

# Teaching and Learning in Cyberspace

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Declaring he was addicted to cybersurfing and just could not quit, Virginia Tech graduate student Cem Ünsal intrigued and amused attendees at the CAUSE/CNI Southeast Regional Conference held September 12-13, 1996 in Roanoke, Virginia. Participants attended a range of plenary sessions and seminars that examined the theme of the conference, new modes of "Teaching and Learning in Cyberspace."

Barbara J. Ford, Executive Director, University Libraries at the Virginia Commonwealth University, and incoming president of the American Library Association, affirmed the value of the experience: "The conference addressed important topics that are key to dealing with the intellectual and values issues associated with using technology in an academic setting."

Ford also gave a presentation at a session entitled "Strategies for Access to Digital Information." Ford and her co-presenter Joan Cheverie, Visiting Program Officer for the Coalition for Networked Information, described opportunities for increased access to networked information.

Touted as the cheerleader of education technology, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign Professor Burks Oakley II, set the tone for the conference with his keynote address entitled "The Virtual Classroom: Silicon and Fiber Replacing Bricks and Mortar." Oakley, who is also the Associate Director of the Sloan Center for Asynchronous Learning Environments (SCALE), described his university's use of networked computers to implement innovative teaching and learning experiences.

Through student-wide network access and the latest uses of networked information, professors at the University of Illinois address common university problems including retention, rapid feedback, and access to faculty, explained Oakley. He also demonstrated professors' use of the WWW to engage and communicate with students: "The Web gives them (students) mental imagery that they wouldn't have received from a textbook."

A captivating visual presentation filled with examples of syllabi on the WWW as well as professor/student/teaching assistant Internet chat groups aided Oakley in what many attendees described as an "invigorating" session.

"Burks Oakley had such high energy. He is an innovator and he's accomplished some great things," said Jayne Salvo, Productions Manger of the Brevard Community College-run WBCC TV 68 in Florida. Jerry Niebaum, Executive Director of the Information Technology Services at the University of Kansas, concurred: "The session was extraordinarily good. It stimulated your thinking about what you need to be doing at your own institution."

Some of the ideas Oakley asserted that institutions could be doing include what he termed distance interaction. "Universities could build learning communities of students not physically on the campus," explained Oakley. Through dorm room access to the WWW, for example, students could view their weekly assignments on the WWW and ask questions via email.

Sessions such as that of Anne S. Parker, Interim Executive Director, Planning and Policy, Information Technology Services at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, and Patricia Wand, University Librarian, American University, delved into specific campus information policies of the teaching and

learning networked environment that Oakley examined. Both spoke of the importance of articulating the rights and responsibilities of users in the online environment including, for example, the appropriate behavior of students in academic versus non official homepages and the idea of policing that environment.

"The police issue question is intriguing. We must decide our role especially in an academic setting where there are guidelines that help students learn what is appropriate in many areas," said an attendee.

Specific student's opinions of technology in instruction were the subject of the session entitled "The Student View of Technology in Instruction." Four Virginia Tech students opined about the use of technology in their courses. The students' majors ranged from technical to non technical concentrations and accordingly, their cyberspace experiences varied.

Attendees found this session one of the most useful, according to Wendall A. Barbour, Vice President for Information Resources at California State University in Bakersfield, "It was extremely helpful to hear the students and find out what their interests were." Buddy Litchfield, Science Reference Librarian at Virginia Tech, stated, "I was glad to hear the students were benefiting from the networked environment and that they appreciate it." Mitchell E. Counts, Director of the Law Library at Baylor University, concurred: "We seldom get to discover what the student's think and it is great to know that they are so successful in this environment." Robert Hansen, Professor of Computer Science at Hollins College, gave his perspective on the session: "It was an interesting and frank student discussion and I felt reinforced from such a positive response, especially to email."

