany. From its inception, the international character of the project was prominent. It was structured at various levels. Management of the project was in the hands of a consortium, with Professor Dr. Ursula Müller from the University of Bielefeld[9] as its director.

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[7]  While the pilot project "VINGS-Studieren" is no longer running, the programme "VINGS-Qualifizieren" has been established permanently at the Distance Learning University of Hagen. Concerning the actual course programme see http://www.vings.de/qualifizieren/kursliste/shtml.

[8]  Concerning the programmes on Gender Studies and for further information see the University of Bochum http://www.ruhr-uni-bochum.de/genderstudies, at the University of Bielefeld http://uni-bielefeld.de/IFF/, at the University of Hanover http://www.gps.uni-hannover.de/gender.

## Pedagogy

The programme is innovative in that the courses are both interdisciplinary and international. The complete catalogue offers 27 separate courses relating to a variety of modules which allow a flexible approach.[10] The courses were produced by internationally-renowned specialists in gender studies. An interdisciplinary approach was used in selecting the topics and in analysing the different thematic issues. To assure a high quality of teaching, tutors were trained in specialist workshops. The courses were designed by a team working with trained media-experts. Tutors had to carry out tasks which differed from those in face-to-face teaching.[11] To improve both learning and teaching, continuous evaluation and final evaluation were used.[12]

The teaching was done 10 % face-to-face, in intensive seminars at the beginning and end of the course, and 90 % by virtual teaching. Part was done by individuals working alone, part in groups and part with a tutor. In some courses a number of different tutors were involved with the students. This was the case, for instance, with "Labour biographies of women" and "Work, Welfare States, and Social Policies".

Students were given training in the use of digital media and digital teaching resources. A modular structure was adopted which allowed planning and studying to be done individually. Students working part-time, and those helping children, were also able to participate in the programme.[13] A particular problem, which could be controversial, was the relatively high work-load, for both students and tutors, in comparison with that in regular face-to-face classes. The huge number of tutors and media specialists involved in such programmes leads inevitably to rather high staff-costs.

The project sought to foster learning by networking and to help develop new contexts and novel orientations in the field of gender studies. Its aim was to promote an interdisciplinary and international approach to learning. The focus was on the learning process and the acquisition of integrated media skills. The team sought to present the courses in a gender-oriented, technical design in order to encourage active participation by students.[14]

[9]   Concerning the different levels of the project and the tasks of further members of the project administration see "Administration" below.

[10]  See below the course structure table in this section.

[11]  Küster, Sybille, "Vings to fly with?" Gender Studies im virtuellen Raum, in: Geschlechterstudien im deutschsprachigen Raum. Studiengänge, Erfahrungen, Herausforderung. Dokumentation der gleichnamigen Tagung vom 4.-5. Juli 2003, ed. by Zentrum für transdisziplinäre Geschlechterstudien an der Humboldt-Universität zu Berlin, Berlin 2004, pp. 109-113, 110s. enumerates various aspects like "coaching discussions", the problem of an anonymous situation in the virtual class-room, the problem of building up contacts between students, the problem of written communication, etc. Concerning the pedagogical concept of the programme see especially the very well reflected study by Knapp, Gudrun-Axeli, Gegenstandsbezug und mediale Übersetzung. Unpublished manuscript, Hanover 2003.

[12]  See the chapter "Evaluation" below.

[13]  Küster, Vings, 110.

To take part in "VINGS-Studieren", students had to be at least in the fourth semester of their studies and enrolled in Social Sciences, the Humanities, or the Educational or Cultural Sciences. Students from other fields were obliged to seek special permission. Students had to be enrolled at one of the pilot universities (Bielefeld, Bochum, Hanover or Hagen) or at one of the co-operating institutions: Basel University, Moscow University, Vienna University, the Technical University of Berlin, Bonn University, Dortmund University, Düsseldorf University, Gießen University, University Kassel, University Münster, University Oldenburg or University Potsdam.

Students did not have to pay any fees if they were enrolled at one of the four pilot universities, or were registered at one of the co-operating institutions. Other students had to pay 25 euros per semester and to register at the distance learning university of Hagen. Charges were also made for study materials, CD-ROMS, photocopies, etc. Such charges applied to all students. It was possible for students enrolled in "VINGS-Qualifizieren" (the programme for equal-opportunities officials) to enrol in these courses, too.

The 27 courses offered by "VINGS-Studieren" were run consecutively over four semesters:

I:     summer semester 2002
II:    winter semester 2002/03
III:   summer semester 2003
IV:    winter semester 2003/04.

"VINGS-Studieren" was constructed in phases. The first phase, "Fundamentals I", consisted of two courses: an introduction to studying on-line and an introduction to gender studies. The second phase, "Fundamentals II", was made up of four modules each dealing with a basic aspect of gender studies and giving an introduction to it.

The main phase of the programme consisted of four modules. These modules offered a variety of courses (module A: 4 courses, module B: 3 courses, module C: 2 courses, module D: 3 courses. The topics in these courses were analysed systematically from a comparative and a historical perspective. In addition, two cross-thematic courses were included which gave an insight into methodology and epistemology.[15] These courses were offered at different points during the pilot phase of the programme. Normally they were only available once during the four semesters. Exceptions are indicated below.

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[14]   For further explanations see http://cweb.uni-bielefeld.de/vings/gast/index,id,968.html [18.5.2006].
[15]   Küster, Vings, 110.

## Course Structure

| | |
|---|---|
| **Fundamentals I** | Studying on-line[16] |
| | Introduction to international gender studies[17] |
| **Fundamentals II** | Module A: Globalisation, europeanisation, regionalisation and gender |
| | Module B: Labour relations – gender relations |
| | Module C: Introduction to international gender studies |
| | Module D: Modernisation of identities and life-styles |

**Main phase**

**Module A: Globalisation, Europeanisation and Regionalisation**

> Courses:
> 1. Globalisation, europeanisation, regionalisation and gender
> 2. War, conflict, security and peace in international relations
> 3. Law and gender contracts: global dynamics and local negotiations
> 4. Political sociology of the women's movement from an international perspective

**Module B:       Social Transformation and its Relationship to Work and Gender**

> Courses:
> 1. Labour biographies of women
> 2. Work, welfare states and social policies[18]
> 3. Social history and the future of gender division of labour

**Module C: Body, Sexuality and Health**

> Courses:
> 1. Modern bodies
> 2. Without a body? Cyber-Bodies and Cyber-Feminism

**Module D: Gender Relations and Radical Changes in Life-styles**

> Courses:
> 1. Legal questions of living together
> 2. Modernisation of identities and life-styles
> 3. Gender contracts: global dynamics and local negotiations

## Cross-thematic options

> 1. Gender and science: Approaches and strategies of feminist epistemology
> 2. Intercultural awareness and gender in the field of globalisation.

Each course had a separate "class-room". These were all structured in the same way.[19]. Most courses were based on blended learning. Students had one or more face-to-face meetings at the University where the course was created.[20] These were "intensive course meetings" usually lasting a full day.

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[16]   Course taught in each semester to allow new-comers to enter the programme.
[17]   Course taught twice: in semesters I and III.
[18]   Course taught twice: in semester II and IV. Main teaching language was English.
[19]   For further details see the chapter "Platforms" below.

In total, the courses were equivalent to a two-year master's programme. This would enable the organisers of the programme, at some future date, to convert the pilot-course programme into a regular master's programme which could be officially accredited. It is a great pity that lack of finance brought the programme to a halt at the end of the funding period – which corresponded with the end of the pilot phase.

This pilot programme was not a degree programme and did not offer a diploma or a certificate. Consequently, students were not obliged to follow a fixed curriculum. They were allowed to choose individual courses. No special requirements were laid down for the main phase. Students who wanted to get an academic recognition of their achievements, had to ask their home institution. Qualifications (the so-called "Scheine") obtained in each single course could be recognised in the participating institutions if they fitted in with their normal course programme. To facilitate academic recognition, it was announced on the project's web-site that ECTS credits should be allocated to courses in the VINGS programme.[21]



## Materials

The materials produced for the 27 courses in the pilot phase of "VINGS-Studieren" were made available partly on the web and partly on CD-ROM. In some courses the entire material was on the web and could be down-loaded from the password-protected area. In other units students used CD-ROMS which were given to them at the beginning of the course. Because of copyright problems, some material could only be used in the form of photocopies provided by the participating

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[20]  Cf. for example the course syllabus "Labour biographies of women" http://cweb.uni-bielefeld.de/vings/home/index,id,401.html [31.05.2006] or the course syllabus "Work, Welfare States, and Social Policies" http://cweb.uni-bielefeld.de/vings/home/index,id,505.html [31.05.2006].

[21]  It is not clear whether the allocation of ECTS credit points in "VINGS-Studieren" occurred generally. Obviously, it was more common to proceed to academic recognition on a more individual basis. The "VINGS-Qualifizieren" programme is actually using credit points. 1 ECTS credit point is given per contact hour/per semester (e.g. one course of 3 contact hours per week: a total of 3 ECTS credit points for the whole course. Obviously, at the end no workload-based allocation of credit points took place.

departments. The material used included sources, secondary texts, images, video sequences and video interviews.

Hanover opted for materials available on CD-ROM. A total of seven courses were produced. In five of them the course material was produced on CD-ROMS enabling it to be used both in e-learning and in face-to-face teaching.

The courses available on CD-ROM and produced in Hanover were:

1. Regina Becker-Schmidt: "Labour relations – gender relations"
2. Regina Becker-Schmidt: "Labour biographies of women"
3. Christiane Lemke: "Work, Welfare States, and Social Policies (course given in English)"
4. Anne Fleig: "Modern Bodies"
5. Gudrun-Axeli Knapp: "Gender and science: Approaches and strategies of feminist epistemology".[22]

The CD-ROMS were designed in a particular way. Their technical lay-out and content were impressive. The use of the various media had been explained in prior discussions, as well as the use of "special technical effects" designed to attract students. In her course on "Labour relations – Gender relations" Regina Becker-Schmidt used "concept maps" – a fascinating way to combine content, information and learning processes. This well-structured, well-developed and convincing method greatly facilitated learning. The same was true of the CD-ROM produced by Gudrun-Axeli Knapp and her team in the course "Gender and science: Approaches and strategies of feminist epistemology". This included oral history, oral interviews, a poster exhibition and video sequences about the women's movement. This basic course can be re-used in lots of ways and does not need to be updated every year. The high production costs were clearly justified.[23]

Producing these CD-ROM-based courses was a lengthy process and included work-shops where ideas, content and design were thrashed out. It was decided to produce material on CD-ROM instead of providing down-loadable course material in the pass-word-protected class-room because the authors had its future use in mind. Such CD-ROMs could be used again later in face-to-face teaching and would not necessarily need a blended learning environment.

From an analysis of the programme it is clear that "VINGS-Studieren" also satisfies the requirements of the "Tuning Educational Structures in Europe" project as far as the use of New Media and e-learning is concerned.[24]

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[22]  Küster, Vings, 110.
[23]  Further details see Küster, Vings, 112s. and Knapp, Gegenstandsbezug, 8s., 13-15 who describe in detail the process of producing the course material and the discussion about different ways of creating such material.

## Administration

A consortium was created to plan and run the "VINGS-Studieren" programme. It was made up of senior staff from the universities of Bielefeld, Bochum, Hanover and Hagen.

Those involved were responsible for different tasks. The consortium leader, and one of its project directors, was Professor Dr. Ursula Müller from the Interdisciplinary Women's Studies Centre at the University of Bielefeld. Other project directors were Professor Dr. Ilse Lenz (Faculty of Social Sciences, University of Bochum), Ulrike Schultz, AOR (Centre of Distance Learning, Distance Learning University of Hagen), Professor Dr. Regina Becker-Schmidt (Institute of Psychology, University of Hanover), Professor Dr. Gudrun-Axeli Knapp (Institute of Psychology, University of Hanover). The central project co-ordinator was Silja Polzin M.A. (University of Bielefeld).

Further tutors and researchers were involved in the work of teaching. Their home universities were Basel, Berlin (Technical University), Bochum, Bremen, Darmstadt, Düsseldorf, Hagen, Hanover, Moscow, Münster, Potsdam and Vienna. Contributing as they did in course design and the teaching phases, they helped to emphasized the international character of the programme.

Several staff members from Bielefeld, Bochum, Hagen and Hanover were responsible for teaching, tutoring, software engineering, evaluation, course administration, translation and legal matters. Specialist staff provided skills in media design, multi-media production, computing, and the use of e-learning – and handled the secretarial side.

Further information about the project and its courses can be found on the VINGS web-site: www.vings.de. It gives general information about both the "VINGS-Studieren" and "VINGS-Qualifizieren" programmes. Details are also included of the latter programme which is still running, and where enrolment is possible in the courses. Brief information is available in English.

