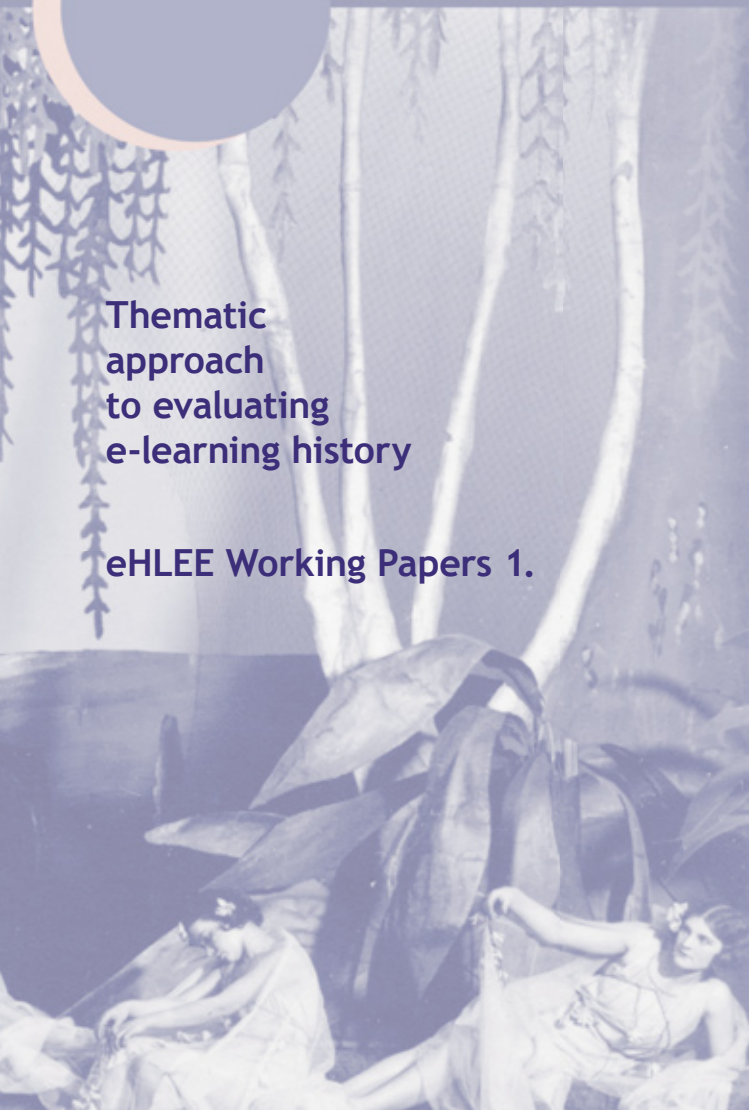
eHistory Learning
Environment and Evaluation

eHLEE



Thematic approach to evaluating e-learning history

eHLEE Working Papers 1.

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Thematic approach to evaluating e-learning history

eHistory Learning Environment and Evaluation (eHLEE) is a project included in and funded by the E-learning Initiative of European Commission. It has two primary objectives: First of all the project gathers and evaluates information concerning e-learning in academic curriculum studies of history in Europe. The second objective is to experiment possibilities e-learning offers in a multi-national pilot course. Course planning has been the main task for the project since early April. The pilot course will eventually be evaluated using the same tools as used for analysing prior experiences.

1. Collecting information

The project started on September 1st, 2004 with gathering and thematically analysing information concerning prior experiences on e-learning history. The first stage of analysis was conducted in the months ending on March 31st, 2005. The work was jointly carried out by the entire consortium of eight universities and official bodies participating in eHLEE. The institutions involved and respective countries have been University of Alcalá de Henares, Spain; University of Bologna, Italy; University of Hannover, Germany; University of Pisa, Italy; University of Turku, Finland; University of Uppsala, Sweden; Primrose Publishing, United Kingdom; and Virtual University of History, Finland.

Each participating institution was first assigned a task of investigating the current state of affairs in e-learning history in their own and few neighbouring countries. The countries thus investigated were in alphabetical order: Austria, Belgium, Denmark, Estonia, France, Finland, Germany, Iceland, Ireland, Italy, Latvia, Lithuania, the Netherlands, Norway, Portugal, Romania, Spain, Sweden, Switzerland, and UK.

Each researcher contacted institutions and they key personnel of e-learning and investigated information on universities' websites. To carry the work out in practice a working definition of e-learning was developed. That concentrated on three levels of learning, teaching and delivery of materials. E-learning can be learning conducted on a *Learning Management System* (LMS) on the Internet or intranet. It can also be *delivery of a learning, training or education program by electronic means.* It can also be *blended learning* with combination of other learning and training methods. In the case of delivery of learning or education material by electronic means e-learning involves the use of a computer or electronic device (e.g. a mobile phone) in some way to provide training, educational or learning material. A particular feature of e-learning is that it can be "on demand" overcoming difficulties in timing, attendance and travelling.[1]

With the working definitions the project narrowed the scope of research to a particular set of learning experiences with a connection to digital media, virtual learning environments and learning management systems. A natural consequence was followingly to study examples of various dimensions. The researchers called examples of prior experiences as *case studies*, and the variety of cases was everything from a singular course using electronical means of transmission to complete history degree programmes using e-learning.

2. Reflections to findings: examples of Italy, Sweden, Romania and Finland

It become immediately apparent that the number of experiences was rather limited. Many institutions informed that the number of instances to use e-learning is significant but simultaneously it was realized that only few concerned history. A case in point is for example Italy. It should be noted that thusfar only rarely e-learning in the field of history has been considered a proper new pedagogical re-

form. Instead its role has been understood more to diversify existing selection of courses.

Italy

In 2004 only 12 Italian universities of 78 offer e-learning courses, but the trend is growing. There was no real national strategy: only self-made experiments and initiatives carried out by individual teachers who lack a real support of the institutional level. Consequently, 50 % of those Italian universities who offer e-learning services only develop ICT tools allowing students to access teaching materials on-line. That's e-reading rather than e-learning.

If we take a look at existing e-learning courses, we can see that almost all universities support blended courses. In other words there are face to face lessons with web-elements. In most examples the teaching method applied is a video-lesson, transmitted in TV-channels or in the web and supported by a series of teaching materials and tools put on-line: links, tests and texts.

Meetings are usually required, but how and when the meetings are arranged, depend on each course and institution. They are often required in the beginning of the course, at the end of the course and during the examinations.

From a technical point of view almost all the institutions use self-developed e-learning-platforms and tailor-made tools. In every case the only language which is used is Italian. Supporting pages can be in English or in French. None of the institutions offer history courses for international students or consider European point of view: web-courses are usually focusing on the Italian history and the Italian culture.

