



COMLEARN

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COL and Education for All Beyond Basic Education



It is well known that the Jomtien Conference gave a major boost to the call for *Education for All*, with an emphasis on basic education. And many countries, large and small, have been seeking to put in place programmes to reach the majority of their populations, but principally directed at the neglected, disadvantaged and oppressed sections of their societies. Whatever the principal motivation – promoting enlightened democracy, human rights, equity, or the greater realisation of human potential – all of us concerned with human resources development are searching for innovative, cost effective ways of providing *Education* (and hopefully *Training*) for All.

Like *Health for All 2000*, *Education for All* can easily become a catch phrase. It is noticeable that whereas in the case of health, the Year 2000 was fixed as a target, no universal “deadline” is now indicated for education. That is probably wise as education, like health, must be *continuously* sustained. If stagnation is to be avoided and progress made, new knowledge and skills have to be acquired and regularly updated. *Education for All* must therefore embrace the concept of life-long education. This, in turn, means that *Education For All* cannot be limited to literacy or basic levels of education only.

If *Education for All* subsumes life-long learning, it can only be achieved within a context of open learning, for it will not be possible to establish more and more “schools” or other institutions to provide the wide range of learning opportunities which will be needed. New flexible arrangements will have to be put in place to respond to those who want a second chance (in some instances, even the first chance) to complete one or other cycle of education. Training to acquire new skills or to update proficiencies, opportunities for using leisure time creatively, for developing competencies and confidence to live in an increasingly technologically oriented world are some aspects that will have to be catered for in a systemic network.

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“We are about human resources development, about Education for All broadly interpreted, and about life-long education.”

In interpreting *Education for All* more widely, new institutional arrangements perhaps even called “schools” must be “open” to cater for the multiplicity of learning needs beyond basic education. There are, however, no prescriptions for establishing and managing “open schools,” and it is through a continuing exchange of experiences and reflection on what constitutes good practice, within given contexts, that lessons may be learned about what is likely to be successful. In this edition of *COMLEARN*, we seek to facilitate that exchange.

We seek also to confirm that COL is not concerned only with higher education as our “midwives” proclaimed. We are about human resources development, about *Education for All* broadly interpreted, and about life-long education. Our *Strategic Outlook* for the future, which is also described in these pages, as well as what we have so far accomplished, bears adequate testimony to that commitment and that mission.

The Case for Open Schooling

by Susan Phillips

Four years ago, the *World Conference on Education for All – Meeting Basic Learning Needs* took place at Jomtien, Thailand. The World Conference adopted a *Declaration on Education for All*, which renewed the commitment that all persons should “benefit from educational opportunities to meet their basic learning needs.” In today’s world, however, we know that *Education for All* is still not a reality. Many people – boys and girls, youths and adults – do not receive the education to meet these so-called “basic learning needs.”

For the most part, these educationally disadvantaged people live in the developing world, where they are often left behind for reasons such as gender inequality, socio-economic circumstances, physical handicaps or the isolation of rural villages. *Open schooling* provides one way to help meet their basic learning needs by increasing access to educational opportunities and thereby moving towards *Education for All*.

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Open schooling means different things to different people, but generally it involves using alternative and usually less resource-based approaches which characterise distance education methods and open learning, to deliver basic education and training.

Open schooling has succeeded in meeting various challenges educators face in many parts

of the world. In meeting the most basic learning needs, open schooling provides opportunities for vast segments of a country’s population to attain literacy, numeracy, and other necessary skills, in ways that conventional schools have been unable to provide. Open schooling reaches out to underprivileged sectors of the population and provides a second chance for young and old alike to acquire the basic skills so necessary for an economically viable and socially satisfying life.

The purposes for initiating open schooling vary from one situation to another. However, in very broad terms, the main purposes are to democratise educational opportunities and to universalise education. Again, broadly speaking, the first purpose tends to be indicative of the reasons that open schooling is implemented in developed countries whereas the second tends to reflect the reasons that open schools are established in their lesser developed neighbours.

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In developed countries, open schooling provides an alternative to conventional schooling. It gives parents the choice of educating their children at home and still receiving the same quality and content of education that they would receive in a conventional school. It provides equality of choice in terms of course content, such that students in small rural schools have the same variety of course offerings as do their counterparts in larger urban centres. And, it provides opportunities for education and training to those that might find it difficult to attend a conventional institution, such as persons who are working or have young children at home.