Although the programme is no longer running, the web-site includes particulars of "VINGS-Studieren". It covers an outline of the two-year course programme, with details of enrolment and academic recognition, and a short abstract of each course. A brief presentation in English is also included.

[24] See Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. Final report. Pilot Project – Phase 1, ed. by Julia González and Robert Wagenaar, University of Deusto – University of Groningen 2003, Bilbao 2003 (downloadable in the section of publications at http://unideusto.org/tuningeu/), 147-159 concerning competences in the field of history and also the use of e-learning; Tuning Educational Structures in Europe II. Universities' Contribution to the Bologna Process, ed. by Julia González and Robert Wagenaar, University of Deusto – University of Groningen 2005, Bilbao 2005 (downloadable in the section of publications at http://unideusto.org/tuningeu/), 98-108, 227-245 concerning history and the use of e-learning; see also Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. The History Subject Area, ed. by Cliohnet, Pisa 2005, 32s. Most of the competences listed can be linked to the interdisciplinary field of gender studies as well. Political Science as a subject area forms part of the third phase of the Tuning Project (2005-2006), but results have not been published yet.

Access to more detailed information is only available using a password. This enables officially-enrolled students to access the restricted areas and the various classrooms of the courses selected. They can also visit each course area, the chat-rooms and forum and have a closer look at the course material.

## Platforms

The platform used for "VINGS-Studieren" was located at Bielefeld University whereas "VINGS-Qualifizieren" was finally transferred to the Distance Learning University of Hagen.

The Vings platform, called "C:Web" (Community Web) was designed by the computer company AMMMA in Bielefeld. It is a CMS-based platform (Content Management System) specially developed by AMMMA. The platform was located at the University of Bielefeld. The central management was under the control of Silja Polzin.[25]

Participating students needed internet access at home, at the university or elsewhere. After enrolling in the course programme, they received a pass-word and user-name giving access to the courses selected.

The introductory course "Studying on-line" was designed to acquaint students with the project's virtual environment and help them to become familiar with the platform and its various tools. It was offered to new-comers each semester.

Each course had a special area or class-room on the platform. Different options were available in each class-room. Students could immediately see who was currently on-line. They could consult "News", "Course Syllabus" and "Who's Who": presentations of the students and others – along with their email addresses. They could find out more about tutors and those managing the course, and about all necessary material – or an indication of where to find it. A glossary was included and a forum was available. All contributions to the forum are now accessible in PDF-format and can be consulted in an archive area. Minutes of face-to-face meetings can also be read and downloaded.

Students were expected to use communication tools like chat, forum and instant messaging, and co-operative tools like BSCW: Basic Support for Co-operative Work. This was designed for on-line co-operation whereby students could work together in small groups, store files in special work areas on the BSCW server, download files and use an integrated calendar. Students were able to use search engines and site maps and to access virtual libraries and other source material.

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[25]   Concerning this company, their platform C:Web and further projects see www.ammma.de.

## Language and intercultural issues

The "VINGS-Studieren" courses were produced by an international group of women specialists from different countries and different cultural backgrounds, including Germany, Austria, Switzerland, Russia, the United States and Japan. This ensured that intercultural awareness and issues relevant in those countries were given prominence, thus adding a valuable dimension to the programme.

The courses were mostly produced and run in German although some courses were also available in English, like the one created by Christiane Lemke in Hanover, on "Work, Welfare States and Social Policies", which was available on CD-ROM. Students using these courses were for the most part German-speakers.

In many courses students were able to discuss specific issues with tutors from abroad who had participated in the creation of the courses or who were guest-speakers. This was particularly the case with "Work, Welfare States, and Social Policies" where academics from San Francisco and Warsaw were involved. Others from Germany, Moscow and Basel took part in the course "Labour Biographies of Women".

Another course where such issues were prominent was one on intercultural awareness and gender which formed part of the area "cross-thematic options". During the winter semester 2003/04, which was the last semester of the project, the VINGS course "Intercultural awareness and gender in the field of globalisation" was presented by "Modernes Japan" (Modern Japan), a department in the Institute of East-Asian Studies at the University of Düsseldorf. This course was created by Michiko Mae and presented jointly by her and Susanne Kreitz-Sandberg. Women academics from other universities also took part. This was a blended learning course in which about thirty students participated. They were all enrolled in VINGS. It began with a face-to-face meeting in Düsseldorf where students and tutors came together. Then the virtual course started. This was a major course on topics like nation, culture and gender, and dealt with intercultural and trans-cultural issues in a number of cultural areas including the Arab countries, the United States, Latin America, Eastern Europe, Russia, Japan and Asia. An evaluation phase was included in the programme and the course itself was presented very successfully at a conference given in May 2004 at the Ochanomizu University in Tokio.[26]

All this underlines the fact that the VINGS project was deeply committed to intercultural issues and emphasizes the role played by well-known female academics in the field of gender studies.

## Quality assessment of courses

During the pilot programme both continuous and final evaluation procedures were used. In addition, the VINGS pilot group organised a series of workshops

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[26] Jahresbericht. Oktober 2003 – September 2004. Modernes Japan, Ostasien-Institut, Heinrich Heine-Universität Düsseldorf, Düsseldorf 2004.

and conferences to discuss, in depth, specific aspects of the project as well as the importance of e-learning. The first "Evaluation Forum" workshop took place in May 2003. It dealt with various aspects of evaluation. A conference called "Techniken und Methoden virtueller Lehre", was held in October 2003 dealing with the techniques and methods of virtual learning. A further conference entitled "VINGS: Innovation und Implementierung"[27] took place shortly after, focusing on aspects of innovation and the implementation of the VINGS project.

It will be instructive to take a closer look at a presentation on evaluating the VINGS project given by Caroline Zimmermann at the "Evaluation Forum" in May 2003.[28] This consisted of a number of parts. The first part was the so-called target-group evaluation. The programme had started in the summer of 2002. The study was based on the results of 270 questionnaires distributed to those students who might be candidates for the VINGS study programme. 76 % of the students who responded, were female, 24 % male. The average age was 31. More than 50 % of the students enrolled at the Open University were post-graduate students, while only 15 % of those enrolled in the other institutions were. About 45 % of the students were interested in the VINGS study programme. 98 % of them had access to a computer, 92 % doing so at home. About 89 % liked to work with a computer.[29]

In the second part of her presentation, on the course evaluation, Caroline Zimmermann described the evaluation methods used. These covered semi-structured interviews by telephone, on-line questionnaires (HTML, SPSS-MR) and open questionnaires sent out by email. As an example the following five courses were evaluated:

1. Introduction to international gender studies (produced in Bochum)
2. Studying on-line (produced in Bielefeld)
3. Modernisation of identities and life-styles (produced in Bielefeld)
4. Labour biographies of women (produced in Hanover)
5. Basics of the work of equal opportunities (produced in Hagen as part of the "VINGS-Qualifizieren" project)

The third part of the presentation concentrated on the "VINGS-Qualifizieren" project – which we are not concerned with here.

The fourth part of the presentation was on system evaluation. Teachers were asked to give their opinion about the course concept and its realisation. Techniques

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[27] Congress papers and summaries can be found at http://cweb.uni-bielefeld.de/vings/gast/index,id,1260.html [24.7.2006]

[28] Zimmermann, Caroline, Evaluations-Ergebnisse VINGS. Power Point Präsentation. Forum Evaluation, 9th May 2003, 38 slides.

[29] Zimmermann, Evaluation, slides no. 1-13.

used by the evaluators were semi-structured interviews by telephone and a special evaluation workshop for tutors.

Each semester between 76 % and 85 % of the students were female. It is interesting to compare the VINGS programme with other gender-studies programmes. In Hanover and Oldenburg the results were similar: 90 % of the students were women.[30]

Relations between teachers and students were more informal than in face-to-face teaching. It is important to define the role of each and to structure the chat sessions. Teachers must expect a high drop-out rate at the start of the course because some students will have orientation problems. The length of the different learning-units must also be carefully considered. An interval of between one and two weeks was felt appropriate.[31]

In several courses, notably "Modern bodies", students were asked to fill in a short evaluation questionnaire and to send it back to Caroline Zimmermann at the Distance Learning University of Hagen who was in charge of the evaluation procedures.

Evaluation also took place in the course "Intercultural skills and gender in the field of globalisation". The results were posted in the course area. About a third of the students never attended a class, another third dropped out, and the remaining third (about 10 students) worked very hard and were active in meeting the requirements of the course, which were very demanding. The teacher was really satisfied with the results and commended the high level of commitment shown by the students, and adding that she herself spent about 8 hours a week teaching and tutoring.[32] The tutors expressly mentioned the enormous work-load they had compared with that in regular face-to-face teaching. They all stressed that without the help of large numbers of media specialist staff they would not have been able to cope.[33]

## Assessment of students

Students were assessed in different ways, the requirements being set by the teachers. Regular attendance was one of the basic requirements. They all had to give a presentation of themselves at the start of the course. In most cases, participation in face-to-face meetings was obligatory. Students had to communicate regularly in both the chat-rooms and the forum. Indeed, in some cases the minimum number

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[30]   Zimmermann, Evaluation, slide 32.

[31]   Zimmermann, Evaluation, slides 33-38.

[32]   See letter written to students on 8th February, 2004 by Susanne Kreitz-Sandberg, http://cweb.uni-bielefeld. de/vings/home/index,id,708html [4.8.2006] and the downloadable questionnaire and corresponding results.

[33]   See also Gudrun-Axeli Knapp, Gegenstandsbezug, 7 talking about the team-work involving all collaborators and course developers and specialists in the area of New Media, modern technologies, social sciences, didactics etc.

of contributions expected from them each week was clearly indicated. In most cases they had to write short contributions, often with the total number required laid down. In some cases, they had to write essays or comment on the course material. In some they had to prepare on-line presentations or prepare a written paper (similar to a German "Hausarbeit") at the end of the course. They had to do this before they could obtain a certificate which would be recognised by their home institution. In German this is called a "Schein" which figures in the curriculum of a normal course of study. No specific indication of ECTS credits was given, although the participating institutions guaranteed academic recognition because the "VINGS-Studieren" programme, being a pilot project, delivered neither a diploma nor a certificate.

## Conclusion

At the moment only part of the VINGS project is in operation. "VINGS-Qualifizieren" is still running successfully at the Distance Learning University of Hagen. In contrast, the pilot universities of Bochum, Hanover and Bielefeld, where their programme was equally successful, lacked funding to continue.

Being both international and interdisciplinary, VINGS has been unique in the field of gender studies. It deserves a better future. Because of the enormous effort that has been invested in creating such a study programme it would be sad if it were to remain no more than a pilot project. Hopefully it will be updated and used again. The organisers of these extremely useful courses live in hope that they will finally get the financial support needed to transform them into an e-learning Master course. At a time when the follow-up to the Socrates programme will focus on Life-Long Learning, there will be an even greater role for e-learning in European teaching.

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## "Who killed William Robinson?", some unsolved cases revisited. Canadian History reconstructed using an unusual didactical approach

Marianna Baldi
University of Bologna
(http://web.uvic.ca/history-robinson/indexmsn.html)

### Description

The case study chosen for this analysis, "Who killed William Robinson", was the first case that R. Sandwell and J. Lutz were involved with in 1997, in the project "Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History"[1] which a number of Canadian historians took part in. They revisited some "cold cases", old unsolved murders dating back to the 1890s in which people then accused turned out through later investigations[2] to be entirely innocent.

The main site consists of 5 sections:

— Mysteries: links to the sites about the cold cases being revisited
— Teachers: this section of the website is aimed at giving teachers an understanding of the pedagogy behind the website and providing support in the form of Teachers' Guides and a Teachers' Forum.

The detailed Teachers' Guides for each site are available free on request, helping teachers to make full and effective use, in class, of each of the sites. They are avail-

[1]    See the site http://www.canadianmysteries.ca/mysteriesen.html

able via a link from the home page of each site. At the beginning of the Guides, suggestions are given as to where they fit into provincial and territorial curricula.

The Teachers' Guides contain background information, technical information about using the site, and both lesson plans and unit plans. Lesson plans have been developed by a team of teachers and historians committed to promoting specific goals in the teaching of history: to make history more interesting, engaging and meaningful by involving students in the active process of critical thinking about a particular historical problem in order to equip them to make a critical investigation of their own contemporary world .

The guides provide at least one full unit of lesson plans for each of the sites as well as a number of stand-alone lessons. Although most of the lessons have been collected into a single unit, individual lesson plans are readily adaptable by teachers. They can select the level of difficulty by the complexity of the questions they want answered. The authors have also provided some suggestions about which courses in Canada's provincial Ministries of Education each site and unit might best be used in.

