MULTIMEDIA EDUCATION SPEC EMERGES IN CANADA

A consortium of Canadian higher education institutions has developed the Canadian Core Learning Resource Metadata Specification (CanCore) to make it easier for students and faculty to access online educational material. The specification identifies each educational object, whether it be a film clip or Web page or an entire course, and tags it with metadata so that students and faculty can search for those objects just as they would search through a text database. “Digital learning resources can be shared and reused across the country, rather than simply remaining hidden within the digital infrastructure of the institution or instructor who created them,” said CanCore leader Rory McGreal of TeleEducation in New Brunswick. Without the metadata, students and faculty might have to scan through, for example, an entire online course on weather to find a specific object relating to tornados. The University of New Brunswick’s Electronic Text Centre was a leader in the program’s development, with help from the Campus Alberta Repository of Educational Objects. (AV Video Multimedia Producer)

INTERNET STUDIES 1.0: A DISCIPLINE IS BORN

Internet studies is a hot topic among students and researchers in U.S. universities, demonstrated by new courses and degree programs that are forming around the medium. Brandeis University will offer the country’s first undergraduate degree in Internet studies this fall, following the lead of Georgetown University’s master’s program, which began in 1996. Five years ago, David Silver formed the Resource Center for Cyberculture Studies at the University of Maryland, College Park. At that time, he found only 5 courses nationwide that focused on the Internet, but he now includes about 400. Also growing over the past few years has been the Association of Internet Researchers. Founded in 1998, it now includes 750 scholars, and its annual conference has already attracted 450 submissions for potential papers and panel discussions. Academics say current Internet research is focusing on topics such as Internet communities and “computer-mediated communication,” with special attention being paid to how Internet communities have developed and changed over the past decade. Silver, soon to start at the University of Washington as an assistant professor, said students want to sign up for Internet-focused courses because they give them an opportunity to analyze formally something they know on an informal level. (Chronicle of Higher Education)

A LOOSE CONNECTION BETWEEN ALUMNI SITES AND GIVING

College and university alumni directors say the Internet has yet to become a significant medium for soliciting or receiving donations. Princeton Giving Director Bill Hardt says the results from a recent e-mail campaign were “not anything notable,” and MIT has reported a similar experience, with under 1 percent of alumni gifts coming online. Still, many universities are eager to leverage their Web presence as a means of accepting alumni gifts. In a recent study, Stanford University tried to prove that its Web presence does have an effect on donations, comparing those who read its e-mail
COLLEGE OUTSOURCES INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY—
TO ANOTHER ACADEMIC INSTITUTION

Cabrini College, a small Roman Catholic institution outside Philadelphia, will outsource its IT operations to nearby Drexel University. Cabrini’s Ron E. Becht, in charge of the college’s computer operations for the past year, said the deal struck with Drexel provides not only technical expertise but also an understanding of the needs and goals of an academic institution. Becht, who has had experience at other schools with outsourcing IT to private companies, said the Drexel offer will save a significant amount of money. The deal will include four Drexel employees assigned to top IT posts at Cabrini as well as open access to Drexel instructional design resources and networking expertise. Drexel will help Cabrini set up a wireless network for the entire campus by next year. Although some public university systems in New York, California, and North Dakota have agreed to share certain elements of IT, such as helpdesk functions or databases of student files, the partnership between Drexel and Cabrini is the most developed technology relationship between two schools so far. (Chronicle of Higher Education Online)

Correction: The techwatch department in the March/April 2001 issue of EDUCAUSE Review included a story about concept mapping at the Institute for Human and Machine Cognition. This institute is located at the University of West Florida, not the University of Florida.