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Welcome to our ninth newsletter of 2009 – which we are sending to an extended circle of researchers, academics and others interested in Virtual Campuses.

To subscribe to this monthly newsletter, please contact nikki.cortos@atit.be.

Project news

The wiki and Multilingualism

One of the issues that the Re.ViCa team tackled in their research work was to examine the vastly significant role played by language and culture. As part of this work, the team has been keen to take language into account as far as possible in the [Virtual Campuses wiki](#). In this short article, project partner Tatiana Mazali from the [International Telematic University UNINETTUNO](#) in Italy summarises some of the steps the team have taken to deal with the challenging question of how to cater for a multilingual community in a wiki.

Wiki and Multilingualism

The Re.ViCa wiki has played and continues to play two fundamental roles:

- It provides a collaborative work tool within the research network
- It acts as an external communication tool related to the project outcomes

For the first role we decided to use English as the official language for gathering contents in order to facilitate cooperation amongst partners. Deciding to use a common language appeared to be unavoidable to the team, as otherwise it would not have been possible to collaborate given the fact that the research team comes from different European countries.

However because of the significant second role which the wiki plays in relation to the public communication of research outputs, it has also tried to promote a more multilingual approach.

The part of the wiki that best exemplifies this role can be found in the [“Countries” section](#). When accessing this page, it is clear that it offers English, Dutch, French, Finnish, German, Hungarian and Italian-speaking visitors an opportunity to access the documents and sections created by the project partners using their own language. This page therefore provides a veritable search engine for preliminary access to Re.ViCa results:

Countries

Article Discussion Edit History Protect Delete Move Watch >>>

To check out a particular country, one can do one of the following:

- ▶ access it via the **Continents list** below
- ▶ access it from the **Countries list**, given after the Continents list
- ▶ type its name into the search box - this can be its English name or its "truename" (i.e. its name in the language of the country)
- ▶ type its two-letter ISO code into the search box at the side of the wiki screen - for the codes see the [Country codes](#) page.

For a list of the countries of most importance to Re.ViCa, see [Country reports](#)

Note that not all countries are represented even in the list below, only those where it is likely that some Virtual Campus activity is taking place. We also wanted to allow access to countries via their name in any one of the languages in the Re.ViCa consortium - English, Dutch, Finnish, French, German, Hungarian and Italian:

- ▶ Countries in English (A-Z)
- ▶ Countries in Dutch (A-Z)
- ▶ Countries in French (A-Z)
- ▶ Countries in Finnish (A-Z)
- ▶ Countries in German (A-Z)
- ▶ Countries in Hungarian (A-Z)
- ▶ Countries in Italian (A-Z)

with links to their English names. Native speakers may always check and add.

Screenshot of the Countries page

This approach has allowed the Re.ViCa team to enable visitors from countries that are partners in the project consortium to access the wiki in a way that takes into account their mother tongue. In addition, while the documents prepared by the partners in different countries are largely available in English, some partners are making them available in their own mother tongue.

Other interesting aspects that are worth noting in relation to the multilingual approach of the Re.ViCa team can be observed in the way in which a definition of the [term “Virtual Campus”](#) is made by means of a glossary of [synonyms existing in different countries](#).

7 Virtual campus synonyms in other countries

7.1 Belgium

1. "Campus Virtuel" (FR) such as for the
 1. Virtual Campus of the University of Liege , MegaTrends case study (PDF)
 2. Campusvirtuel.be from 3 Business Schools (Solvay , HEC-ULg and LSM), article in French: "Solvay, HEC-ULg et la LSM créent ensemble un campus virtuel"
2. "Virtuele Campus" (NL) which was **formerly** used to describe:
 1. a terminated school project as a Second Life campus for Catholic University College Ghent (formerly KaHo Sint-Lieven)
 2. a virtual tour and information guide of the University of Antwerp , which is now redirected to a new URL with the appropriate title "

7.2 France

1. "Université Virtuelle"
2. "Campus Virtuel"
3. "Campus numérique"
4. "Université Numérique (de Région)"

Visit our wiki page [VC definition - France](#)

Screenshot of the Virtual Campus page



Accreditation

When carrying out our research into the Virtual Campus phenomenon worldwide, the Re.ViCa team grappled with the thorny issue of accreditation on several occasions. Nowhere was this more evident than when dealing with higher education institutions in the US. We therefore invited project team member Sara Frank Bristow to provide us with an overview of the accreditation process in the US to help those of us not based in the US to better understand how this process works.