The aims of the Teachers' Guides are to provide teachers with:

— the technical information they will need to use these web-sites effectively in the class-room for the teaching of history
— information **about** how each site can be used to meet the curriculum requirements of their provincial Ministry of Education
— the historical background they will need in order to use the site
— the pedagogical tools they will need, including specific lesson and unit plans developed for the content of each particular Mystery site
— lessons and unit plans specifically developed to promote critical thinking in history
— lessons and unit plans developed to **expoilt to the full** document-based learning in history
— lessons and unit plans developed to teach students the skills needed for historical research and thinking[3].

[2] The others cases: *We Do Not Know His Name: Klatsassin and the Chilcotin War*: As dawn broke on April 30, 1864, some 25 Tsilhqot'in men surprised the sleeping camp of a crew building a road to the Cariboo gold mines. Of the 15 road-builders, only three escaped with their lives. Was it unprovoked or was it revenge? Was it an act of terrorism or war or the worst mass murder of Whites by Aboriginal People in British Columbia history? Who was the leader, and if this was war, who won?

*Aurore! The Mystery of the Martyred Child*: Fortierville, February 1920, looked like a quiet Quebec village -- fields blanketed with snow and wood stoves burning in the simple wooden houses grouped around a tall church spire. A peaceful scene -- you might think. But in one house on the edge of the village, a young girl, only ten years old, was being beaten, whipped and burned. Who could have done this? How, in such a small village where everyone knew everyone else's business, could such a thing not be noticed? Not until they were faced with a corpse. And why does this tragic case still haunt the collective memory of the Québécois.
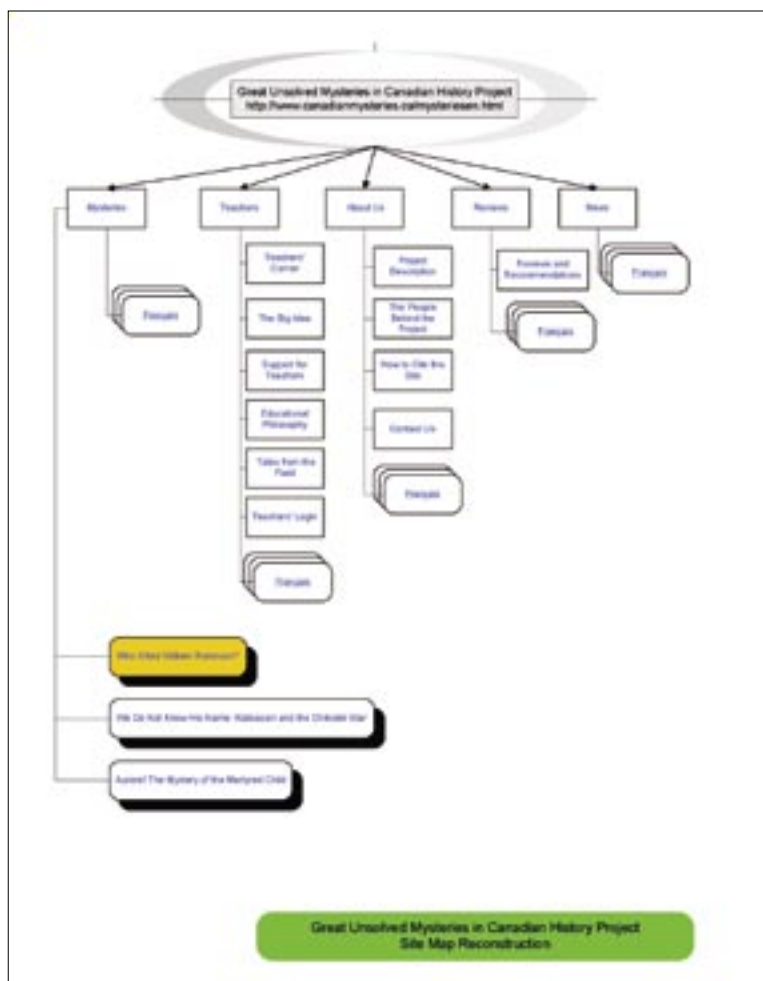
*Picture 1: "Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History Project" – site map*

It also includes a teachers' forum called 'Tales from the Field'[4].
The other sections are:

— About us: information about the authors of the project
— Reviews
— News

In the introduction to the project on the web-site the authors define, as their main purpose, an innovative method which, by allowing students to get away from

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[3]    From the section "Support for teachers".

[4]    The forum is not working at the moment.

traditional learning patterns, could transform them into authors aware of "history"[5].

Participants in the project were the University of Victoria, the Université de Sherbrooke and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto.

The basic concept of the project is extremely simple: "Everybody loves a murder mystery"[6]; getting involved in solving a case where innocent people have been unjustly accused - and hanged. It is extremely stimulating.

An archive of "primary sources"[7] has been created and put at the disposal of students and teachers. The authors aimed at creating a complete archive, containing all the information relating to this particular crime.

Students get involved in the historical inquiry, exploiting the appeal aroused by being involved in a mystery. This could be considered merely as a clever ploy. As the authors themselves admit, it would be interesting to consider the use of detective stories[8] as a teaching tool in studying history.

In this particular case, students are asked to investigate the William Robinson murder using as evidence the documents they can find in the archive of the website. In this way they play the role of principal characters in "history-in-the-making", acting as historian-detectives. The whole historical reconstruction of the William Robinson case uses the setting of a police inquiry, following the criteria of a detective story, as is clearly shown in the following table[9].

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[5]   "Doing History" is not just a fact of memorizing dates, names of famous politicians and all about wars. That all is just context. "Doing History" is the work of the detective, the gumshoe, the private eye -- and we need you to take on this job. All we are left with is traces, clues, hints and allegations. Putting those together, weighing the evidence, assessing the credibility of witness accounts, sorting out contradictions, and showing how your solution to the mysteries is the best of all the alternatives -- that is "Doing History".

[6]   From the section "*The Big Idea*" (http://web.uvic.ca/history-robinson/indexmsn.html) "Everybody loves a murder mystery. Of all the historical situations researchers encounter, nothing has quite the same impact as discovering an innocent person hanged or a guilty person going free. […]. But the mystery is mere bait to lure the unsuspecting into a much more complex understanding of the whole historical enterprise.

[7]   From the "*Introction*" to section "*Archives*", *ibid.* "Our access to the past is entirely dependent on what remains to us through time. Buildings, home movies, landscapes, photographs, and our memories provide some of these 'remains.' In their attempt to understand what happened in the past, however, historians most commonly depend on a wide variety of records created during, or near to, the time they are studying. These records are called "Primary Sources" […]. An archives is a place where historic records are kept. Often these archives are buildings or places in buildings, like the Archives of British Columbia, the Victoria City Archives, or the Salt Spring Archives. This site is a virtual archives".

[8]   In 1946 the french literary critic Nino Frank used for the first time the word "noir" to talk about some american films imported in France ("noir" was the colour of the cover used in France detective stories books).

[9]   The structure reported in the table took its final shape in the second half of the 19th century , when the positivistic idea was applied to this field, introducing a scientific approach to the police inquiry.

| Topoi | Yes | No | Undef. |
|-------|-----|-----|--------|
| Backwards surveying procedure | x | | |
| Effect -> cause | x | | |
| The accused ones turn out to be clearly innocent | x | | |
| Inadequate investigating tools | | x | |
| Survey lead from an aware detective, able to give the right interpretation of each proof at disposal.. | x | | |
| The solution is reached in a rigorous way. | x | | |

Teachers are meant to guide their students through all the processes of interaction with the sources, and the information-gathering process. They can decide the level of complexity of the course and how deep students should go.

## The history

William Robinson was an Afro-American who was killed on Salt Spring Island in British Columbia in 1868. He had arrived in the colony ten years before as a result of the American civil war.

William was one of the three inhabitants of the island killed within just two years. Tshuanhusset, an aborigine also known as Tom, was accused of the murder and then sentenced to death.

## Materials

The site dedicated to William Robinson's murder is a virtual archive[10] created by Lutz's team using a set of original documents preserved in local archives: the Archives of British Columbia, the Victoria City Archives, and the Salt Spring Archives.

The archive is arranged by the type of source and is similar to the standard form of archival organization, where records are grouped by provenance, i.e. by their original location (for example by government department, by particular individual

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[10]    We are here using the definition given by the authors (see footnote 4).

or family, or by company) and in the order in which they were originally created and organized.

The documents, defined as "primary sources", and included because they are judged relevant and connected to the case, represent a collection of sources where students can work just as historians would in practice. They are clearly an invitation to investigate the life as well as the death of the people involved.

The documents were digitalized in a simple way: transcribed or scanned, if images, while the  digital editing was done using html. Meta-languages were not used.

All the documents are accessible from the three main sections: "The murder", "The historical context" and "The archives". In the first two sections the documents are organized by content, with the idea of indicating two different research paths[11]. In the third section, "The Archives" the documents are also arranged according to content.. This structure is also used in the two thematic paths.

Starting from each of the main subjects we can deepen our investigations using menus listing specific sub-sections.

The murder:
— The search for the murderer
— The trial
— The aftermath
— The19[th] century interpretation
— The cast of characters

The historical context :
— Settler society in Salt Spring
— Whippings and hangings
— Other murders
— Other crimes
— Maps and graphs
— Chinook language
— The cast of haracters

The Archives
— Newspapers
— Colonial correspondances
— Attorney General
— Supreme Court
— Photos
— Drawings and paintings

[11]   There is a home section, containing general information about the site and its authors. From the home section it is possible to download the teachers' guide.

— Maps and graphs
— Published sources
— Diaries and letters
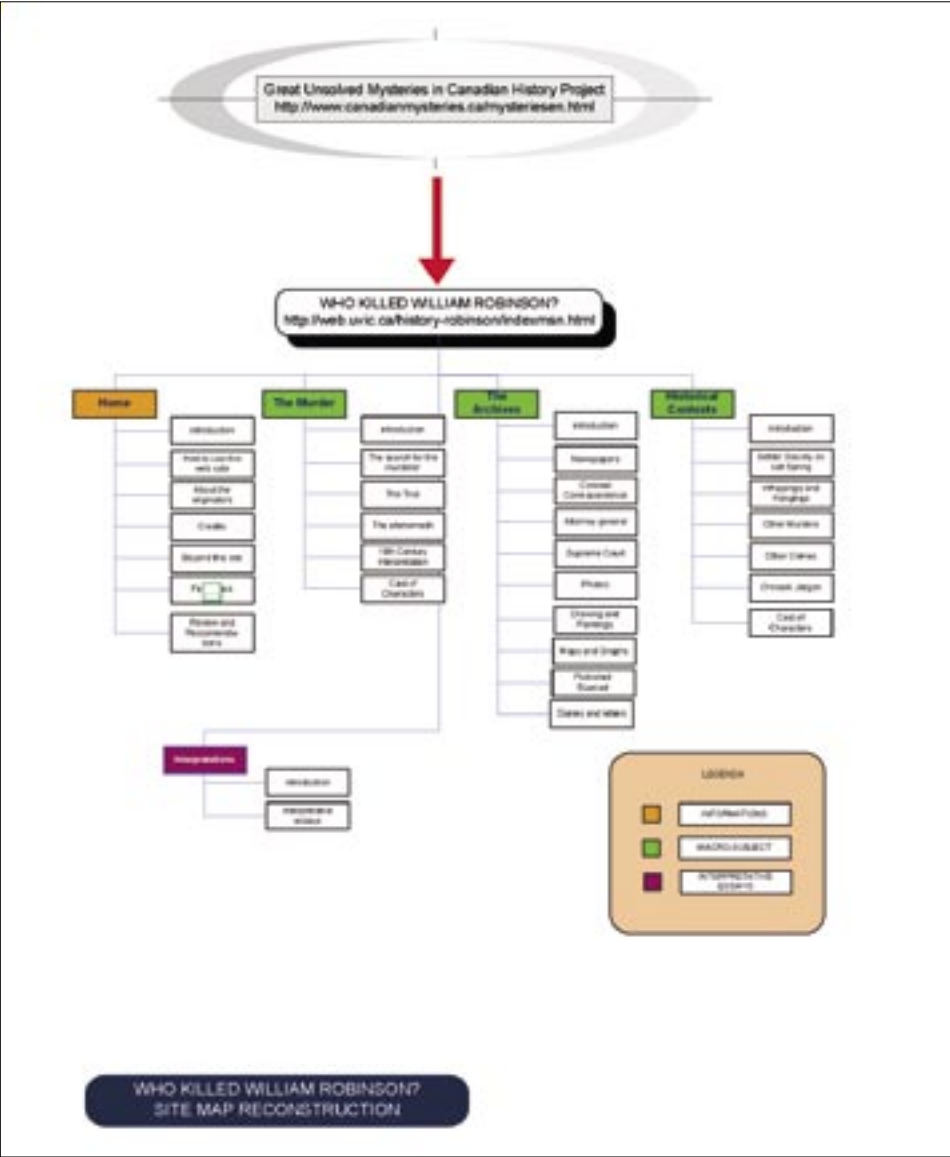