In general there were e-learning courses ranging from all academic subjects into degree programs. There were e-learning history courses mainly in the degree programs of Cultural Heritage and Italian Language and Literature. These aren't really different from a traditional history course except in two points: 1. A short web text or a video

lesson to ensure the synthesis and homogeneity of the course must accompany each teaching unit. 2. The cooperation of several different voices in the construction of a single course. Ancient or medieval, or modern or contemporary history course is made by 5-10 scholars, each responsible of one or more didactic unit for the theme which the scholar is specialized in.[2]

Sweden

Experiences from Sweden emphasize instead the institutional focus on the uses of e-learning. Diminishing resources for teaching and for supporting doctoral research has recently required institutions to adopt new methods of learning and administration. History department of Uppsala has created a portal for overarching use for all information concerning teaching. The aim is pedagogical: to improve the quality of teaching. The emphasis on using electronical media support has instead of using LMS's concentrated on adminstrative uses of the portal.

The experiences have exposed four shortcomings of uses of LMS's in the case of Sweden. 1) The number of courses offered as e-learning has been that limited, that no stronger financial support for the system has been considered necessary. 2) The need has been to improve electronical support services for all types of courses, not only e-learning. 3) Too few teachers consider themselves to be technologically advanced enough to be engaged in using LMS's, after which the impetus on e-learning has not been considered high enough. 4) Introduction of a new LMS should include some value for all the teachers in all different categories to be met with positive attitude. In all these short-comings and suspicions have made it practically impossible to adopt any large-scale attempts for using e-learning for history.

Instead a home-made application for a portal has been constructed to aid teaching. The possibilities the service offers are the following: 1) Teachers

can use an electronical notice-board. 2) Teachers can send emails by using the portal. 3) Teachers can deliver files, eg. illustrations and text documents in various formats. 4) Teachers can prepare simple www-sites for their own usage. 5) Teachers can offer links lists to Internet sites for students' use. 6) Teachers can set up discussion fora for their courses. In all the services provided by the portal are integrating all teachers in to a miniature version of e-learning for history. This in its own stand is considered to smoothen the way into eventually using e-learning facilities.[3]

Romania

Romania serves as an example of country with great hopes for e-learning and a handful of informed projects. However the main emphasis tends to be on subject areas apart from history. At the present time, in Romania, there are several universities that try to introduce in education new ways of learning, including teaching distance and learning. We can't nevertheless say that there is a real strategy in this field, save for a general broadmindedness for e-learning. Several athenaeums, indeed, declare to offer an e-learning service, but as a matter of fact they often have only a developing plan, such as, for example, the private University Spiru Haret of Bucharest.[4]

The best overview of e-learning in Romania has given by the site http://www.timsoft.ro/index.php?pagina=resurse2 that offers an huge information on topic: legislative dispositions passed by the Ministry of Instruction and Research, the development of e-learning in the universities, the e-learning services for professional training. On the same site it is possible moreover to enter in several courses on-line http://www.timsoft.ro/index.php?pagina=cursuri or to consult useful links or to find news about the e-learning platforms.

From this portal we can evaluate how much Romanian universities are still behind in this field. The greater part of distance courses currently avail-

able is fee-paying http://www.cursurionline.ro, even if there are free courses in the site http://www.academiaonline.ro/.

Where it is possible look into the courses, we find that the traditional communication face to face between professor and students has been simply transformed by technology without really modifying the didactics. In plain words, it has been developed the communication systems above all: e-mail, Intranet and Internet. Among the most used tools we find books, electronic text lessons, www-pages, audiocassettes, video and CD-roms, forums.

E-learning projects in Romania can be divided in two categories: 1) Initiatives for professional training; 2) Degree or master courses. The first point is much more developed than the second one. A good start point in this field is www.elearning.ro dedicated to those who want to specialize themselves in teaching distance and learning. The project is the outcome of the collaboration between DotCom and Given Rumania Systems (important suppliers of integrated services for communication in Romania).

Point 2, as it has been already said, is still to the beginnings. In the field of **History**, in particular, the only useful site is http://hiphi.ubbcluj.ro/hiphi/IDD.html, created by the university of Babes-Boyal of Cluj-Napoca as an outcome of the project "Lifelong Learning and Distance Education Centre", but, in matter of fact, it offers now only the topics of the courses and bibliographical tools. We can however signal also http://www.utm.ro by the University Titu Maiorescu di Bucharest, that offers an e-learning course of Jurisprudence.

Finland

Finland has a long tradition of developing open and distance learning methods dating back to early 1970's. Finland was one of the first countries to adopt open university ideals following the structure of Open University in the United Kingdom. In 1990's various forms of blended learning using

telecommunications and transmittors of graphical information was adopted on large scale also for the study of history.[5] Universities in Finland were thus well prepared pedagogically when in January 1999 national "virtual open university" was founded. In 2000 a parallel project was established on a more permanent ground: Virtual University of Finland with practically all higher education institutions as partners. Subject area of history was a prime actor in the very beginning of Virtual University.

Immediately on the launch of Virtual University of Finland, a steering committee was appointed to work with subject area of history leading to establishing "Finnish Virtual University of History" (FVUH). That formed a cooperative unit for both planners and students engaged in national courses. Due to funding of Virtual University by the Ministery of Education, planners were able to get financial resources for preparing new courses. This in all aroused great enthusiasm and interest among especially younger staff members of all history departments. A remarkable feature was that a good number of courses with coplanners from various history departments were produced. Those involved in planning were regularly Ph.D. students or teachers on short-term contract. E-learning was considered an addition to existing courses.

It has become obvious, that for a number of history students, e-learning actually is a better means of study then learning face to face. This is often due to family circumstances, difficult travel distances or simply because of pedagogical possibilities. In Finland, there are currently even students at campus studying a formidable part of their degree by e-learning. One motivation mentioned for attending e-learning courses is that studying becomes more effective: students with a need to finish their degree in a hastened tempo can do that by attending e-learning courses. However, in most cases students would like to combine both the "traditional" way of learning and e-learning.[6]

The growth of interest for e-learning history has rapidlly increased. In the first complete year of activity, 2001, the number of attending students was 103. In year 2004 it increased to 614. In the first year there were four courses offered and in 2004 the project coordinated and arranged a total of 29 courses. In that same year the number of institutions involved was 11.

The results have shown that the Finnish Virtual University of History has succeeded in gathering together scattered intellectual and financial teaching resources from a widespread network of universities. It has improved the possibilities for students to study more flexibly and it has increased options in designing one's curriculum. There are still however also unresolved problems. The FVUH has not been able to guarantee permanent funding nor long-term contracts with institutions involved.

3. Thematic structure of analysis

eHLEE has undertaken as the basis of analysis of e-learning history a *thematic tool kit*. These are both informed by the findings of investigations of prior experiences and also reflect the group's own expectations concerning the essence of e-learning. The themes of importance in evaluating e-learning history are the following: 1) Pedagogy, 2) Materials, 3) Platforms, 4) Administration, 5) Quality, 6) Assessment, 7) Language, 8) Intercultural issues. These partly are themes worth a wider applicability for all kinds of e-learning – not just in the field of history. Also many themes are relevant for all kinds of learning – not just in e-learning. However, the combination of all the eight themes provides us a tool kit with a distinctive appropriateness for analysing experiences of e-learning history.

