

# Editorial

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EDUCATORS are faced with the greatest challenge in learning technologies since the introduction of the printed book by Gutenberg five centuries ago. Since the mid-eighties, computers have been playing an ever increasing role in education. Multimedia presentations were introduced in the late eighties when memories of over 50 MB in personal computers became common. The advent of fast telecommunications in the mid-nineties added online asynchronous facilities for learning materials dissemination. Freimut Bodendorf and Philip Swain cover the current background to these developments in their introductory paper. We need to bear in mind that we are in the midst of a revolution, where many aspects are still in a state of flux. We are moving from 'old learning' to 'new learning' (alluding to the parallel economic phrases). Old universities are challenged by new for-profit universities, and also alliances of universities dispensing their wares on a global scale. Non-concurrent learning is a new market where the possibilities and acceptance are yet to be evaluated. Assessment, accreditation and grading are moving into as yet uncharted territory. Considerable headaches are guaranteed for state and national governments in trying to regulate and resolve these issues. Competition for students will rest primarily on the quality of courses. Engineering educators are already emphasising that the education needs to be performance based. It is clear that the baseline is the interactive multimedia delivery mode, with access to chat rooms and online as well as physical contact with the professor. Updating and individualising interactive courseware will remain the domain of the university and its faculty. How much of the traditional classroom will survive remains to be seen. But certainly a shifting learning culture is evolving.

Freimut Bodendorf and Philip Swain have mastered a fascinating selection of papers for this issue. Inevitably, we have a number of screen dumps within the papers which are stills of the interactive proceedings. A hardcopy issue containing papers describing actions which are activated by using telecommunications may be somewhat anathema. But we are still clinging to our traditional print format—it is convenient to be able to 'hold' it and register information by sifting through the pages and have a permanent record and recall capability. Many references to online access in the papers can conveniently expand the resource into a useful symbiosis of hardcopy and interactive domains.

Michael Wald