In developing countries, however, open schooling assists in meeting a basic human right, that is the opportunity for all segments of the population to receive basic education. There are often not the resources in terms of teachers and physical facilities in many developing countries to provide basic education and training to all, particularly those with special requirements. Further, economically disadvantaged persons in these countries often cannot afford to go to school, nor can they afford the lost opportunity costs to send their children. In these situations, open schooling can offer a workable alternative, as it provides flexibility in as much as it allows learners to study at home, at their own pace, and because of the lack of the necessity for physical structures and full-time teachers, it can be a less-expensive alternative.

Lessons Learned

Despite the reasons for initiating open schooling, there are lessons that can be learned from the experiences that educators have gained in this area. What are some of these lessons about open



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schooling that can be learned from a study of various different situations in which this approach was taken? Some general themes emerge of which educators should be aware before initiating an open school:

The first lesson learned is that, as for so many other innovative educational methods designed to teach basic education, adequate funding must be in place. Training for staff, developing or adapting pedagogically sound learning materials, establishing communication channels, providing adequate student support services, and so on, all depend on sufficient financing and are critical to the success of the open school.

The second lesson concerns the course materials as the education received through open schooling is only as good as the materials provided. In a sense, at least in some open schools, the learning materials *replace* the teacher. In programmed learning, for example, the materials determine whether the student has mastered the curriculum and is ready to move on and a similar approach is taken with some computer-assisted instruction. When a student is confused, the only recourse may be to turn back to the learning materials, or to wait until he or she can contact a tutor by mail or through other means. Good learning materials, therefore, are essential, and supplementary materials are important.

Third, as in conventional education, communication between the learner and the teacher or facilitator is critical. Communication may occur in different forms – one-way communication such as through radio broadcasts, audiotapes and videotapes and television; interactive real-time communication through scheduled face-to-face meetings, teleconferencing tutorials, or telephone contact; and two-way but not real-time communication through written assignments and comments or computer messaging. Regardless of what form the communication takes (and some would argue that the more channels for communication used, the more effective the education), it is critical that it does take place, and that learners receive feedback to their questions and assignments in a professional and timely manner.

Fourth, training for students and staff alike is very important. The students and their parents must know what to expect – that open schooling is different from conventional schooling, and that students (or possibly their parents) will bear more responsibility for the learning activities than is required in a conventional school. Adequate orientation sessions must be provided to all involved.

Similarly, induction and training for open schooling staff is important. A "good" classroom teacher is not necessarily a "good" open school tutor. The specific skills required must be taught. A tutor must learn how to communicate through written comments, for example, using constructive criticism but without discouraging a student as often this is the only communication between a student and his or her tutor.

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On the other hand, sometimes a new, and possibly innovative method of communicating is used and the tutor must also know how to use this new technology effectively. These skills are often not generally required by a classroom teacher, and a tutor would have no role model from previous teaching or learning experiences; therefore, again, adequate training is essential.

A "good" classroom teacher is not necessarily a "good" course writer, either. Special skills must be taught to communicate the learning experiences to the student other than by personal contact, through the use of media such as print materials, audiotapes and videotapes. Often a team approach to course writing is necessary, and the teacher must learn to work with others to develop the concepts to be taught. This experience may be somewhat threatening for those accustomed to autonomy in the classroom, and to doing things "their way" without taking direction from instructional designers and media experts. Again, training is not an option; it is a requirement.

Finally, the fifth lesson learned is that open schooling provides fertile ground for collaborative activities. For example, although it is expensive to create and produce well-designed learning materials, it is an excellent area for collaboration. Once exemplary materials have been created, they can be made available world-wide, to be used "as is" or modified to reflect cultural differences. The possibilities for co-operative projects are endless and could involve the more developed countries lending a hand to their lesser developed neighbours. If learning materials are created for use locally, the developmental costs have been met, and providing master copies for use in poorer countries that may not have the funds required for the development process is not an expensive proposition.

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Similarly, the use of already developed distance education and open learning courses to train personnel involved in the initiation of open schooling systems can also be approached in a collaborative way. Learning materials exist to train tutors, instructional designers, desktop publishers, course writers, etc., and the sharing of these resources could help to facilitate the training of the various personnel required in a cost-effective and efficient manner.