This publication presents followingly research agenda for a multiple selection of cases of e-learning history. This publication both summarises the work of first seven months of the project but simultaneously outlines the strategy of the following steps.

Theme 1: Pedagogy

Issues analyzed with the case studies of eHLEE in connection with pedagogy are the following: E-learning uses several pedagogical tools including activating methods. How in the end e-learning history differs from other subject areas. Are there pedagogical elements specifically important for e-learning *history.* Pedagogy involves various roles of persons active in learning situations. What are the roles of planners and tutors, and what happens when course planner and tutor are two different persons. History is a discipline without "correct answers". How a tutor can encourage discussions into historical interpretations. What are the special learning outcomes and objectives of e-learning history?

Theme 2: Materials

Issues analyzed with the case studies of eHLEE in connection with materials are the following: E-learning is always based on study materials. Text books, articles, images, sounds, video clips etc. can be used in the courses. What are the possibilities online archives, digital and digitized sources offer? What is the demand for online access for literature and journals for courses? How are copyright issues dealt with in the courses? The study of history is always dependent on using primary and secondary sources. What are the specific possibilities e-learning offers for using different source materials?

Theme 3: Platforms

Issues analyzed with the case studies of eHLEE in connection with platforms are the following: When planners are selecting ready-made platforms – such as WebCT, Blackboard, Luvit or others – planners and students gain certain benefits but also apparently face some restrictions. What platforms are used in e-learning history? What is the cost-benefit of the selected platforms? Can there be made comparisons between open-source and commercial platforms? In some cases planners have

preferred a Content Managements System (CMS) to a LMS.

Theme 4: Administration

Issues analyzed with the case studies of eHLEE in connection with administration are the following: Each course needs some sort of administration, be it technical, operative or for marking grades. Courses also always have some meta-texts, descriptions and study guides. There are various channels for marketing courses and spreading information, even probably some "marketing strategies". How are courses and e-learning history degrees marketed and how is the information delivered? What kinds of administrative structures are adopted for e-learning. Are there cases of some cross-national cooperative in marketing and course delivery? How e-learning courses are combined with joint degrees and other international structures. What is the "clientele" of e-learning history. There are examples of operators outside the academia (such as BBC), and e-learning history has a special relevance for adult learners and open universities. Has study of history online a specific audience? What kind of national, international or university strategies have there been to finance e-learning history? How this all has been connected to Bologna process with aims at tuning curricula of various universities in various countries?

Theme 5: Quality

Issues analyzed with the case studies of eHLEE in connection with quality are the following: Quality has a special implication for e-learning, since the courses can be repeated. This makes it possible to take feedback directly into account and develop courses for later use. Each time a course is being studied it can be comparable to previous examples. How is feedback collected from the courses? Are there quality standards used for courses, or should there be?

Theme 6: Assessment

Issues analyzed with the case studies of eHLEE in connection with assessment are the following: Assessment of e-learning differs obviously only partially of assessment of learning face to face. E-learning offers special possibilities of using quizzes or other electronical tools for testing the learning. On the other hand, it promotes discussions with certain difficulties for assessing and evaluating performance. What methods of assessment are used in e-learning history?

Theme 7: Language

Issues analyzed with the case studies of eHLEE in connection with language are the following: History remains a language-specific discipline. On the other hand, e-learning offers unique possibilities for international cooperation. There are different kinds of language issues involved. What are the specific features of e-learning history in terms of languages? Are there multi-lingual courses and how those could be operated?

Theme 8: Intercultural issues

Issues analyzed with the case studies of eHLEE in connection with intercultural issues are the following: E-learning can connect students from various countries, cultures and language groups. Obviously, different academic traditions encourage different ways of learning. What national differences for learning history online can be detected? How multi-lingual groups of students can also be used for activating learning? By interculturality, we understand also opportunities for people with sight problems and other disabilities. Again, are there specific audiences or target groups for e-learning history.

Building on the thematic structure outlined above, the project eHLEE will end up producing an edited volume on analysis of selected case stud-

ies. Next will be introduced the cases under closer research by the consortium.

4. The History and Art area of the Universitat Oberta de Catalunya (UOC)

Rita Rios, University of Alcalá

The History and Art area of the UOC has been in operation since 1997. Currently the task of co-ordination is done by Joan Camp's Montaner, although there are 30 people working in the area. The activities in History and Virtual Teaching cover the continued development of courses on the History of Art, Medieval History, Modern History and Contemporary History – either as core subjects or as optional ones.

Thematic viewpoints

Pedagogy

A number of people perform different tasks. There is the tutor who, at the start, helps the student to get in touch with the University, to do all the administrative work and to get to know the virtual Campus. He also directs the student's learning strategies. Another tutor directs the student's final-year dissertation and advises him or her about the professional world. The consultant is the person who teaches the subject; the titular tutor for the course. He co-ordinates the work of the consultant and the tutors. And there is the author of the contents of the subject, who is a specialist from another university. So there is a clear distinction between the administrative tasks, the teaching work and the preparation of class material.

Teaching materials

These are prepared for the different courses by the tutors themselves. The students have a list of official teaching material, edited by one person or by a team. Copyright matters are handled by EDIUOC, the University publishing house. Students also

have an expanded bibliography with class material; either provided by the consultant or easy to find in UOC's Virtual Library. Copyright matters for this are handled by the Library. Students are required to use textbooks, articles, images and texts. There is a distinction between the printed class material and the on-line materials. Sometimes there is CD-ROM material as well.

Platform

UOC has an original platform for teaching – designed by the university itself. It is managed by the University. There is a Virtual Classroom with five different areas: planning, communication, resources, evaluation and programs. Some tutors have their own web-sites, all of them with free access, where they place some class materials.

Administration of courses

There are several different levels of administration. Teaching is under the control of the History and Art co-ordinator of UOC. The University is responsible for technical and marketing matters. The University uses the internet as its main channel of dissemination. Most UOC students are at least 35, work and have a family. They are not looking for a university degree, even when they follow Humanities courses. Instead they just want to extend their education and gain some vocational training.

The History and Art department of UOC controls the quality of their courses through PanFilHum. This project studies how virtual students interact with the class materials, analyse the content and gain knowledge. The contribution of the on-line materials to virtual teaching is analysed, as well as didactic strategies and teaching methods. All the work that they carry out forms the basis of its pedagogical and didactic innovation system.

Evaluation

This is based on a number of activities: participation in class discussions, carrying out 3 or 4 activities each semester, and sometimes the writing of a final dissertation and doing a written exam. We do not have data on the validation of all parts of the evaluation. It must be of a more continuous kind than that done in regular teaching, although the written exam is common to both kinds of teaching.