*Picture 2: "Who killed William Robinson?" – Site map*
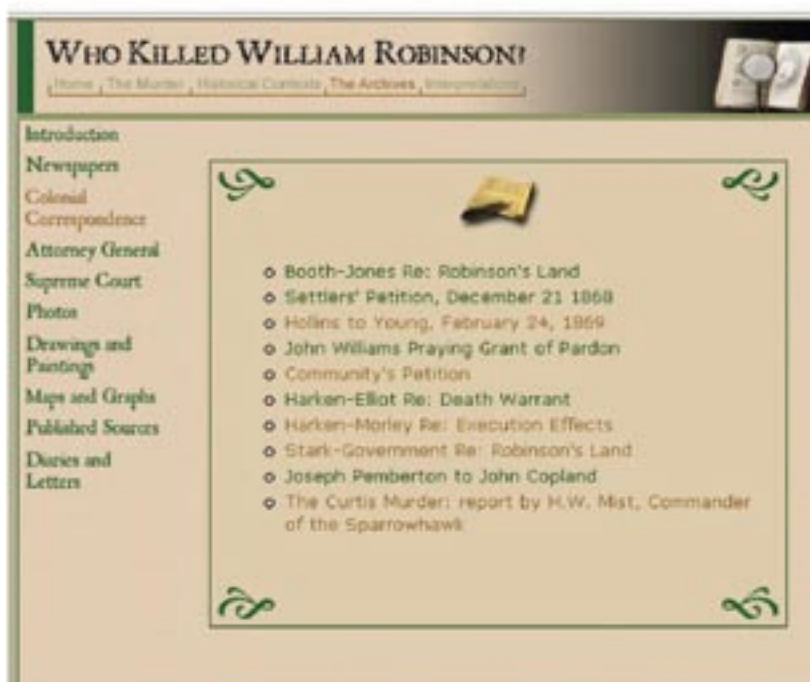
*Picture 3: Section "Archives", "Colonial Correspondence" web page.*

All the materials in the archive are arranged in such a way as to make their use as easy as possible to students. All the texts (newspapers, colonial correspondances, attorney general, supreme court, published sources and diaries & letters) are connected to a didactic support section to help in using the source. It is called "About this source" and is divided into three main questions:

— Why does this document exist?
— Why would we use this source?
— How do we find and use this source?

Here we can find key information about a document and especially the reasons why it is important.

The contemporary photos, drawings and paintings of people and places related to the murder, were captured using a scanner. They are very interesting because they help us to visualize and therefore update the basic information we have to enable us to make an accurate historical reconstruction, starting from the appearance of the place at that time, to the appearance of the people who took part.

The section "Maps and graphs" includes a collection of historical cartographic items created by Ruth Sandwell for her PhD thesis[12]. It offers a wide range of geographical, social and economic information about Salt Spring Island at the time the events took place.

*Picture 5: "About this source", "Why this document exist?"*



*Picture 6: "About this source", "Why would use this source?"*
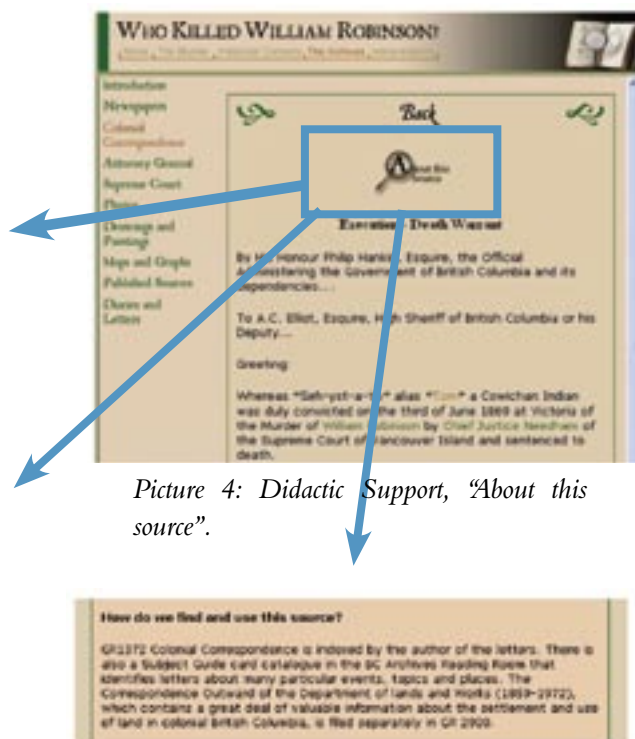


*Picture 4: Didactic Support, "About this source".*



*Picture 7: "About this source" "How do we find and use this source?"*

## Technical aspects

The web-site was created between 1995 and 1997, using a set of documents previously used for teaching. In 1996 it was tested on 130 students, enrolled in the first year of "Canadian history". The the idea was to involve the students and start them thinking – an approach still considered of primary importance by the authors.

From a technical point of view, the web-site consists of a simple hypertext tool with static pages in html. Each section is freely accessible. Only the section "Interpretations" requires authorization to get in[13]. Surfing is based on main subjects, with an index at the top. Each of the main subjects has its own thematic menu. No e-learning platform is used, and no interactive tools are provided, such as forums, chat-rooms and evaluation tests.

An important point when evaluating the site is the fact that the authors had no intention to create a set of stand-alone teaching mateials, but a set of materials that

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[12]    R. W. Sandwell "Reading the Land: Rural Discourse and the Practice of Settlement, Salt Spring Island, British Columbia, 1859-1891," Unpublished PhD Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1998."

[13]    The teacher can get the password by filling out a form and can give it to his class under his responsibility.

could be used by students for comprehending the historical event. Both the analytical and reconstructive phases are meant to be carried out during class-room lessons or in face-to-face meetings with the teacher[14].

This explains both the simplified structure of the site and the decision not to use interactive facilities. It is of course possible to alternate face-to-face sessions with guided discussion on the internet using other software.

From the students' point of view, this method does not cause problems, as is shown in the three experimental cases explained in the teachers' guide. It allows discussion in the classroom within the timetable set by the teacher for completing the case. In the reference guide teachers can find suggestions and examples for checking their students'research activity. These include evaluation tests based on a proper approach to the sources, inquiry tables, and so on.

From a technical point of view "Who killed William Robinson lacks any digital feedback for checking what the students are doing. The materials provided (sources and didactical support) are to be considered real learning objects, following the definition given by LTSC: *learning objects* include "every digital or non-digital entity that could be used, re-used or pointed out to as point of reference, during a learning path supported by the new technologies"[15]. The digitalized contents follow the ADL standards[16].

— ***accessible*** *from multiple remote locations through the use of meta-data and packaging standards*
— ***adaptable*** *by tailoring instruction to the individual and organizational needs*
— ***affordable*** *by increasing learning efficiency and productivity while reducing time and cost*
— ***durable*** *across revisions of operating systems and software*
— ***inter-operable*** *across multiple tools and platforms*
— ***re-usable*** *through the design, management and distribution of tools and learning content across multiple applications"*

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[14] *Teachers' Guide* for "Who Killed William Robinson". August, 2004, p. 4. It is important to notice that this Website is not designed as a "stand-alone" teaching tool. Most part of the learning process happens when students analyse and discuss the Website in a classroom or in a moderated Internet discussion. Students may be surprised to find that this site is not designed to provide an absolute answer about who killed William Robinson. Instead, it is designed to provoke questions about how we get to the truth, or truths, about the past.

[15] IEEE Learning Technology Standards Committee, http://ieeeltsc.org/. Against this definition , David Wiley, who thinks that only the digital sources, just for the fact of being re-usable, can be defined as LO. Wiley, D. A. (2000). "Connecting learning objects to instructional design theory: A definition, a metaphor, and a taxonomy".

[16] http://www.adlnet.gov/index.cfm, The Office of the Under Secretary of Defense for Personnel and Readiness (OUSD P&R) was tasked with leading a collaborative effort to harness the power of information technologies to modernize structured learning. Through the sponsorship of the OUSD P&R, the creation of the Advanced Distributed Learning

This standard will specify the syntax and semantics of Learning Object Meta-data, defined as the attributes required to fully/adequately describe a Learning Object. Learning Objects are defined here as any entity, digital or non-digital, which can be used, re-used or referenced during technology-supported learning.

## Language and Intercultural aspects

Interaction between different cultures, though not specifically dealt with on this web-site, wholly permeates it and is constantly proposed as a motive for thought and analysis.

It is not possible to define briefly the intercultural importance of the subjects dealt with in "Who killed William Robinson?" We can simply underline the fact that this project was carried out in Canada, a bilingual country where two strong social realities co-exist: the French and the Anglo-Saxon ethnic groups.

The web-site deals with events of Canadian history in the 1890s , shortly after the end of the American war of Secession when a lot of Afro-Americans fled to Canada, just like Robinson - not to mention the alleged murderer, the aborigine belonging to the Kanakas (Hawaiians) ethnic group.

The event is reported in a factual way and presented to the students to analyse. In this case too, the historical sources transmit information. Clearly the unsolved mysteries of Canadian history can only be understood in the light of the multi-ethnic reality of the society they took place in.

The intercultural character of the materials emphasizes the fact that they are provided bilingually with a French and an English version. The French version is a translation of the English and *vice versa*[17].

Language and culture are sensitive issues in Canada. They underlie great social concerns for the entire population.

The "manifesto" of these activities is the "*Canadian Multiculturalism Act*", published on the web- site of the Department of Canadian Heritage[18], whose emblematic home page image is shown here. It indicates, as the main points of the CMA program:

— Equal Opportunity in Federal Institutions
— Capacity Building



*Picture 8: An image from the Canadian Heritage Dept, home page*

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[17] About Canada's Bilingualism see http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/progs/lo-ol/biling/index_e.cfm

[18] http://www.canadianheritage.gc.ca/progs/pa-app/prog-home_e.cfm. And the booklet "Official Languages: Myths and Realities" (Committed by The Government of Canada). This booklet is intended to help answer questions about federal languages policy – questions such as: what an official language is; why we have two official languages; how much bilingualism costs and what it all means to Canadians.

— Enhancing the understanding of and Respect for Diversity
— Research and Data that Support the Development of Relevant Policies, Programs and Practices
— Language Skills and Cultural Understanding of Individuals of all Origins

This reflects the determination to create a common national consciousness, involving all the ethnic components of the population of Canada. For many years there has been a policy of recovering and developing indigenous cultures - a policy that has been actively implemented.
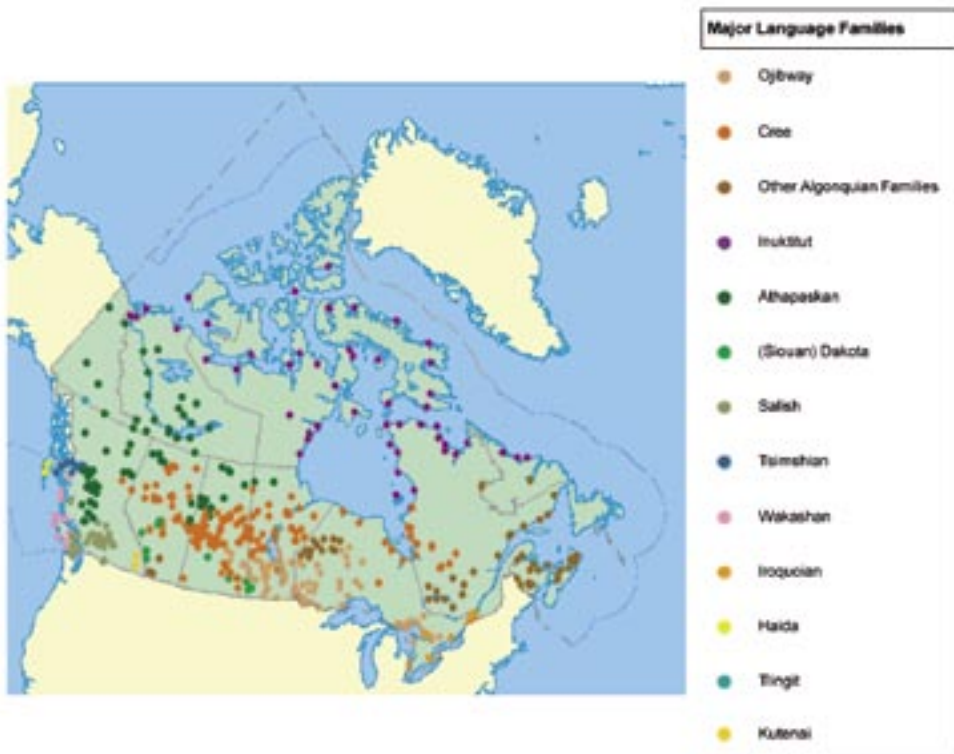


*Picture 9: Map about the most important native languages in Canada.*

Bearing this policy in mind, the choice of the subject in the case becomes clear, as does the desire to make students appreciate the roles which the different ethnic groups played in the creation of modern Canada.