Summary

As the Year 2000 approaches, many people in the world still do not have access to free basic education, a right that is clearly stated in the 1948 *Universal Declaration of Rights*, and that has been reiterated many times in the ensuing years. To

“... COL proposes to focus its energies on four strategic goals or objectives: ...”

realise this right and to help make education universally available, educators must make full use of all strategies and innovative methodologies available.

Open schooling can be a successful alternative to conventional teaching modalities, particularly in its ability to reach disadvantaged segments of the population in a cost-effective manner. By using open learning methods and, in particular, by using distance education courses, economies of scale can be realised, and more students can be reached through less expenditures of limited resources.

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Governments must come to realise that an initial investment in ways designed to strengthen open schooling, including training, developing courses and establishing infrastructures, can lead to economies of scale and to making the most of limited resources in an effort to provide basic education to all.”

It is important, not only for the recipient individuals, but also for nations themselves, to have access to a basic education so that an improved quality of life can be provided to current and future generations. Using various methods, open schooling can provide opportunities for upgrading, retraining and acquiring specific skills that would not be readily available to the majority of the population through conventional means. Governments must come to realise that an initial investment in ways designed to strengthen open schooling, including training, developing courses and establishing infrastructures, can lead to economies of scale and to making the most of limited resources in an effort to provide basic education to all.

Only by exploring all options available to us, including open schooling, can we hope to achieve equality in the provision of educational opportunities and to truly democratise the educational system.

Open Schooling: Selected Experiences will be published this month by The Commonwealth of Learning. It contains a series of case studies on open schooling.

The Way Forward

COL's Strategic Outlook for the Future

In November 1994, The Commonwealth of Learning issued its *Strategic Outlook* for the period 1995 to 1998. The document sets forth the future strategic orientation of the organisation in terms of primary operational objectives and priorities and in the context of its mandate, the needs of its client community and anticipated resources. The Outlook will serve as background to support the overall planning process for COL and for more general discussion purposes.

Mandate. As stated in the Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) agreed to by Commonwealth governments in September 1988, the formal mandate of The Commonwealth of Learning is:

... to create and widen access to opportunities for learning, by promoting co-operation between universities, colleges and other educational institutions throughout the Commonwealth, making use of the potential offered by distance education and by the application of communication technologies to education.

The 1988 MOU reflects a number of realities about the *international environment* which continue to influence the organisation and the manner in which it does its work. At the broadest level, these pertain to the changing nature of the Commonwealth, and to the serious development pressures afflicting many parts of the world, especially the developing *South*. In a more specific sense, however, they derive from the central role that education, training and learning in all its various forms has begun to play in the process of social, economic and cultural development.

Events since 1988 have magnified the importance of these observations and furthermore have confirmed the enormous, transformative role which communications and information technologies are playing in the process of learning and all other facets of society. The accelerating convergence of communications and computer technologies has brought enormous potential for devising effective and affordable solutions to the problems of volume, quality and distance, provided that the institutions and mechanisms are in place to exploit them.

Goals. Based on its success during its first five years, and the continuing needs and demands of its clients, COL proposes to focus its energies on four *strategic goals or objectives*:

- to promote the utilisation of *communications and information technologies* for the purpose of distance learning;
- to facilitate access to affordable, high quality *learning materials and resources* in support of formal and informal education;
- to provide access to *training* in the adoption and use of distance learning techniques and technologies; and
- to supply *information and advice* regarding distance learning systems, programmes and technologies, both to practitioners and developers alike.



COL's Reporting and Review History

In Islamabad in November 1994, The Commonwealth of Learning's Board of Governors will present their report to Commonwealth Ministers of Education in accordance with the requirements of the 1988 Memorandum of Understanding (MOU) establishing COL. When COL was founded in 1988, it was regarded as an "untested" innovation. The achievements, operations and governance of this new multilateral organisation have since been monitored closely, with the highest of expectations, by the Commonwealth Governments which established it. The record shows that COL has passed the "tests" and is looking forward to the future.