Equally positive responses resulted from the session entitled "Electronic Theses and Dissertations: Unlocking Access to Graduate Research." Gail McMillan, Director of the Virginia Tech Libraries' Communications Project and the Head of the Special Collections Department, spoke of the policies, procedures, and training for faculty and students developing at Virginia Tech in preparation for mandated electronic theses and dissertation. Janice Thomasson, Director of the Medical College of Georgia, articulated a highlight of this session: "The beauty of the presentation was that it demystified high technology. When the speaker discussed the fact that even she as a non technical person could configure a program for an electronic thesis, I thought that was excellent."

A similar message affirming the ability of all technological levels to use teaching and learning in cyberspace resonated through the session entitled "Using the Network as an Integral Part of Curriculum." Brad Cox, George Mason University Professor, and Joseph S. Merola, Virginia Tech Professor, explained methods technology extended to traditional teacher/student relationships beyond the space/time limitations of the classroom. Both professors discussed their experiences using the Internet to enhance communications with students.

Marcella S. Rorie, Classroom Improvement Coordinator at North Carolina State University, found Merola's message especially powerful: "We're starting to use a lot of technology at NC State and it was very useful to see that you don't have to have the most technically advanced software programs to still make a big difference in the student curriculum." Linda J. Hutchinson, Information Systems Project Leader at Iowa State University, expressed similar sentiments, "I felt I could go home and begin this advanced technology right away."

Robert Bates, Dean of the College of Arts and Sciences at Virginia Tech, also examined the impact of technology in the university environment during a general session. Bates used a video presentation featuring professors and students to describe first hand accounts of positive experiences at Virginia Tech's educational technological environment. Bates also stressed the importance of taking risks in

efforts to induce a positive evolution in teaching and learning environments. "Bates' session had a proactive message. It's nice to be challenged to take these risks," said Roger Akers, Manager, Research and Development at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill.

William Graves, Associate Provost for Information Technology at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill, addressed the key issue of the costs involved in modern technology in the university environment. Graves explained the idea of a new national learning infrastructure designed to increase access to education, to contribute to the quality of learning, and to contain overall instructional costs.

Another key conference issue addressed was support services for technology-based information resources. Polley Ann McClure, Vice President and CIO at the University of Virginia, examined the many changes occurring in technology including the demand for dial-in lines, Internet overload, and requests for more support. McClure then offered some solutions to what she termed a "crisis" in IT support. "McClure's discussion integrated well into a whole range of problems and she explained what has to be done in some places to find solutions," said Gary Graham, Director, Learning Resources and Technological Centers at John Tyler Community College.

The Southeast Regional Conference's closing general session highlighted future campus networking strategies. Douglas Gale, Assistant Vice President, Information Systems and Services at George Washington University, explained pedagogical and economic perspectives to the question "Why do we need to do this?" Gale then outlined the technical and policy issues associated with providing digital networks capable of supporting higher education's research and education requirements in the year 2000 and reviewed the emerging solutions to these issues.

According to conference survey results, attendees left the conference enthused and armed with notes and ideas to continue and in some cases begin, building their respective university's teaching and learning environments in cyberspace.

The conference was chaired by A. Wayne Donald, Team Leader, Project ENABLE, and Eileen Hitchingham, Dean of University Libraries, both of Virginia Tech. The chairs recognized the \$5,000 grant from Virginia Tech's Division of Continuing Education that aided in supporting the regional meeting.

- [Louise Fisch](#), *Coordinator of Communications*

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## **Workshop on Metadata for Networked Images and Imagebases**

The Coalition for Networked Information and OCLC organized an invitational workshop in Dublin, Ohio on September 24 and 25. The purpose of the workshop was to promote convergence among alternative approaches to describing images and imagebases in networked environments. The workshop focused on still images, such as photographs, slides, and graphics. It did not deal with moving images, such as films, videos, and simulations. Attendees included faculty members, archivists, librarians, information technologists, and other professional developers and managers of information infrastructures, resources, and services.

See <URL:<http://purl.oclc.org/metadata/image>> for [more information](#), including the workshop report .

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