Apart from the two-language problem of English and French, there are fifty native languages still spoken, and these represent at least eleven linguistic families.

## Pedagogy

The web-site is structured on four main levels, each designed for a different group of users. The first two levels are intended for high-school students and first-year university students. The third level is aimed at university students in general while the fourth level is designed for university students in their final year and at graduates.

### First level: reading and understanding primary documentation

The first level is obviously the easiest. Each site relating to the project "Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History" puts at the user's disposal a lot of authentic documents from Canadian history. These are sources which are hardly accessible for a historian and almost impossible to find for a student. They are "primary sources": newspapers, diaries and letters. They have been transcribed to help students in their task and allow them a direct approach to them "in the raw". This level represents the cycle-level Descriptors of the Tuning Project[19]: It provides direct contact with the historian's craft, albeit in a circumscribed way, access to original sources and texts produced by professional historiographical research.

### Second level: exploring the social history of Canadian society

At the second level students acquire basic knowledge of life in the colonies in the 19th century. This is acquired through basic education and reinforced by a series of questions asked by the teacher. Their purpose is to help identify the most important information in order to reconstruct the social and cultural context in which the event took place. In this way students learn as precisely as possible how ordinay people lived at the time of the murders. They are constantly forced to interpret the information gained through the questions, each more complex than at the previous level. To get the answers they need to use the tools provided on the web-site.

### Third level: doing history.

The third level is decidedly more complex than the previous ones. Students have by now become aware of the problems of "doing history" and have direct contact with the sources which, though transcribed, are beyond the usual narrative form

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[19] The project Tuning Educational Structures in Europe is at the heart of the Bologna – Prague – Berlin – Bergen process (see also http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/). It is one of the few projects in Europe that actually links the political objectives set in the Bologna Declaration of 1999 (see http://www.bologna-bergen2005.no/Docs/00-Main_doc/990719BOLOGNA_DECLARATION.PDF) to the higher education sector. Tuning is a project developed by and meant for higher education institutions. The Tuning project focuses not on educational systems, but on educational structures and content of studies. Whereas educational systems are primarily the responsibility of governments, educational structures and content are that of higher education institutions. As a result of the Bologna Declaration the educational systems in all European countries are in the process of reforming. This is the direct effect of the political decision to converge the different national systems in Europe. For Higher Education institutions these reforms mean the actual starting point for another discussion: the comparability of curricula in terms of structures, programmes and actual teaching. In this reform process the required academic and professional profiles and needs of society (should) play an important role. [From the introduction to the project http://tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu/].For more informations see below.

that they are probably used to. At this point they begin to realize that the history they were familiar with up to now was the result of complex analytical work, often slow and laborious, aimed at organizing heterogeneous and often conflicting information which culminates in a phase we could define as "creative". It groups, in narrative form, all the information that has been gathered. The students are thereby called upon to think about a very important question, namely: "What is happening?"

This is the moment for discussion, in class or via the web, led by the teacher. Students have to expound their theories to their colleagues and be ready to co-operate, which means that they will not be allowed to get out of the debate even if the discussion ends up in a close examination of the proposed theories. At this point, students should have reached a higher level of awareness of how information is handled when "doing history". They should now be capable of discussing and supporting any hypotheses put forward.

A crucial task of the teacher is to pay special attention to the way research is carried out, and so help the students to do their work correctly, and encourage them to find a modus operandi which they can later discuss with other students.

Obviously, different research approaches could cause a different value being placed on certain evidence and consequently lead to different conclusions. The real strength of this method lies in making people understand that history is often the result of subjective interpretation reached through an analytical approach, though mainly through the contextual perception of the historian. The different weight assigned to a piece of evidence can significantly modify the final result.

The aim of the third level, therefore, is to encourage open discussion among students, freed from preconceived ideas or influenced by other people, in order to enhance their experience in the study of history and so gain fresh insights into its practice.

**Fourth level: what is history and how can we understand it?**

For advanced students the fourth level operates in the historiographic and epistemological sphere by emphasizing different interpretations of evidence and of its importance. It opens an interdisciplinary discussion about known events and offers a chance to examine closely some of the most important methodological and theoretical issues, particularly about "the nature of history".

## Some considerations

"Who killed William Robinson?" is a very good example of a web-site offering resources for teaching. It is effective, and it is easy to use  In its approach to history it can be usefully compared with the "learning outcomes" of a history course as formulated by the Tuning project[20].

The elements identified as necessary points of reference for any history course at university level (a learning activity leading to assessment and credit award), that should convey and develop a historical perspective about reality are these:

1.    A critical vision of man's past and the realization that the past influences our present and future and our perception of them.

In fact the students are here invited to acquire a "critical" mentality towards the past so that they can interpret and understand it and at the same time be allowed to live the history and the social evolution of their own country, with its multi-ethnic mix. This will be accompaied by a critical awarness of the relationship between "current events and  processess" and those of the past. The interpretation of this past will be framed by:

2.    the understanding of and the respect for viewpoints moulded by different historical backgrounds.

Whilst historical information is provided by the teacher, each student processes the information in their own way and interprets it in the light of their own experience. So differing views come to be held about the same historical events: one view held by the teacher, and a variety of differing views held by individual students. This applies to people in general as much as to students. The creation of these differing views is done automatically and unconsciously. Equally, this process is possible when the teaching material provides the students

3.    with a general idea of the diachronic framework of major  historical periods or events.

The case that we are studying takes place at a specific period and in a relatively young country, historically speaking. The events were recorded more or less as they occurred.  This is an example of the direct approach that Tuning recognizes as the fourth core learning outcome.

4.    A direct contact with the very activity of the historian means a contact with original sources and texts resulting from a professional historiographic research, although in a limited context.

In view of these considerations, it would be fair to claim that "Who killed William Robinson?" represents an interesting and valuable example of digital publication.

The learning objects produced in this Canadian project seem to be a good model of digital resource to be used in a course whose "learning outcomes" reflect the above-mentioned point of reference. In fact, this site not only proposes "learning objects" but also a learning method that, the authors claim, enables the student to acquire an awarness of how historical information comes into existence.

[20]    Tuning Educational Structures in Europe. II Universities' Contribution to the Bologna Process  II, ed. by Julia Gonzalez and Robert Wagenaar, University of Deusto-University of Groningen 2005, pp. 98-108, esp. p. 101 pdf version downloadable from the website: <http://www.tuning.unideusto.org> [visited on 8.3.2006]

Nevertheless, one must ask whether this be considered a genuine e-learning product, since there are no interactive tools, especially at a synchronous level[21], nor devices for either evaluation or self-evaluation[22]?

There is no express advice on the learning methods or format to be used, nor on the methods of assessment or the skills to be promoted through the use of e-learning tools as opposed to traditional methods of learning..

This is clearly an interesting point, because the aim of the project is to offer learning objects, or rather learning materials, suitable for different teaching/learning situations and different levels and kinds of skill. The focus of the project is the creation of a data-base of primary sources and set of learning tools to facilitate various didactic needs.

The creation of this type of integrated digital library and set of archives for pedagogical purposes has been promoted widely by government institutions in other countries. It is sometimes based on non-digitization projects of real libraries and archives. It is especially true of the institutional electronic-publishing tradition of North America.

This tradition, which has been discussed by Serge Noireit[23] , proposes a huge group of digital tools which put at the user's disposal extensive data banks of primary historical resources designed to support the teaching/learning of American history. A "primary" resource is historical information which is given to users without the involvement of the professional historian[24]. Noiret reminds us of the NARA web-site (US National Archives and Records Administration)[25].

The affinity between the treatment of the materials in "Who killed William Robinson?" and these institutional American products is so obvious that one has the impression that these historically young countries are motivated by a fervent desire to organize and propogate their own history by involving their students in an operation of historical consciousness. As these are developed countries, they use innovative tools like digital publications. Such means have the advantage that they enable a vast audience scattered over a huge territory to use resources otherwise inaccessible[26] to many. It seems that digital tools are more suitable for organizing more recent historical information.

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[21] There is no chat room and it is not possible to share documents; the files can be downloaded but it's not possible to upload.

[22] The teacher evaluates the learning achievement of the students through direct discussion of the topics. This discussion can take place in class or in written form.

[23] S. Noiret, La didattica della storia su Internet, in Memoria e Ricerca (Nuova Serie) 2/1998 – digital magazine – pp 177-200. [Visited on http://www.racine.ra.it/oriani/memoriaericerca/noiret.htm]

[24] For this definition, please see S. Noiret 2002, with reference to "digital classroom" in NARA (US National Archives and Records Administration) and the definition on the same site http://www.archives.gov/.

[25] Il NARA is part of the network "U. S. National Archives", http://www.archives.gov/.

It might be interesting to find out the dynamics that lead to the carrying out of far-reaching projects like the American State Archives and why such initiatives are all too rare in Europe.

Clearly, the use of computers suits the publication of relatively recent historical documentation, like the one in the archives already mentioned (vedi sopra non isitiuirei una tale relazione), as we are dealing with original contemporary sources, often available on modern[27] support systems that do not require the involvement of professional historians[28]. On the other hand there are also examples, always in the USA, like the "Rare Book and Special Collections Reading Room"[29] where we find older texts[30] whose publication is based on simple but effective criteria[31].

The elements that would provide an answer to the initial question are many and varied and cannot be described in detail. There appear to be two macro-systems with different ways of handling history on-line. They may be defined as "new world" and "old world", where "new" and "old" refer not only to the historical heritage but also to the historiographic tradition and consequently to the teacher-student approach to history. The didactical objective already quoted can help us to understand the differences.

A critical vision of man's past and the understanding that the past influences our present and future and our perception of both.

Not every European country belongs to the "old world" since some have already acquired the means and the mentality that takes to the future of digital history. Others, by contrast, are paradoxically penalized by their own historical heritage that influences them and prevents them from accepting the necessity of developing and using new means to "do history"[32].

26   See Noiret 2002.
27   In this case we mean films, microfiches, newspapers, photos, etc.
28   Other interesting example, both for the publication of learning objects and the typology of the sources, is the Library of Congress – American Memory, http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/.
29   (Library of Congress) http://www.loc.gov/rr/rarebook/
30   Example: Digital Materials from the Lessing J. Rosenwald Collection Bible. N.T. Epistles. Italian. 1495.] Epistole [et] Euangelii [et] Lectioni vulgari in lingua toschana. Florence, Lorenzo Morgiani and Johannes Petri, for Piero Pacini, 27 July 1495, http://www.loc.gov/rr/rarebook/rosenwald-featured.html
31   The photos of the various digital volumes are public and have an exhausting introduction and tools for the research, there is also the opportunity to "turn the pages" of the documents.
32   However we want to mention some examples of Interesting Project of Digital Archives in Europe:
—   **"Per la tua Margherita". Lettere di Margherita Datini a Francesco Datini (**Letters from Margherita Datini to Francesco Datini**),** http://www.archiviodistato.prato.it/margherita/trailer/home.htm
—   **Danteonline,** http://www.danteonline.it/english/home_ita.asp
—   **Rialc. Repertorio informatizzato dell'antica lirica catalana (**Digital Archive of the Ancient catalan poems**),** http://www.rialc.unina.it/
—   **Codices Electronici Ecclesiae Coloniensis,** http://www.ceec.uni-koeln.de
—   **Archivo Virtual de la Edad de Plata (1868-1936),** http://www.archivovirtual.org/primera.htm
—   **Bibliotheca Augustana**, http://www.fh-augsburg.de/~harsch/augusta.html
—   **GALLICA** (pour les textes) http://gallica.bnf.fr/
—   **MANDRAGORE** (pour les miniatures médiévales) http://mandragore.bnf.fr/html/accueil.html http://mandragore.bnf.fr/html/accueil.html
—   **CETE** http://palissy.humana.univ-nantes.fr/cete/cete.html.

Certainly, on the basis of this difference in attitude, there are delays in the diffusion of information-science tools at every educational level, but particularly in universities[33]. This generates indifference and often hostility towards computers amongst students (and unfortunately also in teachers) and a refusal to adopt new ways of thinking and working[34].

Clearly, there are many problems too-complex to go into here, but we must remember that the two US initiatives already cited were carried out in leading national institutions and universities and were financially supported by them with the help of important private sponsors.[35]

Finally the possible advantages should be considered of applying the teaching method proposed on this web-site.