- At their last conference in Barbados in 1990, **Ministers of Education** congratulated COL on the accomplishments made in the first two years. Since the Barbados conference, COL has made very considerable progress. As testimony to the value which member countries have placed on COL's activities, the number of member countries pledging funds has risen from the original nine to as many as 30.
- When they met in Harare in 1991, **Heads of Government** noted with satisfaction COL's accomplishments and "urged all member countries to pledge additional support as soon as possible, to enable the organisation to develop and expand its services." They also asked that the Commonwealth Secretary-General should convene the review of progress in the first five years that had been foreseen in the MOU.
- A **Progress Review Committee** was appointed in March 1993 after full consultation with governments. The Progress Review Committee reported in August 1993 that "COL has succeeded in establishing itself as a recognised specialised agency, and in delivering services which are making a valuable contribution to distance education and human resource development in Commonwealth countries." In making recommendations, the Progress Review Committee identified an urgent need to secure COL's funding base. The Committee also recommended that the Board should devise a fund-raising strategy to diversify COL's sources of finance and that a review of organisation and management should be undertaken.
- In Cyprus in October 1993, **Heads of Government** "received with satisfaction the Report from The Commonwealth of Learning and an independent Progress Review which commended the achievements of the organisation since its inception. They noted, however, the grave financial situation facing The Commonwealth of Learning. They made a strong appeal for increased contributions from a greater number of member countries with the intention of maintaining its valued services and of ensuring the pan-Commonwealth character of the organisation." Heads of Government also requested two further studies – one concerned with organisation and management, the other with governance. The COL Board has subsequently commissioned and received the two studies.
- The Board has welcomed the recommendations of the **Organisation and Management review** for appropriate institutional and administrative structures and improved financial management. Action in many of these areas has already been initiated. The Board has also taken decisions on securing economies in the costs of headquarters accommodation, and has drawn up a strategy for accessing funds in support of specified projects and programmes. The Board is also studying options for the internal organisation of COL and for organisation of its work in the various regions of the Commonwealth. The Board has confirmed that quality information is central to COL's functions and it will continue to develop its relationship with the International Centre for Distance Learning.
- The Board has also welcomed the **Governance review**, with its proposal that the size of the Board should be reduced in the interest of economy and efficiency. It recommends adoption of the option for a smaller governing body structured along the lines of the present board.

The contribution of COL in the areas of training, learning materials/resources and communications technology, and information and advisory services, and their value to Commonwealth educators, has been recently confirmed by the Progress Review Committee (PRC), established in 1993 to assess the performance and achievements of COL's first five years of operation and to report to governments with recommendations for COL's further development. In addition to undertaking these tasks, COL is also well placed to support other activities, including distance education research and student support services.

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The strategic objectives described above represent *core, enabling* activities aimed at strengthening the effectiveness of distance learning programmes and the capabilities of the Commonwealth educational community in this domain. In the process of *capacity-building*, COL directly contributes toward:

- **institutional support**, aimed at strengthening the physical and human infrastructure of institutions engaged in distance learning;
- **systems development**, providing for effective communications within and among distance education organisations; and
- **collaborative arrangements**, encouraging greater co-operation and co-ordination among Commonwealth countries and institutions.

A key feature of these efforts will remain the requirement for devising and implementing approaches to capacity-building which are *sustainable* in terms of the objectives, means and commitments of the participating institutions.

In order to meet its primary objectives, and serve its clientele, COL must carry out a wide range of activities and tasks such as *networking, model-building, brokerage, facilitation* as well as the advocacy of distance education. These key functions have figured prominently in COL's previous work and will remain the primary modalities of its future operations. The uniqueness of COL derives from its ability to combine these activities with a source of specialised and objective professional expertise in technology, materials, training and other aspects of distance learning, and constitutes one of the fundamental, defining attributes of COL as a development agency.

Clientele. Consistent with its mandate, COL must serve a broad cross-section of the educational community – ministries and other governmental

bodies responsible for formal schooling and basic education; universities, colleges and other individual educational institutions at the post-secondary and tertiary level; and professional and other associations in relation to professional continuing and technical education. Apart from the scope of its work, the diverse nature of this client community permits COL to actualise a comprehensive, system-wide perspective on learning.

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Regional Presence. As an instrument of Commonwealth co-operation, COL must give special attention to the regional implications of its work internationally. As a matter of priority, it will continue to aim at ensuring an equitable balance in the implementation of its programmes relative to the main Commonwealth regions of Africa, Asia, the Caribbean and Pacific. Given the diversity of needs between regions, COL is also committed to region-centred planning, based on close consultations with regional stakeholders, including governments, educational institutions and associations, as recommended in the 1994 COL *Organisation and Management Review*.

In strategic terms, however, particularly as information technologies make communications and the diffusion of knowledge more and more practical on a world-wide basis, COL must continue to pursue, individually and with its partners, initiatives which link regions of the Commonwealth (and which link the Commonwealth to *non-Commonwealth* bodies) in furtherance of this mission. Similarly, COL must address the educational implications of issues of global concern, such as *gender and development* and *the environment*, which are common to all countries and regions.