Sara Frank Bristow

Understanding Postsecondary Educational Accreditation in the United States

Researchers often struggle to grasp the state of accreditation in contemporary America, and no wonder: few countries possess a system as complex. Here we offer four little-known facts about postsecondary educational accreditation in the US.

1. There is no single governmental accrediting body for American postsecondary educational institutions. Rather, the [US Department of Education](#) (USDE) relies on private and state-based accrediting agencies to provide oversight of member institutions. A decentralized approach may seem reasonable for a country as large and diverse as the US (with an estimated 307 million inhabitants of 50 independently governed states). But with 74 accrediting agencies providing approval for over 6,900 postsecondary educational institutions and programs, a diverse range of institution types result.
2. [USDE-recognized accrediting agencies](#) are divided into subgroups which are not considered equal in American academia. Sixteen “regional” agencies are regarded as the most selective, accrediting well regarded institutions like [Harvard University](#) and [Pennsylvania State](#). The remaining “national,” “hybrid” and “programmatic” agencies typically certify lesser-known and/or specialized entities such as [Full Sail University](#) and [Texas Chiropractic College](#) – whose students may find themselves unable to transfer earned academic credits into regionally accredited schools.
3. Agencies awarded recognition by the US Department of Education are not the only ones permitted to provide university accreditation – they have simply met a certain set of USDE criteria. Recognition is not a requirement for an accrediting body to operate (although without it, institutions it certifies cannot participate in federal student aid programs). Numerous accrediting agencies operate legally without recognition from the US government.
4. US universities are not required to obtain formal accreditation to operate. As noted on the [US Dept of Education web site](#), “Accreditation in the United States is a voluntary, nongovernmental process, in which an institution and its programs are evaluated against standards for

measuring quality.” Naturally, most postsecondary institutions do seek accreditation, and those which achieve international standing normally have accreditation from the most rigorous USDE agencies.

Further Reading:

1. [“Accreditation in the United States”](#), USDE web site
2. [Database of USDE Accredited Postsecondary Institutions and Programs](#), USDE Office of Postsecondary Education
3. [List of recognized US accrediting agencies](#), USDE Office of Postsecondary Education

Project Activities for November

September was a busy month for the project partners and included a lively final meeting for several members of the team in Leuven, where the main topics of discussion were the project handbook, updating the wiki and the overall process of exploitation of the work carried out during the project lifetime. During this meeting the team agreed in principle to establishing an agreement amongst the project partners to continue to support the wiki for at least another two years. We also agreed to continue to distribute this newsletter on a monthly basis till the end of 2009 and then once every two months in 2010.



Project partners through videoconference: Cristina Stefanelli & Alessandro Caforio (UNINETTUNO)

Project partners in Leuven: Sally Reynolds & Nikki Cortoos (ATIT), Prof. Theo Bastiaens (FernUniversität in Hagen), Ilse Op de Beeck (AVNet – K.U.Leuven), Bieke Schreurs (EuroPACE ivzw), Philippe Portelli & David Gauckler (Université de Strasbourg), Grégory Lucas (University of West Hungary), Paul Bacsich (Matic Media Ltd) and Anna-Kaarina Kairamo (TKK Dipoli)

Interviews with Experts Almost Ready for Publication

[AVNet](#) and [EuroPace](#) have been busy with the editing of the video interviews carried out with many of the experts who took part in the ICDE/EADTU conference in Maastricht in June. We expect to be able to publish these interviews in November.