Language and intercultural aspects

All the courses are taught in Catalan, though students can work in either Catalan or Spanish. This is of significant benefit to cultural exchange. It implies that the student must know both languages. This only happens these days in Catalunya. As such it can restrict the students' choice of courses.

5. Universidade Aberta, Portugal

Rita Rios, University of Alcala

The Universidade Aberta was created in 1988 in Portugal as a public, distance-learning University. Its Rector is currently Maria José Ferro Tavares, professor of History. Activities relating to History and distance learning cover the continued development of a number of degree courses. These include Social Sciences, European Studies, History and Portuguese, History, Teaching of History, Teaching of History and Portuguese.

They also include masters degrees in American Studies, British Studies, Cultural Heritage Studies, Portuguese Studies and Women Studies. These courses relate principally to the History of Art, Prehistory, Ancient History, Medieval History, Modern History, Contemporary History, History Teaching, American History, British History, Local History, Portuguese History in different ages and the History of Women's Rights. All of them are officially recognized by the Portuguese Government.

Thematic viewpoints

Pedagogy

There is a clear division in the teaching work among different people. The authors of the content write the class material. The courses are organized in virtual class-rooms of up to 10 students. Each group has its own tutor who is responsible for the subject as well. Finally, each subject has an overall co-ordinator. Teaching combines classes, which the student must attend, with virtual tutorship, both synchronous and asynchronous.

Teaching materials

These are not published materials. They are prepared by different authors paid by the university. The university holds the copyright for a specified period of time. These materials consist of textbooks, videos and images, with a very important role played by the resources and the bibliography which is in Portuguese and has been digitalized from the University's library collection.

Platform

A commercial platform, called IntraLearn, has been created for tutoring. It consists of four parts: description, tutors' biography, themes and books, and various tools. The contents are available on CD-ROM and on the web. They are also broadcast on the radio and in TV programmes, and are available in video conferences.

Administration

Administration of the courses is done at several levels. The teaching side is under the control of the subject co-ordinator. Technical matters, mainly the platform management, are the responsibility of specialist staff. Marketing is handled by the University, using the internet as its main channel of dissemination. Universidade Aberta students are located all over the world. It is easy to find students looking for a university degree as well as students keen to extend their education and their vocational training.

Most of them are adults, some with limited experience of computers.

Evaluation

This is based on two activities: work done each semester, and an on-site test which is either a final dissertation or a written exam. We do not have data about its validation.

Language

All the History courses are taught in Portuguese. Students have materials in Portuguese, French and Italian, so the student must have a knowledge of all three languages.

Intercultural aspects

These are an important feature owing to the participation of different nationalities in the courses. But the basis of the relationship is the language, culture and history of Portugal, as well as its historiographic tradition and its teaching methodology.

6. The ADA-Madrid Project – Distance Learning Classroom of the Autonomous Region of Madrid

Rita Rios, University of Alcala

The ADA-Madrid Project was started in 2001 by the Government of the Autonomous Region of Madrid in order to offer virtual education to those studying for different degrees at the public universities in the Madrid area: Universidad de Alcalá, Universidad Autonoma de Madrid, Universidad Carlos III, Universidad Complutense, Polytechnic University of Madrid and Universidad Rey Juan Carlos I.

Those activities relating to History and Virtual Teaching consist of the teaching of two subjects: *Science and technique in History*, led by Mario Melandez Rolla and Gerardo Balabasquer Villa, and

History of the Written Culture (from the beginning to the XVIII century), led by Enrique Villalba.

Mario Melandez Rolla and Gerardo Balabasquer Villa are tutors of Applied Mathematics to Technical Engineering of the Telecommunications Department of the Polytechnic University of Madrid.

Enrique Villalba is tutor in the Humanities Department of the Universidad Carlos III). These two courses are offered as optional subjects in the official curriculum of the Humanities degrees of the Universities collaborating in this project.

Thematic viewpoints

Pedagogy

Each subject has a co-ordinator and a tutor. The co-ordinator leads the subject, prepares the content and participates in the video conferences. The tutor motivates the students, encourages them to participate in the workshops and answers their questions. Each course has up to 60 students (10 from each University), who are related in this virtual space but who never meet face to face, even though they are so close.

Teaching materials

These are designed by the co-ordinator of the course. He holds the copyright. The materials consist of a number of epigraphs with explanations, images, texts, bibliography and on-line resources related to them. It is a theoretical kind of teaching.

Platforms

The Atnova Virtual Campus is the commercial Spanish platform for teaching the subjects, and it is managed by the Universidad Carlos III. It has four parts: secretarariat, library, classroom and main hall. There is a video conference once a fortnight.

Administration

The administration of the courses is quite complex. The Government of the Autonomous

Region of Madrid accepts the subjects of the project and hires the tutors, since they are financing the project. Promoting the courses amongst the students of the Universities is the responsibility of the Universities' Secretariats, supplying the students of Humanities with information about the virtual subjects. Each Secretary has a book containing all the courses offered by the ADA-Madrid project. The Universidad Carlos III is responsible for technical matters, mainly the management of the platform. Each University provides a multimedia classroom so students can access the platform and follow the video conferences. The administration of the course comes under the administrative system of History and Humanities degrees.

Quality

Quality control is under the supervision of the Government of the Autonomous Region of Madrid, but there is no information offered about how it is done.

Evaluation

This is based on participation in the forum, writing commentaries and a final dissertation. We do not have data about its validation.

Language and intercultural aspects

All the courses are taught in Spanish and are open to students in any of the Universities of the Autonomous Region of Madrid that are participating in the project. So intercultural exchange is the same as in an on-site classroom.

7. Antiquitas: Universities of Fribourg, Zürich, Bern and Lausanne

Cristian R. Raschle, University of Bologna

The Antiquitas project was created in 2001-2003 as part of the Swiss national e-Learning

project “Swiss Virtual Campus” (SVC). Due to SVC-requirements Antiquitas is structured in independent, multilingual modules in French and German. The main goal of Antiquitas is to present e-learning material for basic courses in ancient history at university level.

Thematic viewpoints to analyze

Pedagogy (choice of content):

The following 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 introductory modules have been designed to meet the needs of tutors and students to prepare for exams using e-learning materials. A second group insisted on the fact that students in their first year at the university had to learn practical skills in the analysis and contextualisation of historical documents. This has been achieved by creating activities that provide training in the methodological procedures needed for approaching ancient Greek and Roman inscriptions as well as ancient coins. On the other hand the third group wanted to exploit new ways of teaching ancient history through the choice of themes that student manuals covered less fully. The main goal was also to enrich the student’s historical vocabulary through research-guided topics, e.g. historical anthropology.