— What influence has this approach on the education and training of a historical mind (or, if we prefer, a historian's mind) and consequently how useful can it be for starting an academic career?
— How does this teaching/learning method contribute to a valuable professional qualification[36] and can it help the student to acquire the subject-specific and transversal skills typical of a history programme?

As the teaching materials and methods suggested for this e-learning activity envisage a progression of levels, it could be interesting to compare them with the "history area specific competences"[37] and with the "Dublin Descriptors"[38], to see in what way they may be appropriate for the different cycles, described in the Tuning

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[33]   Obviously we refer to humanistic faculties.
[34]   See the interview to Tony Bates, teacher at the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya da, December 2004 in www.elearningeuropa.info and Studies in the Context of the E-learning Initiative: Virtual Models of European Universities (Lot 1) Draft Final Report to the EU Commission, DG Education & Culture – Feb. 2004.
[35]   Library of the Congress. From the outset, the National Digital Library was truly a collaborative national endeavour. Bipartisan support from Congress for $15 million over five years and a unique public-private partnership involving entrepreneurial and philanthropic leadership led to more than $45 million in private sponsorship from 1994 through 2000, http://memory.loc.gov/ammem/about/index.html.
[36]   We quote the definition from: *A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*, Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation February 2005, published by Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, Copenhagen K, February 2005. The publication can also be downloaded from: <http://www.vtu.dk>, p. 67, note 29: "The word 'professional' is used in the descriptors in its broadest sense, relating to those attributes relevant to undertaking work or a vocation and that involves the application of some aspects of advanced learning. It is not used with regard to those specific requirements relating to regulated professions. The latter may be identified with the profile / specification."
[37]   See: *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe II. Universities' contribution to the Bologna Process. Final Report. Pilot Project – Phase 2*, Ed. by Julia González. Robert wagenaar, University of Deusto-University of Groningen, 2005, pp. 108-109 [available for free downloading at the w.p.: http://www.tuning.unideusto.org/tuningeu/index.php?option=com_docman&Itemid=59&task=view_category&catid=19&order=dmdate_published&ascdesc=DESC, visited on 20.4.2006].

project and in the "overarching qualification framework" for the EHEA (Europen Higher Education Area).

Even if the the Dublin Descriptors are intended for describing national or over-arching qualifications[39], nevertheless it may be useful to use the same basic elements (the five 'dimensions'[40]) in their construction, as tools to analyse the subject-specific and transversal skills that can be conveyed through the different levels proposed by our learning activity.

The level of progression proposed by the authors of the course where focussed on the following subject-specific skills:[41]

1st level. Reading and understanding historical sources (Tuning subject-specific skills: 8, 10, 11, 29).

2nd level. Acquiring information, knowledge and critical understanding of the context (Tuning subject-specific skills: 5, 7, 18, 19)

3rd level. Acquiring awarness of the historiographical process (Tuning subject-specific skills: 3, 27, 28)

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[38]  The shared 'Dublin' descriptors for Short Cycle, First Cycle, Second Cycle and Third Cycle Awards Have been developed by an informal group of higher education specialists from a variety of countries met under the umbrella of the Joint Quality Initiative [w.p. http://www.jointquality.org visited on 20.4.2006], have been commended to the ministers' meeting in Berlin by the Amsterdam Consensus and have then been incorporated as main descriptors for the Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, by the Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks. The Framework for Qualification has been adopted by the ministers in the conference of Bergen in 2005. *A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area*, Bologna Working Group on Qualifications Frameworks Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, published by Ministry of Science, Technology and Innovation, Copenhagen K, February 2005. The publication can also be downloaded from: <http://www.vtu.dk>, pp. 64-74.

[39]  «The Dublin descriptors have been developed as a set and are intended to be read with reference to each other. They are primarily intended for use in the alignment of qualifications and hence national frameworks. National frameworks may themselves have additional elements or outcomes, and may have more detailed and specific functions.» A Framework for Qualifications of the European Higher Education Area, p. 65.

[40]  Ibid. : «The Dublin descriptors were built on the following elements:
—  knowledge and understanding;
—  applying knowledge and understanding;
—  making judgements;
—  communications skills;
—  learning skills.»

[41]  History subject specific competences: *Tuning Educational Structures in Europe II*, cit. (above note 6) p. 108-109:
«List of Subject Specific Skills and Competences for History
Please note: The following is the list of 30 subject specific competences on which we based our consultation with academics. It is designed to suggest a broad array of competences which might be used in designing curricula and course units. It does not include all the competences which might be kept in mind in designing programmes and course units; it is not expected that any one student *will develop all the competences listed*.
1.  A critical awareness of the relationship between current events and processes and the past.
2.  Awareness of the differences in historiographical outlooks in various periods and contexts.
3.  Awareness of and respect for points of view deriving from other national or cultural backgrounds.
4.  Awareness of the on-going nature of historical research and debate.     *[continues...]*

4th level. Acquiring methodological awarness of epistemological questions (Tuning subject-specific skills: 1, 2, 3).

Even if all the dimensions used in the 'Dublin Descriptors' are obviously present in all the four levels envisaged by the course, the first two levels of the course are closely related to the first two dimensions of the Dublin Descriptors: knowledge and understanding, applying knowledge and understanding. The second and third levels are more focussed on the other dimensions: making judgements, communication skills, learning skills.

The first and second levels seem to be appropriate for a short-cycle qualification (awarded to students who:

— "have demonstrated knowledge and understanding at a level supported by advanced textbooks;

5. Knowledge of the general diachronic framework of the past.
6. Awareness of the issues and themes of present day historiographical debate.
7. Detailed knowledge of one or more specific periods of the human past.
8. Ability to communicate orally in one's own language using the terminology and techniques accepted in the historiographical profession.
9. Ability to communicate orally in foreign languages using the terminology and techniques accepted in the historiographical profession.
10. Ability to read historiographical texts or original documents in one's own language; to summarise or transcribe and catalogue information as appropriate.
11. Ability to read historiographical texts or original documents in other languages; to summarise or transcribe and catalogue information as appropriate
12. Ability to write in one's own language using correctly the various types of historiographical writing
13. Ability to write in other languages using correctly the various types of historiographical writing
14. Knowledge of and ability to use information retrieval tools, such as bibliographical repertoires, archival inventories, e-references
15. Knowledge of and ability to use the specific tools necessary to study documents of particular periods (e.g. palaeography, epigraphy).
16. Ability to use computer and internet resources and techniques elaborating historical or related data (using statistical, cartographic methods, or creating databases, etc.)
17. Knowledge of ancient languages
18. Knowledge of local history
19. Knowledge of one's own national history
20. Knowledge of European history in a comparative perspective
21. Knowledge of the history of European integration
22. Knowledge of world history
23. Awareness of and ability to use tools of other human sciences (e.g., literary criticism, and history of language, art history, archaeology, anthropology, law, sociology, philosophy etc.)»
24. Awareness of methods and issues of different branches of historical research (economic, social, political, gender related, etc.)
25. Ability to define research topics suitable to contribute to historiographical knowledge and debate
26. Ability to identify and utilise appropriately sources of information (bibliography, documents, oral testimony etc.) for research project
27. Ability to organise complex historical information in coherent form
28. Ability to give narrative form to research results according to the canons of the discipline
29. Ability to comment, annotate or edit texts and documents correctly according to the critical canons of the discipline.
30. Knowledge of didactics of history
31. Other (specify)

— can apply their knowledge and understanding in an occupational context,
— have the ability to identify data in order to formulate responses to well-defined concrete and abstract problems;
— can communicate about their understanding, skills and activities, with peers, supervisors and clients;
— have the learning skills to undertake further studies with some autonomy."

The third and fourth levels seem more appropriate to first-cycle qualifications which are awarded to students who:

— "have demonstrated knowledge and understanding in a field of study that builds upon their general secondary education, and is typically at a level that, whilst supported by advanced textbooks, includes some aspects that will be informed by knowledge at the forefront of their field of study;
— can apply their knowledge and understanding in a manner that indicates a professional approach to their work or vocation, and have skills typically demonstrated through devising and sustaining arguments and solving problems within their field of study;
— have the ability to gather and interpret relevant data (usually within their field of study) to form judgments that include reflection on relevant social, scientific or ethical issues;
— can communicate information, ideas, problems and solutions to both specialist and non-specialist audiences;
— have developed those learning skills that are necessary for them to continue to undertake further study with a high degree of autonomy."

The levels envisaged in the course seem not to be suitable for second-cycle or third-cycle qualifications, because they do not offer a real research context, do not require "systematic understanding of a field of study" or problem-solving abilities "in new or unfamiliar environments", do not forsee" broader (or multi-disciplinary) contexts" or "the necessity to handle complexity, and formulate judgments with incomplete or limited information" nor a capacity to apply "critical analysis, evaluation and synthesis of new and complex ideas".

The course does not envisage communication skills that require ability to
"communicate conclusions, and the knowledge and rationale underpinning these, to specialist and non-specialist audiences clearly and unambiguously" nor has the aim to develop learning skills
"that allow them to continue to study in a manner that may be largely self-directed or autonomous".

The four levels do not require or address skills that are typically associated with autonomous research. They do not require specific competence in analysing documents (Nr. 15, 29) because most sources have been already collected and transcribed. The understanding of the historical and historiographical contexts does not promote a wide historiographical knowledge (Nr. 6), but it is limited to the main historical narratives. The course does not aim at teaching students how to acquire new information (Nr. 14, 26), or promote inter-disciplinary ability and awarness of new fields to be explored with tools and methods of other disciplines (Nr. 23-24). The questions are already defined and students are not required to identify new research topics (Nr. 25) nor practice how to communicate to different kinds of public (scholarly audience and society in general) with appropriate language and to be able to promote cultural advancement (Nr. 12, 30).

The e-learning activity suggested in this course may therefore be suitable for the level suggested by the authors, namely the final level of seconday schools (that it is very close to the short cycle (within or linked to the first cycle) or the level of the first cycle. It seems not suitable, in the way it is organised, for the second or third cycle, because it does not lead to research of new information or elaboration of data through inter-disciplinary methods and techniques. No new research is necessary beyond the material that is offered in the course.

## Conclusions

The judgment on "Who killed William Robinson?" is positive because the aims that moved the creators of this website, namely

— to involve the students by transforming them into authors
— to make them part of it
— to enable them to acquire a research method
— to force them to think,

are universal didactic values which go beyond the e-learning issue since they represent the difference between success and failure in transmitting knowledge. "The Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History Project" has clearly been a success, as its authors say in the news[42] section. In August 2005 new funds allowed the start of phase 3 of the project[43].

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[42] User data for the period ending July 1, 2005 show that this site received nearly ten million hits during the past year, with the average visitor spending about ten minutes per session exploring Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History. About 22% of site users stayed even longer, with many learning about the mysteries for more than a half-hour at a time. There were about three hundred user sessions on the site each day. While most visitors were from Canada, there was also interest from Internet users in France, Belgium, the Netherlands, Australia, Italy, the United States and the United Kingdom. http://www.canadianmysteries.ca/news/indexen.html

In this new phase they will deal with the "devastating Montreal fire in 1734, the mass murder of an Ontario family in 1880, and the mysterious death of Peter Verigin, the Doukhobor leader, near Brilliant, B.C., in 1924". The new additions to the web-site's current three mysteries will be developed by the project's co-director, historian Dr. John Lutz of the University of Victoria, together with research teams in various parts of the country[44].

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[43]  An additional $457,000 from Canadian Heritage under the Canadian Culture Online program will fund three new mysteries on the popular national website. http://communications.uvic.ca/releases/release.php ?display=release&id=667.

[44]  These new projects are now available at the same URL. The titles are:
— Torture and the Truth: Angélique and the Burning of Montreal
— Heaven and Hell on Earth: The Massacre of the "Black Donnellys"
— Explosion on the Kettle Valley Line: The Death of Peter Verigin.

# Quality management processes in web-based history learning

Sirkku Anttonen
University of Turku

## The Finnish Virtual University of History and a joint European web-course "Identities in European History"

## 1. Introduction

In recent years web-based learning has became a part of everyday activity at universities. This being the case, it is now recognized that more emphasis has to be put on the quality of teaching and learning, the quality of on-line learning materials and the quality of technical and pedagogical support services.[1] The purpose of this case-study is to highlight some practial initiatives in quality management taken at a national and an international level. It identifies some good practices in e-learning in History at both these levels based on a project at the Finnish Virtual University of History[2] and a web-course called "Identities in European History".