Prof. Dr. Fredric M. Litto during the interview



Interest in wiki Continues to Grow

The level of interest in the Virtual Campuses wiki is really encouraging and up to now we have had 6,875 unique visitors coming from 167 different countries. The community of people contributing to the wiki is also on the increase and now includes 88 people.

Conference Feedback

The outputs of the Re.ViCa project were presented at two leading conferences in September where they attracted quite a lot of attention. The first, the [Cambridge International Conference on Open and Distance Learning](#) which took place from 22 to 25 September, included a presentation by Paul Bacsich and Bieke Schreurs, the [full paper](#) (PDF) is now available from the conference web site. The second was the [International Conference on Computer Aided Learning \(ICL\)](#) held in Villach 23 to 25 September.

New People in the Re.ViCa Network

Expert for New Zealand: Mark Brown, Massey University, New Zealand



Dr. Mark Brown

Mark Brown is the Director, Blended and Distance Education at [Massey University](#), New Zealand. Associate Professor Brown has specific responsibility for policy and strategic direction in the areas of blended learning and distance education. He is a member of the [New Zealand Academy of Tertiary Teaching Excellence](#) and past recipient of a National Award for Sustained Excellence in Tertiary Teaching. Mark was

New Zealand's first Apple Distinguished Educator and has published extensively in the field of Technology-enhanced Learning. He serves on several journal editorial boards and is active in a number of professional associations. Dr. Brown has been involved in a number of large externally funded research projects, including an analysis of international e-learning policy and the development of the [Mahara eportfolio system](#). He currently chairs the Mahara International Academic Advisory Group.

Expert for UK: Sarah Frame, UELconnect, University of East London, UK

Sarah is currently Director of [UELconnect](#) at the [University of East London](#). UELconnect is responsible for the provision of all distance and e-learning at UEL, and with over 4000 students registered on distance learning programmes, they are a leading UK provider of undergraduate courses by distance learning. UELconnect also successfully provides a



Sarah Frame

range of e-learning consultancy services on a commercial basis to external clients. For many years she was a Director of ICS, then a subsidiary of the Thomson Corporation and the world's largest private provider of distance learning courses. She joined UEL in January 2007, initially as Head of School of Distance and E-Learning. In July 2008, UEL expanded their activities and integrated the School of Distance and E-learning with UEL Extra. In addition to her role at UEL, Sarah is a Director, and currently Chair, of the [Open Learning Foundation](#) based in London. She also represents UEL on the million+ universities group and as a Foundation member on the [London Higher Business Development Unit](#).

Expert for Palestine: Mahmoud Hawamdeh, Al-Quds Open University, Palestine

Mahmoud Hawamdeh is Head of Training and Development at the Information and Communication Technology Center (ICTC), [Al-Quds Open University](#). His duty and responsibility is to design and supervise the implementation of the training programmes conducted by the ICTC. He is responsible for the overall direction, development, coordination and supervision of the Training and Development Department which provides a broad range of courses on a variety of subjects in Information and Communication Technology (ICT). The department strives to meet the needs of the individual as well as those of the organisation. Prior to joining Al-Quds Open University, Mr. Hawamdeh worked as training manager at Arab Technology Systems (ATS) where he was responsible for all training programmes offered by ATS.