Materials:

The project partners chose the following list of independent modules:

A) Introductory modules: General Introduction (history of the subject), Chronological Overview, an Interactive CD-Rom as well as 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 Classic 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 Avenches, Family loyalties in Ancient Rome, Late Antiquity, Pagan and Christian Senators in the Later Roman Empire

The presentation of the content modules follows one pattern: instruction. Each module is structured in three chapters. Each chapter is divided into 5 to 7 pages. On one side the student can study static HTML-pages. These text-based pages provide the theoretical framework for the chosen module. Each page provides additional material to the grouped categories written sources, images, notes, (such as deeper scientific commentary on the above-mentioned theories) and links. The additional material is not exhaustive but is intended as examples. Therefore the number of items in each category was limited to five. As a minimum, one activity in each chapter illustrates the content of the text-pages. One goal is to activate the student, but particularly in the methodological modules the students are confronted with a skill-centred activity to decrypt information in documents. These activities focus more on training methodology. Self-correcting quizzes can sometimes be taken as well. Additional features such as bibliography, research tools and forums are included in the overall course framework.

Administration

Due to different e-learning strategies in the participating universities the project partners didn't opt for a Learning Management System (LMS) but preferred a Content Management System (CMS). So up to now everybody has been able to follow the modules without being hindered by authentication routines (see http://www.antiquitas.ch).

The members of the project made it clear that they wanted to provide their class participants with learning material and illustrative content (a blended learning approach) and therefore had no need for

advanced tools like student-tracking. For this reason the project partners didn't want to use assessment and testing tools either. The quizzes are used for practise. The students will still have to take their exams in the traditional way.

Developing and Testing

The students of all partner universities were testing the modules during the developing period of Antiquitas. The fact that the modules are totally independent gives the opportunity for each student and tutor to use the material as they wish, so too for the international collaborators in Belgium. International learning scenarios have not yet been considered.

In this case e-learning was the incentive to provide new computer-driven learning material and content, but not with a collaborative/constructivist approach.

8. Ad fontes, University of Zürich

Christian R. Raschle, University of Bologna

Adfontes concentrates on the teaching of theoretical and practical skills for historians who need to work in archives. The authors have developed their own content-management system. After a welcome-page, and a well-balanced introduction to the different parts of the course, the student gets access to the main learning areas. These provide the following elements:

a) The **Tutorial** consists of approximately 200 pages with no interactive elements. It is hierarchically structured in seven chapters with 3 to 6 sub-chapters each. The texts provide as much information as necessary but still as little as possible. Each page is linked to other materials and learning opportunities for the course itself.

b) The **Training** gives the students the possibility to develop their ability to recognize the different

scripts used in archives from the 13th to the 20th century, and the transcription and dating of documents. This area is activity-centred.

c) The **Resources** provide check-lists, dating tables, bibliography, listed and commented links, rules for transcription etc. The resources have the same structure as the Tutorial to which its pages are linked.

d) The **Archive** consists of assignments for students. The student must make use of the full range of the tools and pages offered in the Tutorial and Resources. Each assignment requires two to four hours individual work. The student progresses in a linear way.

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

Ad fontes can be used as a stand-alone facility. The course language is German. Users can obtain their own username and password and get their own authentication. Extensive testing and use in different types of courses at the University of Zürich confirmed that **Ad fontes** was best used in an in-house, blended-learning context, where the authors of the course have been involved as tutors or as external experts. The testers got better results in courses that have been built exclusively in **Ad fontes** than in those that used it as one of many exercising and learning tools. The forum has been used for collaborative assignments in these courses as well. Face to face units and the final papers assess the quality of the student's work. Sometimes the tracking device has been used to monitor the student's progress.

Up till now no international, multilingual or intercultural approaches have been made. Other universities in Germany and Switzerland tested parts of **Ad fontes** on their own or told their students about this useful tool.

9. DOMUNI, web site of Université dominicane

Marianna Baldi, University of Bologna

The first step of our research was to examine the use of e-learning tools for teaching history in France. In this phase we have noticed that the didactic offer in the humanistic field is very limited in comparison with scientific matters.

Among the few cases most of them are based on learning management systems with restricted access and so it was difficult to evaluate them. Some other cases were simply a collection of documents or lessons extracts. On our point of view these cases aren't to be considered e-learning tools.

To reach the objective to analyse and describe an experience in the developing of e-learning content in this country we've had to choose an example among those that had restricted access. In many cases during the inscription procedure was requested some information (like matriculation number) for us unavailable. We had to look for a case in which the inscription was open also to people not matriculated.

We've chosen the case of "DOMUNI" (http://www.domuni.org), the web site of "Université dominicane", since it uses CLAROLINE. (http://www.claroline.net), an open sources platform for e-learning.

In this web site are proposed subjects about theology and Church history.

The formative offer is available in two different levels: primary ("Inithéo" level, http://initheo.domuni.org/), and advanced ("Campus St. Jérôme" level, http://stjerome.domuni.org) In the first section the arguments are splitted in three different level, easy, medium, hard; for the medium and hard levels the students should have previous knowledge, but there isn't an evaluation test. Although the formative offer is rich and interesting, there aren't downright curricula but are presented some monothematic courses.

To have an access to the courses you need a registration in the e-learning content manager. For the courses a fee is charged. For some courses on university level, is possible choose some learning methods: guided by a Tutor (with forums, chats, etc.), without help on-line.

To evaluate how it works we have chosen a basic course: "Approche du Coran", a course without tutor. In the student personal page is available the list of active courses, from which is possible to consult the didactic materials. In our case the course is structured in static html web pages.

The framework of the course develops in ten steps. Each step is considered as one hour of frontal lesson. It's a simple linear hyper textual model.

There isn't any downloadable document.

The essays give information about authors but there isn't the possibility to contact directly the teachers.

The open source e-learning platform CLAROLINE (http://www.claroline.net) give some tools like chat, forum, event calendar, file management system, newsletter, etc.

In DOMUNI these services, aren't implemented in the self-learning courses.

The courses have a detailed presentation, and are created inside the DOMUNI organization. It seems there isn't any cross-national cooperation and the site language is only French.

The course contents are interesting and well built, but too poor in scientific field and e-learning tools.

10. Who killed William Robinson?

Marianna Baldi, University of Bologna

This site is a part of a wide project: "The Great Unsolved Mysteries in Canadian History Project" that is focused on providing materials to high schools and universities for the teaching of histori-

cal methods and Canadian History. The project is based at the University of Victoria, the Université de Sherbrooke and the Ontario Institute for Studies in Education at the University of Toronto. All the material is provided free as a public service.

This project was initiated in 1997 with the launching of the "Who Killed William Robinson?" website which introduced the format. A virtual archives was assembled to include all the key documents available on or surrounding the death of William Robinson from the relevant collections. Each of the documents was transcribed and assembled thematically. Teachers' guides were prepared to assist implementation in the classroom and students were invited to "solve" this old crime.