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Partnerships and Alliances. As an effective "catalyst for promoting co-operation in distance education" (COL *Progress Review*), partnership-building and collaboration are a critical element of the organisation's strategic positioning for the future, and also represent a means for maximising the productivity of scarce funding and other resources.

Resources. Serving the needs of these sectors of the educational community throughout the Commonwealth places immense pressures on resources, both in financial and in personnel terms. Based on the assessment and recommendations of the PRC, COL favours an approach to funding based on multiple funding sources and types – an annual amount of Cdn.\$5.0 million in *core funding* enabling the organisation to maintain a credible number and quality of professional staff and to undertake minimal programme levels; *supplementary funding* of Cdn.\$5.0 million, which was required to ensure a full range of services to all areas of the Commonwealth and which could be devoted to specific programme or geographic areas. COL considers that these resource levels and mix of funding are necessary to ensure the mandate and primary objectives of the organisation can be achieved over the period 1995 to 1998.

While COL, as an intergovernmental agency, depends on Commonwealth governments for its basic *core funding*, to maintain the organisation and to fulfil the responsibilities they entrust to it, it will continue to seek funds from other sources for specific projects. Consequently, COL intends to incorporate such "leverage" activities in its future business plans, and to approach appropriate organisations in both the public and private sectors to underwrite specific activities or to engage in joint ventures.

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The Future. In establishing COL, Commonwealth governments fashioned an international agency that empowers citizens through the acquisition of knowledge and skills, and by bringing learning opportunities within the grasp of millions who would otherwise be denied them – an endeavour in which nearly every Commonwealth country has participated, and which is founded on sharing knowledge, expertise and experience, and on encouraging international co-operation rather than dependence. The *Strategic Outlook* portrays how COL is preparing to carry on its efforts in the years ahead, with the support of governments and partner groups, both to advance the cause of learning world-wide and to enrich the Commonwealth as a free association of nations.

"Consistent with its mandate, COL must serve a broad cross-section of the educational community . . ."





Canadian appointed Chair of COL

Dr. H. Ian Macdonald, Chairman

Dr. H. Ian Macdonald, OC, BCom, MA, BPhil, LLD, KLJ has accepted the nomination to serve as Chair of the Board of Governors of The Commonwealth of Learning. On January 1, 1994, Dr. Macdonald succeeded the Rt. Hon. Lord Briggs of Lewes, who had chaired the Board since COL was established by Commonwealth Governments in 1988.

The appointment of Dr. Macdonald is, as was that of Lord Briggs, an honour for both The Commonwealth of Learning and the distance education "movement" world-wide. Both men are eminent educators, who are committed to COL's goal of increasing access to educational programmes of the highest quality. Dr. Macdonald refers to his great respect for his predecessor, pointing out that he was a student of Lord Briggs while attending Oxford University, as a Rhodes Scholar, nearly forty years ago.

Dr. Macdonald has had a distinguished career in academia and government, having been a professor of economics and chief government economist early in his career and then serving the Canadian Province of Ontario as Deputy Minister of Treasury and Economics. In 1974, he was named President of York University, a position he held for more than ten years. He is a director of several Canadian and international companies, associations, and institutions and has been elected president of many organisations. Dr. Macdonald is now President Emeritus of York University and Director of York International.

In the official communication announcing the appointment, in letters sent to Commonwealth Heads of Government, other appropriate Ministers, and heads of national and international agencies, associations and educational institutions, Prof. James A. Maraj, President of COL, stated:

Personally, and on behalf of the Board of Governors and staff, I would also like to take this opportunity to place on record sincere appreciation for the leadership that Lord Briggs has provided the organisation over the past few years. I am confident that Dr. Macdonald can rely on the same degree of support and goodwill which you extended to his predecessor especially at this crucial time in the further development of The Commonwealth of Learning.

Commonwealth Open Lecture honours Lord Briggs

At its November 1993 meeting, COL's Board of Governors paid tribute to the retiring Chairman and instituted an annual *Commonwealth Open Lecture*, which, in 1994, would be given in honour of the Rt. Hon. Lord Briggs of Lewes in recognition of his pioneering work as Chairman since 1988. The first COL *Commonwealth Open Lecture* was given on May 10 at the University of Hull (UK) by the university's Vice Chancellor, Prof. David Dilks. Prof. Dilks spoke on *Communications, the Commonwealth, and the Future*. Lord Briggs was present to receive an Honorary Doctor of Letters.