In Finnish higher education, work on quality management has already been done in a joint venture between three Finnish institutions: the University of Helsinki, the University of Kuopio and the Lappeenranta University of Technology. The project was called VOPLA[3]. Its aim was to support and enhance quality management in web-based learning and to develop quality consciousness and expertise among uni-

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[1]  Look at for example: "Finnish Quality Management in Web-based Learning". Vopla www-pages.
[2]  Look at the article p. 27-33.
[3]  Verkko-opetuksen laadunhallinta ja laatupalvelu.

versity staff and strengthen their commitment to quality management. It is important to bear in mind that quality-management procedures at the organizational level are more wide-ranging and more complex than for a singular web-course.[4]

The VOPLA project created a *"Manual for Quality Work of Web-based Learning"* (Verkko-opetuksen laatukäsikirja)[5]. It is aimed at all staff responsible for web-based learning at the universities: at directors who make strategic decisions about e-learning in the department, and at teachers, planners and support staff. It is a tool for developing quality in web-based learning. It gives an overview of the quality procedures of web-based learning and explains the contents and methods of quality work. The main object of the manual is to promote e-learning.

In short, the Manual:

— Speeds up the start of quality work.
— offers various kinds of check-lists, criteria and descriptions of the procedures for one's own quality work.
— helps departments to see web-based learning as a whole.
— helps direct resources and develop know-how.

In the manual, quality is examined under five main headings which follow the contents of the most common quality models (ISO, EFQM, BSC and TQM).

Two matrices from the manuals are used: *The Quality Matrix of Web-based Learning* and *The Process Description of a Web-Course.* The first matrix is helpful in analysing the project of the Finnish Virtual University of History, and the second in analysing the web-course "Identities in European History". These two matrices are linked: *The Process Description of a Web-Course* comprises one part of *The Quality Matrix of Web-based Learning.*

As emphasized in the Vopla project, it is not necessary to implement all phases of the matrices, but only those that are relevant to one's own quality work.[6] Quality management work is not done overnight, procedures take years to implement, so this analysis is a step towards refining these procedures.

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4   Vopla www-pages.

5   There are all together six (6) matrices in the manual: *Quality Matrix of Web-based Learning* (Verkko-opetuksen laatukehikko), *Quality Matrix of web-based material* (Verkko-oppimateriaalin laatukehikko), *Quality Matrix of Web-based learning support services* (Verkko-opetuksen tukipalveluiden laatukehikko), *Process Description of a Web-Course* (Verkko-kurssin prosessikuvaus), *Process Description of Producing Web-based Material* (Verkko-oppimateriaalin sisällön tuottamisen prosessikuvaus) and *Process Description of Web-based learning support services* (Verkko-opetuksen tukipalveluiden prosessikuvaus).

6   Vopla www-pages.

## 2. The Quality Matrix of Web-based Learning by VOPLA – an example at the Finnish Virtual University of History

With the help of the Quality Matrix of Web-based Learning one can examine the quality of web-based learning from a number of different angles. The matrix includes the following three phases:

1) **Describing the present situation**. In this phase the current situation is described.

2) **Selecting the procedures.** This phase can also be called the "present situation plus", where current actions are defined and critically examined. In this phase, plans are made for improvements and quality processes. It is also important that the organization is committed to these procedures. Those in phases 2 and 3 (Execution and development) can overlap. The improvements do not have to be done immediately but according to needs and the degree of urgency.

3) **Execution and development.** In this phase, quality management processes are already an established part of the procedures of the organization. It is important that the organization is behaving as described in phase 2.

The matrix should be read from the top downwards. Only phases 1 and 2 of the matrix are covered because the time scales of the phases are not the same. The description of phase 1 is done easily, whereas the procedures in phase 2 and especially those in phase 3 can even take many years.

| Phases >>> Contents | Describing the present situation 1st phase | Selecting the practices 2nd phase | Execution and development 3rd phase |
|---|---|---|---|
| Management | | | |
| Know-how | | | |
| Resources | | | |
| Procedures | | | |
| Evaluation | | | |

### Describing the present situation. 1st phase

**Management**
— How does web-based learning relate to the agreed strategies?
— How is web-based learning organized?
— Who is responsible for web-based learning?

Web-based learning in history has already reached quite a stabile situation in Finland, even though there have been no proper strategies for Virtual teaching. Since 2000 the Finnish Virtual University of History (FVUH), which has been financed by the Ministry of Education, has created over 30 web-courses. FVUH is a sub-

project of the Finnish Virtual University. It has a coordinator who is in charge of distributing the courses to the partner universities.

### Know-how
—    What kind of skills do teachers and students have in web-based learning and teaching?

In Finland, teachers and students in academia have achieved fairly good skills in studying on the web thanks to the many possibilities for choosing web-based history courses from the curriculum. Students were already used to web-based learning at school.

### Resources
—    What are the resources for web-based learning?

The financial resources of FVUH have been provided by the Ministry of Education.

### Processes
— How is web-based learning organized?

Course planners are mainly PhD students who are doing course planning and technical implementation. They work free-lance. Planners, or others working free lance, usually tutor the courses.

### Evaluation
— How is web-based learning evaluated?

FVUH organizes a meeting every year where new pilot-courses are evaluated by pedagogical and technical experts and by students.

## Selecting the practices. 2nd phase

### Management
— How far does web-based learning promote strategic aims?

In Finland, universities have adopted a softly-softly approach to web-based learning. More effort has been put into the development of web-based history by some History Departments than by others. In some cases new connections have already been made with history departments in other European countries.

### Know-how
— What kind of pedagogical and technical skills should teachers and students have in order to achieve the objectives?

There is a need for some kind of training for course planners and teachers. Tutor training should be considered, as well as courses devoted to course planning.

**Resources**
— What resources are needed to reach the goals of web-based learning?
— What resources do teachers need to plan and deliver web-based learning?
— How can resources be guaranteed?
— How are resources to be divided between the tutors?

After 2006 the Ministry of Education will no longer be funding the FVUH so departments themselves will be responsible for the financing of their web-based activities. On-line teaching should become part of normal teaching. Responsible staff should take responsibility for both the planning and the tutoring.

**Processes**
— What kind of processes are there in web-based learning?
— What kind of quality aims are put into the process?
*The next section: The Process Description of a Web-course by VOPLA – The joint European web-course "Identities in European history" is examined here.*

Quality standards should be given greater prominence. In the future, course planners may be asked to follow a certain quality matrix, such as The Process Description of a Web-course, which is examined in the next section.

**Evaluation**
— What indicators are created for quality objectives in web-based learning?
— When is information collected for evaluation and how is it processed?
— How is web-based learning evaluated?

Some indicators should be identified for quality standards. One of these could be, for instance, the rate of drop-outs in relation to the number of students starting a course.

## 3. The Process Description of a Web-course by VOPLA based on the joint European web-course "Identities in European history"

When describing the processes of web-based learning the aim is to identify the processes and remove those that overlap. Descriptions make the processes in the organization visible. It is easier to understand the activities of an organization when they are seen in the round. The purpose of the quality management processes is not to create fixed routines but to enhance innovative initiatives.[7]

The international web-course "Identities in European History" has been chosen for describing the process. The course was created by eHLEE (eHistory Learning

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[7]   Vopla www-pages.

Environment and Evaluation) an e-learning project funded by the European Commission. One of the partners of eHLEE was the Finnish Virtual University of History. Planning and creating the course was one of the tasks of the project. Its aim was to develop and evaluate e-learning in history. The project was co-ordinated by the History Department of the University of Turku.

The Matrix should be read from the top downwards.

| Planning | Production | Starting | Execution | Ending |
|---|---|---|---|---|
| Defining the staring point of the course | Production of the learning management system | Information and marketing | Introducing the course to students | Posting the students' grades on the web |
| Planning the learning procedures | Production of the materials | Enrolment procedures | Studying - Web-based learning/ face to face learning | Course evaluation |
| Choosing the media | Testing | Giving passwords to students | Student counselling | Re-usability of the course |
| Information and planning the marketing | | Testing the equipment | Assessment | |

## PLANNING

### Finding the starting points for the course

The course was for 5 ECTS credits. It started on 10th October 2005 and ended on 20th January 2006. About 60 students took part in the course from the Universities of Alcalá, Bologna, Cork, Hannover, Pisa, Siegen, Turku, Uppsala, and the Finnish Virtual University of History.

The course consisted of many components. Each partner produced one of the components. The History Department of the University of Turku had responsibility for technical issues: choosing the learning platform and putting the materials onto the web. They were also responsible for technical and pedagogical support services. The course was run using WebCT, the learning management system. Students were required to read articles, take part in discussions and carry out assignments, both individually and in groups.

The most valuable spin-off from the course was the international co-operation. In the end there were about 50 students (after drop-outs) from Finland, Germany, Italy, Ireland, Spain and Sweden who could not have studied together without this particular web-course. It would have been interesting to find out before the course started what computer skills students had and whether they used computers at home.

## Planning the learning processes

Planning the learning processes (objectives, groupings, assignments and time-table, tutoring and the assessment procedures) helped students to understand the course as a whole.

The objective of the course was to examine how ideas of identity are formed, reinforced and modified in European history. The question was studied from different viewpoints and at various periods. The course was divided into 8 phases: phases 1 & 2 and 5, 6 & 7 were international phases.  Phases 3, 4 and 8 were local ones, where students worked in their own university.

Students were divided into two kinds of groups: international groups and local groups. Students were divided into these groups at the start of the course and they were obliged to take part in both of them. International groups were made up according to students' preference, based on the different themes: European Unification and the Coordination of Multiple Identities, Migration and National Identity, Language in the Formation of Identity, Being Yourself, Belonging to a Community; Religion, Otherness and the Shaping of Collective Identities, Identity through Re-

ligious and Ethnic Conflicts in Europe, and Gender and Identities in European History. The course language was English. Local groups were formed in their home universities. The course language in these local groups was either their national language or English, depending on the university.

In each group there were around 10 students. Their main activity in the group was preparing two presentations: one for phase 4 and one for phase 6.

The principal method of working on the course was holding group text-based discussions on the learning platform. These were based on interaction and sharing information. Students could participate in the discussions at any time convenient for them, as long as they adhered to the time-table. In general students were required to send 2 or 3 messages to each discussion.

Each student had two tutors, a local one, and an international one who also assessed the students at the end of the course. Before the course started, tutors were asked to take part in the specially-tailored tutor-training program. In the first part of the training tutors learned how to use eTutorPuzzle[8]. In the second part they practised specific tools that were to be used on the course. Tutors had their own chat-meetings and a discussion forum. They proved to be very useful.

Student grades for the course consisted of two parts: a compulsory part for everyone (phases 1-7) and a local part (phase 8). To carry out the compulsory part students needed to complete all the required assignments. Assessment of the compulsory part consisted of three components, each of which could be judged as: excellent, very good, good, satisfactory, sufficient or fail;

1.  Group discussions
2.  Group work
3.  Individual assignments

## Choosing the media

It was planned to run the course on the WebCT platform which was already being used by the University of Turku. However, some universities used their own local platforms for the local phases of the course. Experiences from those experiments were good. The practical reason for using WebCT was financial: Turku already had a licence to use it.

## Planning marketing and information

Planning was carried out during project meetings.

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[8]    Look at the article called Activating the student – Analysis of assignments and activating methods in Finnish Virtual University of History in p. 129-136.

## PRODUCTION

### Production of the materials

Production of the materials was a long process. Each partner produced material not only for its own local phase but also for the joint phases. Because they produced material on their own, it was difficult to co-ordinate the amount they produced. The constraints of the time-table meant that there was too little time to balance the resulting workload for the students.

There were two kinds of material used on the course: material inserted into the WebCT area, and material that was accessed through digital libraries. The use of digital libraries caused some problems; since not every university had a license to use the libraries, or the licences were limited. The accessibility of the material is a very important issue when thinking about the re-usability of the course.

### Testing the material on the platform

There was too little time to test the material properly on the platform. However materials were tested during the tutor training that was organized before the course started. Of course the material was well tested during the course itself. After all, it was a pilot course.

## STARTING

### Information and marketing

The course was promoted in the curriculum of each partner university and in the web-pages of the project. Posters and brochures were also used. In some universities tutors personally recruited students.

### Enrolment procedures

For the enrolment, the course planning team created an electronic registration form, which was available on the project's public web-page. In it, students were asked why they wanted to come on the course. Although there were quotas for each university, all the applicants accepted. Had there been more applicants than places on the course, motivation would have been the criterion for entry.

### Giving passwords to students

Two weeks before the course started students were sent an email giving the web-address of the course area, passwords and information about their tutors and groups. Students were also reminded of the importance of reading the Study Guide.

### Testing the host equipment (computers and software)

There was no need to test this as WebCT was already in frequent use.

### EXECUTION – carrying out the course

### Introducing the course to students

Some students came a little late to the course because of differing starting dates for the university academic year. This caused some distraction at the start of the course so that forming the groups was a little complicated.