The project builds on a "document-centred inquiry" and the pedagogical method of "active learning"

In 2003 the Department of Canadian Heritage gave funds to create two new mystery archives, "We Do Not Know His Name: Klatsassin and the Chilcotin War" and "Aurore: the Martyred Child." The first is set in 1860s British Columbia, the other in 1920s Quebec. Each site focuses on different themes: aboriginal issues, disease and terrorism, in the one case, and family violence, small town life in the other. The new sites are fully bilingual.

In the web site "Who killed William Robinson?" you find as complete a collection of historical documents, that relate to the death of William Robinson and the other two Blacks killed in the same period, as the two originators, their research assistants, and their friends and colleagues have been able to find.

In the documents shown in the site there is a rich social history of the Blacks, Aboriginal People, Kanakas (Hawaiians) and Whites of many national backgrounds, from Azorian Portugese to the British colonial elite, who settled Salt Spring Island. Their stories tell about settlement, the importance of land, the dispossession of aboriginal people, about justice, racism, family life, religion etc.

The documents include newspaper stories, inquests, trial documents, private correspondence, diaries, paintings, artist's reconstructions and photographs.

This web site then is not just about William Robinson or about British Columbia. It is also about historical understanding. It allows you to look at the same documents that professional researchers look at to build their accounts. It allows the students to interpret the raw material of the past.

The *Who Killed William Robinson?* web site is split into five main sections: Home, The Murder, Historical Contexts, The Archives, and Interpretations. Each main section has an own menu on the left side of the page.

Clicking on a left menu selection will change the content in the centre, and will present you with a list of primary or secondary sources to view, under headings indicating what kind of source(s) are available. Once one of the sources has been clicked, it will be displayed in the centre of the screen. After you have finished reading it, and want to get back to the list of sources, simply click on the black "Back" button at the top and bottom of each source.

Who Killed William Robinson? Race Justice and Settling the Land was a project conceived, written and organized by **Ruth Sandwell** and **John Lutz**. The on-line version was funded in part by a grant from the "Innovation Fund" of the British Columbia Provincial Government.

The mystery is mere bait to involve the students into a much more complex understanding of the whole historical enterprise. It provides an initial introduction to archival research and archival materials. The particular skills it teaches include critical reading, critical analysis/thinking, understanding different points of view and the ability to think historically (i.e., to understand how people thought and behaved at different times in the past).

By trying to solve each mystery, students will learn more about the historical context in which

the action take place, and also about how to "do" history.

The site give also a teachers' Guide that contain background information, technical information about using the site, and both lesson and unit plans. Lesson plans have been developed by a team of teachers and historians committed to promoting some specific goals in history education: 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 better equip them to critically investigate their own contemporary world.

The guides provide at least one full unit of lesson plans for each of the sites and a number of "stand-alone" lessons. Teachers can select the level of difficulty by the complexity of the questions they want answered.

The site contains also a restricted session with interpretation documents or essays written recently by the site originators, giving their own interpretations. The teacher can give the free access to the students, better at the end of the learning path, because the goal of this project is stimulate students in doing the job of historians.

11. Medieval History course at ICoN

Enrica Salvatori, University of Pisa

ICoN is a consortium of 24 Italian universities. It offers a degree course, for foreigner students, in Italian Language & Culture as well as two separate Italian language courses and a course in Written Italian for Special Purposes. 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. This course is open to enrolled students, althouigh others can access some of the lessons.

The course appears set in stone with no sign of the materials being developed or extended. All teaching is done on-line. Students use the interactive materials, do the exercises, and consult the library, the museum and the encyclopaedia. They can follow the entire course as a self-guided, self-access course, or they can make use of tutoring services for their subject during the semester.

Thematic viewpoints to analyze

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 virtual 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 want to resume work, all they have to do is to log-on to the website and start again where they left off.

The Medieval History course is divided into 10 lessons, written by various tutors. Each lesson is divided into 8-10 units, and provides a presentation and a guide. At the end of each lesson the student can do an optional exercise. This is not open to anyone not enrolled (so it was not possible to evaluate its usefulness).

The Mediaeval History course does not appear to differ much from the other courses. The material is nearly all in the form of texts, though there are some images in Archaeology and in the History of Art. Some use of tables is made in Linguistics. Tutors conduct mid-term tests and they interact with their students in a virtual classroom. 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 balanced.

Materials

The study materials look like traditional lessons written by the tutors, divided into convenient

chunks and put on-line in html. There are very few images, or links to other texts. Each course has its own bibliography. The on-line Library, Museum and Encyclopaedia are accessible from the ICoN home-page. The Library gives access at 318 works of Italian literature 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 tutors or between ICoN and the other institutions that participate in the consortium – such as Treccani the publishers and the offices of Monuments and Fine Arts.

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. There is no sign of interactive quizzes, games or other learning devices. The bibliographical database is wholly internal so the course appears as a closed unit. Students are neither encouraged nor required to look for material elsewhere on the Internet.

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 Operational Organization. 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.

Intercultural issues

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

Quality

Feedback on the ICoN degree courses, including the Mediaeval History course, is extremely sparse: just the number of students enrolled each year and the number of those that complete their degree. Students can study when they want to, without any time constraints, but 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

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 throughout the world. They are generally held at

an Italian school abroad or at 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.

Contexts of importance for analysis

The ICoN consortium is extensive, well-financed and supported by the Ministry of Education, University and Research. It offers new courses each year, but it seems that existing courses are neither developed nor improved.

12. Edinburgh University and the 12 history tutorials

David Sephton, Primrose

Edinburgh University does not offer any on-line history courses. They do make extensive use of on-line materials, in particular a series of 12 tutorials. This case-study is about these tutorials and the use that the History Department makes of them.

Thematic viewpoints

Peadagogy

A tutor sends an e-mail to his students, at a certain point in the course, saying: "Before my seminar next week, study tutorial number 12 "Urbanisation in Britain 1780-1914".

Materials

The tutorials were developed by a consortium of 15 UK universities and completed in 2001. They are on 12 CDs. A full set of CDs entitled "Core Resources for Historians" was then distributed free of charge to all UK Universities and Institutions of Higher Education.

Edinburgh University have put the tutorials on their web-site together with a colourful Title screen – which may have been taken from the CDs. The

history tutors make good use of the tutorials in their courses. The titles of the 12 tutorials are:

An 18th Century Town
Social Aspects of Industrialisation
French Revolution: the people enter politics
British Industrial Growth
Great Powers & the Division of Europe 1944-1949
Migration and Population Change: the early modern English town
The Papacy, Religious Change and Church Reform 1049-1125
Mass Politics and the Revolution of 1848
Women's suffrage: Enfranchising women: 1789-1945
Women's History: Major themes from the enlightenment to the second world war
The Protestant Reformation, Religious Change & the people of 16th Century Europe
Urganisation in Britain 1780-1914

A full set of these history courseware CDs can be obtained from the History Courseware Consortium at Glasgow University. They are known as the "TLTP Modern History Tutorials"

Administration

The tutorials were simply installed on the history department's web-site from the 12 CDs. A colourful access-page has been inserted.