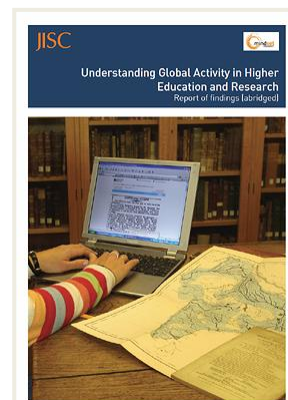


Mahmoud Hawamdeh

Announcements

Report on Study into Global Activity Published by JISC

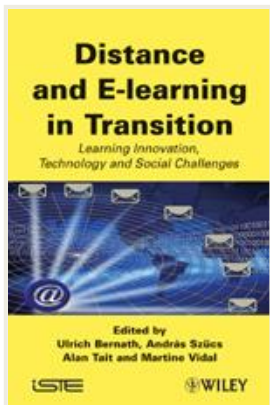
JISC in the UK has recently published a report which highlights activities and developments in the fields of e-Learning and e-Infrastructure supporting the higher education and research sectors in ten countries across the world. The countries examined are Australia; Canada; Denmark; Germany; Korea; Japan; the Netherlands; New Zealand, the United Kingdom and the United States. This report, entitled "Understanding Global Activity in Higher Education and Research" provides an abridged summary of the findings of the research carried out and attempts to offer a flavour of e-Learning and e-Infrastructure activity in each of the countries





studied (and in particular evaluates the geographic, economic and cultural factors which shape the way that e-Learning and e-Infrastructure are developing). You can read "Understanding Global Activity in Higher Education and Research - Report of findings (abridged)" (PDF) [here](#).

Distance and E-learning in Transition Published by EDEN



Published in the summer, this new book from EDEN includes a selection of the best EDEN conference papers from the past years, revisiting research, innovation and professional practice in distance and e-learning. The first part of this book pays particular attention to all the aspects related to institutionalised approaches to distance education and e-learning, the reform and development through sustained

social and educational policies and practices. The second part explores the continued impact of ICT on teaching and learning. The articles assembled here span eight years, reflecting on an evolving process, if not a consistent one. It can be ordered [here](#).

Commonwealth of Learning Publishes report on ICTs for Higher Education

This report was published as one of the background papers for the [2009 World Conference on Higher Education \(WCHE\)](#), which has the overarching theme "The New Dynamics of Higher Education and Research for Societal Change and Development". While it takes a global perspective, the main focus is on the implications of ICTs for developing countries and it is clear that is intended primarily for an audience of newly appointed ministers, officials and institutional heads in higher education in developing countries. However it also includes useful information on networks and is a valuable resource for the research community, investigating the incidence and take-up of ICT in higher education institutions in developing countries. You can read the [report \(PDF\) here](#).

Bits and Pieces

Increase in Online Learning at University of Guyana

Newly appointed Director of Distance Education at the [Institute of Distance & Continuing Education](#) of the [University of Guyana](#) Ramesh Sharma drew our attention this month to the fact that the University of Guyana is now offering a host of new courses online. These courses along with the university's recent announcement about the introduction of an electronic students' records management system and the start of on-line applications for its prospective students show the extent to which the university is adopting ICT.

Major Growth for Online Education in Australia

[CHECKpoint eLearning](#)

recently reported on the extent to which online education is growing in Australia. Based on the findings in a recent report, predictions are for a 24% increase this fiscal year, described as being twice as much growth as for any other business in Australia. Checkpoint goes on to say this 'report, from business information analysts IBISWorld, forecasts that online education will be one of Australia's major growth industries over the next twelve months, as learners increasingly demand education and training that is flexible, engaging, and up to the minute.' Read the [full article here](#).



Gráinne Conole raises Interesting Issues at Italian Conference

Reports of the keynote presentation given by Gráinne Conole at the Annual Meeting of the Italian E-learning Society in Salerno in September 2009 indicate that she raised some questions as to whether reality was matching rhetoric in respect to e-learning. Gráinne argued that while e-learning is now well and truly embedded in all educational institutions, there is still a gap between the promises inherent in the policy rhetoric and actual use in practice. For a summary of Gráinne's presentation see a summary in [Cloudworks](#). Her slides are available at <http://www.slideshare.net/grainne/conole-salerno-2010660>.



Prof. Gráinne Conole

Reminders

We look forward to receiving input from you for our next newsletter which will be published in November. This input can be news items, new RSS feeds, relevant papers or publications by you or others.

Editorial team **Nikki Cortoos** nikki.cortoos@atit.be
Sally Reynolds sally.reynolds@atit.be