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The computer has invaded law classrooms. As time goes by law students, teachers and administrators may become more dependent on e-mail communication. Computer assisted legal instruction is also being used in many law schools. Legal educators have accepted computer technology without serious question, critical thinking or considering what the implications are for the profession. Are computers a help or a hindrance in making the law classroom a more human place and law practice a more human enterprise?

In the case of e-mail, its most obvious use as a pedagogical device is in facilitating communication between teacher and student and as an alternative forum for discussions without some of the physical and social restraints inherent in a real law classroom. It is a more egalitarian form of communication between teacher and student than the traditional classroom and, because it breaks down social barriers, promotes collaboration between students.

Nonetheless, it is not a panacea for all the administrative and social problems of a law school. Through the removal of the motivation for face-to-face contact between student and teacher and the loss of a sense of community, e-mail poses a threat to teaching law. What e-mail lacks in comparison to face-to-face teaching is the conversational nuances. Without such nuances misunderstandings can abound. The depersonalising aspects of e-mail must therefore not be allowed to isolate the law student from the idea that law is of and for people.

The author also offers specific suggestions for establishing an

alternative e-mail classroom for a medium to large law class.

#### **Trials and tribulations of developing computer assisted learning in a small law school**

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5 *JL & Info Sci* 1, 1994, pp 57-70

The article outlines the use of computer assisted learning (CAL) within the University of Tasmania (Australia) Law School. The project was aimed at producing an alternative means of learning to supplement existing educational processes and to respond to the government's push for productivity gains in educational institutions.

The CAL modules were developed on Apple Mac Plus computers using the popular HyperCard product. HyperCard proved well suited to electronic books and interactive flow charts. The tool that was developed was a question and answer template which uses menus, dialogues and windows. Sixteen different CAL modules have now been produced, four of which are described: Property Law Tutorials; Restrictive Covenants - Overview and Problem Solver; Administrative Law - Overview and Questions and Answers; and Personal Insolvency Tutorials.

The authors caution that staff should not use CAL completely to replace contact teaching hours; rather that the time should be devoted to other aspects of the learning process. Designers should critically question whether a CAL module is the most desirable tool when other resources are available. However, the key lesson is the early and equal participation of students, as the end users, in the development process.

## **WOMEN'S ISSUES**

[no material in this edition]

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