Platforms

The tutorials are accessed by students simply by going into the web-site and typing a UserName and Password.

Language

The tutorials are in English.

Quality

The tutors make regular use of the material and appear to be pleased with its quality.

13. Alllearn: consortium of Oxford, Yale & Stanford

David Sephton, Primrose

This is a series of on-line history courses offered by a consortium called Alllearn developed by the universities of Oxford, Yale and Stanford.

Thematic viewpoints

Peadagogy

The courses are offered on-line to students anywhere in the world. They were created by history tutors at the three universities. Courses are also offered in 15 other subject areas.

Materials

The courses vary in length from 3 to 10 weeks. There are one-week taster courses so that students can try them out before committing themselves to the full course.

The cost of the courses varies, from 100 euros for a 3-week course to 700 euros for a 10-week course. Students have to pay between 20 and 60 euros for materials.

The courses are of three kinds, and often combine all three:

- multimedia
- discussion groups
- web-casts of lectures

Students have to commit themselves to spending between 5 and 9 hours per week:

- 3-4 hours per week on reading, and on watching, or listening to, lectures
- 2-3 hours per week in on-line discussion and chat sessions

At the end of the course students have to pass an examination or submit a paper of 6-8 pages.

Administration

The courses are already listed on-line and students simply apply to follow the course of their choice. The courses are administered by the individual history tutors

Platforms

The courses are accessible to students simply by applying to take part.

Language

The courses are in English and students have to submit their work in English.

14. BBC History on-line

David Sephton, Primrose

This is part of a huge amount of on-line material covering many subjects. It is one of the BBC's main educational activities since its charter requires it to provide educational programmes and other material.

Thematic viewpoints

Pedagogy

All the materials are of high quality. They are used as additional resourses by history departments in universities and schools. One of our CLIOH partners from Cork says that he finds the BBC history material excellent. He has helped create some of the material himself.

Materials

The history topics include:

Ancient History: Prehistory, Anglo-Saxons, Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Vikings

Archaeology including Marine Archaeology

Church & State: British Empire, Church & Reformation, Monarchs & leaders, Nations

Science and Discovery: Medicine, Revolutions in Science, Exploration

Society & Culture: Inductrialisation, Women's History, Protest & Reform etc
Wars & Conflict: Norman Conquest, 1916 the Easter Rising, Genocide, WW1and WW2
Family History

All the material is attractively presented and easy to read, with sensible use of colour and plenty of images. The various subject areas are easy to navigate and have extensive links to related items.

The BBC are apparently investing very heavily in "streaming" which will allow audio and video files to start playing immediately, without any waiting time, and it will prevent illegal copying of the files.

Administration

The material is updated and new material added from time to time.

Platforms

Anyone can use the material as it is freely available to all.

Language

The material is all in English

Quality

Comments from history tutors that use the material rate it as excellent.

15. The Open University history courses

David Sephton, Primrose

The history courses are part of an extensive range of courses offered by the British Open University and are available to anyone wishing to obtain a degree.

Thematic viewpoints

Pedagogy

The Open University offers a broad spectrum of courses enabling people of all ages to obtain a degree. The courses are intense and can take many years to complete. They are designed for people who missed out on university when they were young. My aunt obtained her open university degree when she was over 80. There is no formal academic background required. Students can get a certificate in one year, a diploma in two years or go on to take a degree.

Materials

30 on-line courses are offered for history. They include:

- Exploring the Classical World
- Fifth-Century Athens: Democracy and the City State
- From Enlightenment to Romanticsim c. 1780-1830
- Princes & Peoples: France and the British Isles
- State, Economy and Nation in 19th Century Europe
- Europe: Culture & Identities in a Contested Continent
- The Renaissance in Europe: a Cultural Enquiry
- Total War and Social Change: Europe 1914-1955
- Urban Britain: 1870-1914
- Nineteenth-Century Britain
- Religion in History
- The Professions in Early Modern England: c.1450-1800
- Art, Society and Religion in Siena, Florence and Padua 1280-1400

A typical course starts in January or February and lasts for nine months. Students are expected to attend a summer school for two weeks. There are also shorter courses from 8 to 20 weeks.

Students have to pay for the course. Fees range mostly from £245 to £475, although a few courses cost as much as £1060.

Courses are generally divided into Levels 1, 2 and 3. Level 3 builds on study skills and subject knowledge acquired at Levels 1 and 2.

2 million people have already completed Open University courses. 200,000 people study annually. 150,000 students work on-line, but not yet much in the history courses.

They are the first UK university to introduce e-books giving a choice of on-line or printed course material.

Students can mix-and-match their courses so they can study two unrelated subjects such as art history and computing.

Administration

It is an independent organization and is not linked to any of the existing universities.

Each student has a personal tutor and there are 13 regional centres and 350 study centres that provide help.

Platforms

Little material is so far available on-line. The courses make extensive use of television – often at very unsocial hours.

Language

The material is all in English

16. Assignments and methods in e-history courses in Finland

Sirkku Anttonen, Turku University

This case deals with different assignments and methods that have been used in e-learning history courses in Finland. The material for this case study has been used in about 30 courses. E-learning his-

tory courses in the Torus network will also be included in the final version of the case study.

In general, there are two kinds of assignment used in the courses: written assignments and discussion assignments. Students are organized into different group divisions and assignments. There are many kinds of discussion forums: from the Café to an academic discussion forum, which motivate students to carry out different kinds of discussions.

Almost all courses are lead by a tutor. Some courses are self-study. At least three different ways can be found of teaching in the courses: a) Students carry out discussion and written assignments every week, b) Students carry out either discussion or written assignments every week, and c) there are only a few discussion assignments; most of them in written form.

Thematic viewpoints to analyze

Pedagogy

The questions posed for pedagogy in the research are:

1. What kind of activating methods have been used in the courses?

2. How can learning-by-doing be adopted in the field of history?

3. What do students have to do to get a credit? Are students required to do many small assignments? Or is it enough to do one large assignment? Is work-load related to the length of the course?

4. How are students motivated to study in the course?

5. What is the role of the tutor in activating the students?

6. How can Learning Management Systems be used in activating students?

7. How are learning outcomes and objectives being formulated?

8. How are the discussions validated? Are there any standards or criteria for validating?

Contexts of importance for analysis

The Finnish Virtual University co-ordinates the distribution of the courses. The case-study on the Finnish Virtual University of History will deal with this

Possible articles and researches

Brace-Govan, Jan: A method to track discussion forum activity: The Moderator's Assessment Matrix. *The Internet and Higher Education*, 6 (2003).

Dezhi, Wu & Hiltx Starr, Roxanne: Predicting learning from asynchronous online discussions. *JALN*, vol. 8, issue 2. April 2004.

