

for some modest reflection as to the possible impacts of this technology on legal education in the longer term.

As with all new academic ventures, there were design flaws in the course. Some of the contextual modules looked and read too much like lecture notes with only occasional forays into other forms of communication. When this happened we failed to take advantage of the uniqueness of the web teaching environment. This lesson about the need to construct a website so as to balance the need to communicate information with an immediacy of intellectual challenge so as to draw students into active engagement with the material presented has been taken to heart by the contextual module designer. Work has been under way to reduce the length of the expository sections.

With respect to workload issues, it is important to note that the creation of a course of this sort is labour intensive, involving significant investments of time by both academics and technical support personnel. Once the website is built, technical assistance is required to ensure its ongoing proper functioning and students require technical instruction on the use of the site and communications software.

A number of strategies might be employed to make better use of the interactive component of the course, even within the constraints of a seminar with 70 participants. Though formal structuring of discussion groups in advance of the interactive phase of the course would detract from the spontaneity of discussion, it might improve the intensity of exchange without overwhelming the limits of the medium. One possibility would be to construct groups including students from each of the partner schools, each of which would have the assigned task of focussing on one specific historical them.

Although the course was not designed to probe the limits of legal education in any fundamental way, a widened horizon of legal education is nonetheless discernible from our new perspective 'on the other side' of distance education, as it were. DCT promises, too, to enhance the quality and experience of graduate ed-

ucation in law through a pooling of resources. At the other end of the educational spectrum, DCT can also provide a means of teaching undergraduate courses to classes of almost limitless size and in more effective ways than the continuous play video-taped lectures of urban myth ever could. Some big questions remain and, obviously, we cannot know clearly where trends are heading until such time as we know more about both the future of the legal profession and emergent technology. An unbounded university education does seem to be on the horizon.

Legal education in the technology revolution: the evolutionary nature of computer-assisted learning

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The wider community's rapid assimilation of computer-based tools in the 1990s has given rise to calls by students for parallel integration of these innovations into their education. This call has been intensified by the provision of computer hardware infrastructure and of Computer-Assisted Learning (CAL) programs.

As students have become increasingly familiar with and dependent on computer technology, the boundaries of what constitutes a comfortable, stimulating, flexible and varied learning environment have altered. This inevitably adds to the demands placed on those individuals who have painstakingly developed, programmed, tested, and refined unique computer packages for student learning. Keeping materials updated is of particular importance in legal education and this maintenance function alone can consume substantial resources. The task of adapting an existing program to incorporate textual changes and new technologies on an ongoing basis, while concurrently developing new programs, is a particularly overwhelming one. Collaborative planning, development and resourcing of Australian CAL programs for legal education is necessary to achieve widespread support and acceptance by students, faculty and the legal profession.

The importance of pedagogical goals as the starting point for CAL development has been well documented. When planning a CAL program, establishing whether pedagogical aims are attainable using a standardised package is obviously a precursor to using such a template. For those of us considering converting an existing program into a standard form, the extent to which both systems are likely to achieve pedagogical goals must be reviewed and compared.

The very nature of CAL development is evolutionary. Whilst every case will be determined according to the required balance between time, resources and program features, the speed of development of technology requires CAL program designers to factor anticipated changes into their planning. That is, the sacrificing of desirable program features, such as integrated email and conferencing, can be considered temporary and should not necessarily be used to reject adoption of a standard template.

If we accept CAL has a continuing role to play in legal education in the new millennium, countries which do not take a coordinated approach to its development are in danger of becoming increasingly isolated backwaters. Technology has an important role to play in campus-based legal education.

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