The course planning team wanted to emphasize the importance of the support services. A forum called "FAQ" (for frequently asked questions) was introduced where students could send questions about technical and pedagogical problems. This forum was widely used. Every Tuesday there was a virtual "Chat-office". This did not prove very popular, though the idea of setting up a virtual help-desk was felt to be good. Course planners used WebCT's main page as a notice board; where messages were posted announcing the next phase and giving the salient facts about the forthcoming study period.

Because WebCT as used at Turku University is mainly in Finnish, all support services (for example the introductory course on how to use WebCT) were in Finnish. Because of the lack of support material in English, students were encouraged to click links and wander round the course area at the start of the course. Students were told that it was important to read the Study Guide. The assignments for the first study week were introductions to the subject and course areas.

> "You are now working in your "international groups" of around 10-14 students. To get an idea of how the discussion forum works, in this learning platform, you are assigned a task in the Discussion forum. You can enter your group's discussion from the link below or by clicking on the section Discussions in the Course Menu on the left-hand side.
>
> Apart from getting to knowthe members of your group, you are asked to reflect on the following question: "The concepts of identity can be related to several aspects (like nationalities, language, politics, religion, gender, professions etc.) What concepts would you use to describe your own

identity/identities? And why? Please send your messages during the first study week, between 10th and 17th October.

For the purpose of course evaluation, and to learn about your study strategies, there is an Evaluation survey that we kindly ask you to fill in. It is a questionnaire with ten questions. You can access the questionnaire from the link in the Course Menu. After clicking on the link "Evaluation survey", you will see a detailed description of how the tool works. You can start by clicking on "Begin quiz" and selecting "Questions for the students at the beginning".

The final task is of a different type. To ensure you have all the information, please read the course Study Guide thoroughly.. , If you are uncertain about anything, be sure to raise the matter in your Discussion forum group. You can also use the FAQ section in the Discussion forum at any time. There is a "virtual office" which is open in Chat on Tuesdays from 12.00 to 13.00 (GMT). "

## Studying – Web-based learning/ face to face learning

The course was designed to be an on-line course, although almost all local tutors also met their students in face-to-face meetings. These motivated the students and encouraged them to work on the web, because they could meet their fellow-students and ask their tutor for help if there were any problems. On the other hand, even those groups that did not meet face-to-face succeeded in their studies. Howev-

er there were some students who dropped out. They were obviously not motivated enough to overcome the obstacles presented by workload and time schedules.

## Student counselling

Students were advised to contact either their international tutor or their local tutor if any problems occurred. The FAQ-forum and weekly Chat-office were also offered – the FAQ-forum proving especially useful.

## Assessment

This was facilitated by each student having two tutors, a local one and an international one. The basis for assessment was clearly explained in the Study Guide. The final assessment proved to be a little difficult because of different grading practices.

## ENDING

Posting the students' grades on the web, and course evaluation
As each partner held information on the grades obtained by their own students; there was no need for a common register.

## Course evaluation

This was carried out by external evaluators from Karlsruhe Pedagogical University. They collected feedback at the beginning and at the end of the course. The evaluators concluded that:

> "In the end it is clear that the course was a huge success thanks to the planners and tutors who did a great job and spent a lot of working hours as can be seen in the tutors questionnaires: They spent between about 200 hours preparing the course and between 100 and 150 hours in tutoring the course.
>
> Especially the internationality of this course helped the students to go on, awakened their interest and gave them the chance to use the computer and the internet where it makes the most sense: communicating with people all over Europe or the world whom you cannot meet otherwise. Such courses should be offered and supported more often at university level because there is a great chance of bringing people together working on a topic and not just chatting on."[9]

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[9]    Evaluation report, http://ehlee.utu.fi. See Publications.

It is important to take account of the feedback. However, it is somewhat unclear how and when it may be possible to update the course.

## 4. Conclusions

In this case-study an analysis has been made of the Finnish Virtual University of History and the web-course "Identities in European History". It has been done using two different quality matrices: *The Quality Matrix of Web-based Learning* and *the Process Description of Web-based Learning*. Attention has been drawn to some of the steps taken when planning and executing web-based learning on a national and international level.

The Finnish Virtual University of History clearly displays many good practices, such as their annual evaluation seminars. Nevertheless it is problematic that course planners and tutors mainly work free-lance and are not staff members. Uncertainty about future financing is casting a shadow over the whole project, with the result that no long-term plans can be made. But these are problems with e-Learning that afflict the entire academic world, and are not confiend to the Finnish Virtual University of History.

When thinking about the joint European web-course "Identities in European History" some good points and some less-satisfactory ones are highlighted in terms of quality management. *Good practices*: Study Guide, FAQ-forum/Technical support, Chat-office meeting, notice board and Chat-meeting for tutors. *Problems*: Poor access to the digital archives and repositories. Students had difficulty in timing their assignments and coping with their workload. The course has underlined, as the key elements for a successful web-course: proper planning, training the tutors, offering enough information to students and student motivation.

From this case-study it is obvious that quality work is not achieved in a day, or in one year. Procedures take time and need familiarity. It is also crucial that the whole organization takes an active part in it. Quality work is worth doing. Nobody will oppose improvements in learning and teaching.

## Bibliography

Vopla www-pages, http://www.helsinki.fi/vopla/
Evaluation report by Karlsruhe Pedagogical University. http://ehlee.utu.fi. See section Publications.

# Teaching history in the age of digitalisation and the Internet

Tapio Onnela
University of Turku

## Why history?

Researching and teaching history do not mean looking back. They mean creating the future. Historical knowledge is a powerful decision-making tool: the better we understand our past, the more informed we are about the future. History is the most important ingredient in our understanding of Europe.

History researchers, teachers and students are important intermediaries in the formation of cultural identity. They form those mental concepts and symbols which are the foundation of European co-operation in commercial, technological and in-dustrial activity. To encourage nations to co-operate, European integration calls for joint action in the study of history. Broad co-operation between people from dif-ferent countries in the field of history safeguards national differences and helps Europeans to understand one another better.

## Digitalisation: new challenges for historians

Although it is obvious that our environment is going to be more and more digi-tised, that the Internet will grow ever faster and information and communication technologies (ICT) will play an ever-growing role in our everyday life – the Internet is still a relatively new phenomenon. It has been used as a communication channel for only 10-15 years, which is actually a very short time-span. Services and resources offered by ICT-technologies are still not used by universities as much they could

be. Transformation of institutional structures is a very slow process, especially in the old, conservative and rigid structures typical of universities.

Historical knowledge is based on working with documents, books and artefacts left to us from the past. These remnants are analysed and interpreted by historians and then transmitted to the specialist community, and then to the public at large, through books and learned journals. The Internet and digitalisation has brought to these basic forms of dissemination several major changes: Digitalisation has provided huge amounts of source material, in the form of on-line archives, databases and library catalogues, electronic books and scientific journals. New communication technologies and e-learning tools are all novelties offered to the educational community and they are inevitably affecting the way history is taught and researched at the university level.

## Social software and digital archives

Innovative software, like blogs or wikis, facilitate on-line communities and could in the future change the way we produce knowledge. Such collaborative software enables people to rendezvous, to connect through their computers, and build on-line communities which can then form co-operative work systems. It is important not to forget that fictional items, which are not specifically designed for teaching history, such as films, books and games – distributed nowadays more and more in digital form – contribute strongly to our understanding of the past and the way we imagine it.

We are not going to see digitised the entire contents of the massive collections in archives, libraries and museums, at least not in the foreseeable future. Those documents are on traditional material like paper and parchment. Anyway, there are already huge collections of digital source material. They are constantly growing and are readily available to historians through the Internet. Large digitalisation projects are in progress everywhere. For example, Early English Books Online (EEBO) is a collection containing all books and works printed in English between 1473 and 1700. Historians researching this period cannot ignore this collection. Their tools for producing historical knowledge are fundamentally better than before.

Great numbers of books and newspapers from the 19th century have now been digitised and saved. These were based on cellulose which otherwise had become brittle and unusable within only a few decades because of acid in the paper. This has created new opportunities for historians to analyse large text corpuses. If historians do not take these opportunities seriously they will loose their chance to interpret the past. Foreseeing the future will thereby be more difficult.

### Digitized past

Another important fact is that modern societies are already producing material and documents in digital format only. This is a big challenge for historians, and one that they have to resolve. What should be done with source materials of this new kind? And how are students to be taught how to use them? Students should be guided to analyse, research, handle and interpret electronic source material, and they should learn to pose new and different types of questions when dealing with digitised material.

### Why e-learning in history?

Training students to use digital sources and to exploit ICT is important. It also enhances collaboration. E-learning is a good tool for increasing co-operation: between people, and between institutions. It is vital in the field of history because there is a need for co-operation and a regular exchange of expertise: first of all internationally, but also at a national level.

### Content comes first

Because history is so important it is a pity if the new ICT tools and the possibilities offered by e-learning are not used as much and as intensively as they could or should be for teaching and researching history. ICT and the Internet are too important to be left to the "sciences" and to the commercial sector. What is even more important is not the technology but the content and ideas, and the opportunity to communicate with others. Technology should be regarded merely as a valuable tool for getting things done. It should be used for helping people inside organizations, and between organizations, to form new co-operative ways to teach, learn and research. This is especially so if we want more European co-operation between universities.

### Collaborative teaching and mobility

For achieving this goal ICT is the most valuable and cost-effective tool for promoting collaborative teaching in the universities. It creates opportunities for diversifying teaching by providing possibilities for many history departments to form international teaching groups. This is important because it make it possible to create courses about more-marginal sub-disciplines or special courses on historical topics which are rarely dealt with. Resources could be used more economically by pooling specialist knowledge which is now scattered across separate departments around Europe.

Student mobility can be improved by giving students an opportunity to study in an international context using, as a first step, "virtual mobility". The more students

have contact, from the start of their university career, with their colleagues and peers in other countries, the more it fosters the quest for European identity, tolerance and critical thinking. The increased flexibility provided by e-learning enables people who are working for their living to pursue a history course because they can study in their own time and at their own pace.

## National traditions

The question of nationality and language is a constant challenge in the European context. Study of history is mainly based on national traditions. Collaborative, international e-learning can illuminate different historical traditions. The possibility to deal with materials in several languages based on different historical traditions is a great aid to critical thought in the study of history. On the other hand there is the fear that it may spread the dominance of the English-speaking world. At least e-learning gives the potential to create new interpretations of history independent of national traditions and thus provide transversal content for analysing history. At the same time, e-learning can bind traditional narratives with interactive narratives, for example by assuming roles and playing games.

## Mainstreaming e-learning in history: from pilot projects to permanent structures

Prejudices against on-line teaching, a lack of knowledge about e-learning methods, and the absence of examples of good practice are the main obstacles preventing e-learning becoming a normal part of teaching in the universities.. The problems of funding, as well as insufficient supportive structures, are hindering e-learning from becoming a natural part of university history teaching.

## Mental barriers

To instigate e-learning for history needs, in the first place, a proper technological infrastructure: broadband connections, good computers and other key equipment. The most difficult barriers are, however, mental. In the field of humanities many researchers and teachers, including historians, prefer to close their eyes to technological change. With the help of the Internet, digitalisation and global education are having an effect on the humanities and the teaching and learning of history. This is unavoidable. Particularly when international co-operation is needed, history should not be taught only by traditional face-to-face methods. To change attitudes and to tackle prejudices against new methods there is a need for good-quality information about the facts and the possibilities offered by new teaching methods and new techniques. There is a need for discussion and debate at the European level about

the effects of the digital revolution on research, teaching and learning methods in the humanities.

## Establishing co-operation

E-learning is not specifically catered for in the structures of history departments in European universities. Although there are some good examples, and some good teaching projects are taking place, they mostly remain pilot projects and seldom become part of main-stream teaching. E-learning is not automatically included in the teaching agenda. This causes a low level of understanding about its potential. The reason for this is that it is much more difficult to raise money to set up new structures which fall outside established practice and existing funding procedures. The problem is: how to establish co-operation between different university departments. It is very difficult to finance e-learning, both at the national level and internationally. It is far easier to get money for pilot courses, for experiments, and for testing, than it is for establishing long-term structures or new organizations requiring permanent funding. This is understandable because setting up e-learning is expensive. The costs are particularly high at the beginning when the amount of staff involvement required to produce the courses is considerable.

## How to do it in practice?

If there is a need to establish collaborative e-learning in the field of history in European universities, we should start with simple things. The type of co-operation should be very practical, and organized from the grass roots up rather than top-down. The most effective and lasting way is probably to start with simple and concrete actions. First there should be web courses developed jointly by several departments working together to provide courses for their students. This group is then gradually enlarged as the courses are fine-tuned with proper evaluation and quality procedures, which give constant feedback throughout the enlargement of the project. With enough practical experience, as well as knowledge of e-learning, it is much easier for departments to build up the organization needed to support the work. Departments should be offered incentives outside their normal budgets to enable them to begin co-operation.