Gunn, Cathy: Dominant or different? Gender issues in computer-supported learning. *JALN*, vol 7, issue 1. February 2003

Meyer, Katrina A.: Evaluating online discussions: four different frames of analysis. *JALN*, vol. 8, issue 2. April 2004.

17. Cultural History degree studies at Turku Open University

Sirkku Anttonen, Turku University

This case deals with Cultural History degree studies at Turku Open University. The whole first-cycle and second-cycle studies can be studied on-line. About. 50 students take part in these studies annually. The focus here is on the first-cycle studies.

Turku Open University has offered Cultural History degree studies on-line since the mid-1990s. E-learning has a considerable status in the Turku Open University. There are e-learning studies in the departments of Art History, Political History, Geography, Media Studies and Psychology. Turku is the only Open University in Finland which offers on-line degree courses in Cultural History or in general cultural history. Students at the Open University come from different backgrounds and are in different age groups. Many of them study us-

ing distance-learning and have a day-time job. This causes problems in organizing the courses.

Thematic viewpoints to analyze

Pedagogy

It would be interesting to consider the pedagogical aspects by asking the following questions:

What are the specific requirements and benefits when adults study on the web?

How can the possibilities of blended learning be connected to courses?

What kind of study guides are prepared for the courses? What kind of activating methods are there in the courses?

In the Open University, educational co-ordinators have many roles in the courses as they act both as planners and tutors for the course. Usually they also do the technical implementation of the course. There are advantages and disadvantages in this.

Materials

What kinds of materials are used? Do the course planners write articles themselves? If not, how are copyright issues handled?

Administration & marketing

How many different people are involved in the administration of an on-line degree? What is the relationship between the educational co-ordinator as a course planner and the faculty? How is marketing organized?

Student assessment

Courses are assessed using discussion assignments, essays, and exams done at home.

It would be interesting to compare assessments used in face to face teaching and e-learning. Are there other types of assessment used in e-learning? How can quality be measured?

18. Administrative questions concerning The Finnish Virtual University of History

Tapio Onnela, Turku University

The Finnish Virtual University is a partnership of all 21 Finnish Universities. It started in 2001 as a part of a national ICT strategy from the end of the 1990's. Different academic networks have created virtual teaching activity for specific disciplines.

The Finnish Virtual University of History was started in the same year 2001. It is a project that was financed by The Finnish Ministry of Education from 2001-2005. Financing for the year 2006 is still unclear.

The Finnish Virtual University of History is based on collaboration, division of labour, shared knowledge and the expertise of member departments and universities. It promotes on-line learning and teaching in the field of history, and develops best practice.

Organisation consists of partners from 8 universities. 10 departments of these 8 are history departments. Others are: Faculty of Art and Design, Department of Cultural Production and Landscape Studies (also another project organisation) and the Finnish network for the History of Science and Technology (Torus).

Co-ordination is done by the History Department of the University of Turku. The management group consists of representatives selected by each member organisation.

Thematic viewpoints to analyse

Administration

This case-study focuses on the administrative questions and feed-back systems of the Finnish Virtual University of History. It will deal especially with producing web courses, organising course-teams, marketing courses, managing student registration, managing study attainments, financing co-ordination and course production, and financ-

ing teaching in the courses. It will also study quality systems like evaluation seminars and student-feedback systems

19. A Student Portal for five departments at Uppsala University

By Peter Knutar, Uppsala University

The object of this study is the capabilities and use of a locally-developed, web-based student portal, and how tutors and course administrators use this tool for course administration and teaching.

The portal is part of an intranet project, which is the basis of co-operation between five departments at Uppsala University. It is in constant development and the addition of new modules and features is almost entirely user-driven. Unlike some other efforts, the "consortium" of departments has a conscious strategy not to develop LMS-like functions – the University already runs an LMS – but to take a minimalist, but all-embracing approach. *All* courses, whether campus, "traditional" distance, or web-based, are managed in the portal. Therefore, the pedagogical capabilities are limited. Teachers who want to use a traditional LMS can do so outside the portal.

Thematic viewpoints to analyze

Pedagogy:

How does the web improve the campus-based courses? What are the benefits? How do the limitations hinder the virtual courses? What are the drawbacks?

Materials:

The portal allows for a formal "required reading" list to be inserted. Tutors can add supplementary reading in various forms. There is no limit to who can upload material, as long as they are defined as administrators or tutors in the portal. There is also

a small, albeit rudimentary, text-editor for creating on-line materials.

Administration

Course secretaries administer the "course framework", i.e. define which courses run in which term, and associate tutors to the courses. There is also the possibility to appoint any teacher as course administrator, which gives him or her full control over the course's scheduling, messaging, pedagogy, etc.

Platforms

The portal application has been designed and built by a consortium of five departments in the faculties of Humanities, Law, and Social Science. It is part if a bigger intranet application for disseminating all types of information, which will be discussed later.

Language and Intercultural issues

The platform currently uses Swedish and English. All teaching is done in either of these languages. Since the departments own the code and the application is designed to support different languages, there shouldn't be too many problems in adding more, should the question arise.

Student assessment

Due to university policies, no results can be stored in the portal database. There is the possibility to use web-based evaluation but this is not used, either in campus or distance courses. Take-home exams are used more frequently, though, but they are not uploaded to the web. They are sent to the tutor by e-mail. Only term papers are handled via the portal.

Contexts of importance for analysis

An interesting point about this student portal is that its development is entirely user-driven. The group that prioritizes the development consists of

users from all the departments involved. Because of this, and a conscious strategy not to add LMS functionality, almost any tutor can use the set of tools available in the web. Of course there are drawbacks, mainly in the field of interactivity and inter-student contacts.

Another important point is that the portal's code is owned and developed by the departments themselves. This adds a level of control and flexibility that would be impossible to achieve with a centrally-administered system or an 'out-of-the box' system.

A third contextual issue is the scope of the portal; since *all* courses, be they virtual, blended or face to face, are defined in, and managed via, the department's intranet. Since the student portal is an 'extension' to the intranet, there is no learning curve whatsoever for tutors – they all use the intranet already. This might give interesting results to the often-posed question of whether lack of acceptance is explained by the complexity of the new on-line tools.

Notes

[1] Source: http://derekstockley.com.au/elearning-definition.html, http://www.dfes.gov.uk/elearningstrategy/elearning.stm

[2] Enrica Salvatori 2004. *E-learning History: Italy.* Agricolan Tietosanomat 3/2004.

[3] György Novaky & Peter Knutar 2004. *Erfarenheter av e-learning vid Historiska institutionen, Uppsala universitet.* [Experiences on e-learning in History Department of the University of Uppsala]. Agricolan Tietosanomat 3/2004.

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[5] Henri Terho 2005. *Yliopiston ja yhteiskunnan palveluksessa* [In the service of University and the society] Turun yliopisto.

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