Lord Briggs' last action as Chairman of the Board was to commend the President and staff of COL for their work on behalf of the Board; he said he greatly appreciated their imagination, zeal and co-operation in often difficult circumstances.

COL Wins Award for its Annual Report

The Commonwealth of Learning won a "Best in the West" Communications Achievement Award, for its *1992 Annual Report ("Moving Ahead")*. COL's entry was selected as first-place winner in the "annual report" category, for associations with budgets in excess of US\$500,000.

The Best in the West Communications Achievement Award competitions are held each year in conjunction with the annual meeting of the Western Conference of Association Executives (WCAE). Entries were evaluated not only on professional criteria from each of those disciplines, but also taking into consideration the organisation's goals, objectives and audience.

Under the guidance of COL's President, Prof. James A. Maraj, the winning publication was written and edited by Dr. Dennis Irvine and Mr. Dave Wilson and included contributions from other staff members. COL was assisted by Ms. Betty Sommerville, a Vancouver-based graphic designer. The report was printed by Bowne of Vancouver.

WCAE is a federation of twenty allied societies, located throughout western Canada and western United States, all of which function as chapters of either the Canadian Society of Association Executives or the American Society of Association Executives.

International Alliances

CARICOM

At their meeting in Belize in September, in preparation for the Commonwealth Education Ministers meeting later this year, Caribbean Community (CARICOM) Ministers of Education adopted a resolution reaffirming their support for COL and urging that "all the countries of the Commonwealth continue to protect, preserve and develop The Commonwealth of Learning in the interest of the Commonwealth as a whole."

UNESCO

As officially authorised at the 144th working session of its Executive Board in March 1994, the United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) and COL entered into a formal co-operation agreement. Recognising common aims and objectives, the agreement calls for regular consultation between the bodies, participation at respective meetings, exchange of information and documents, and future co-operative endeavours. The agreement formalises a working relationship that has been developed over the past few years. Most recently, COL has been actively involved with UNESCO's Education for All programme and its work with the nine high population developing countries: Bangladesh, Brazil, China, Egypt, India, Indonesia, Mexico, Nigeria and Pakistan (where, collectively, three out of four illiterate adults live).

ITU

As a product of background material and a draft resolution prepared by COL, the International Telecommunications Union, at its World Telecommunications Development Conference (Buenos Aires, March 1994), accorded official recognition to the need for formal collaboration between the communications representatives and organisations, such as COL, engaged in promoting the use of distance learning internationally.

COL welcomes the return of South Africa

South Africa was welcomed back into the Commonwealth on June 1, 1994. There is much opportunity for COL to collaborate with the South African Government as well as with institutions and non-governmental organisations in the country. The Commonwealth, and especially Commonwealth Africa, will be significantly enriched by South African participation in co-operative programmes and, it is hoped, that the Commonwealth and COL will continue to make important contributions to human resource development in the new South Africa.

Distance Education Programmes Launched in Africa

The installation of the first Chancellor of the new **Open University of Tanzania (OUT)** took place on January 19, 1994 at the new premises of the University in Dar es Salaam and the first batch of 766 students was registered later in the month.

COL has actively supported the developments for the new university. A consultancy mission, jointly sponsored by UNESCO and COL, took place in March/April 1993 to prepare an implementation plan for the establishment of OUT. The assignment was conducted by COL staff member, Prof. Peter Kinyanjui. Following the acceptance of the main recommendations in the report, the Government of Tanzania took immediate action in providing funds for the completion of the buildings for the university and in appointing the Chancellor, Vice Chancellor, and members of the University Council.

Through COL assistance, students have received course materials based on the B.Ed. degree programme at the University of Nairobi (Kenya).

In Harare, the official launching of the **Distance Education Programme at the University of Zimbabwe** took place on August 28, 1993. The President of Zimbabwe, HE Mr. Robert Mugabe, who is also Chancellor of the University of Zimbabwe and who himself has obtained five of his six degrees through distance education, presided at the launching ceremony. Prof. James Maraj, President of COL, was a guest of honour and gave the keynote address.

COL has worked with the Zimbabwe Ministry of Education and Culture in developing programmes for strengthening the in-service teacher education programmes for the secondary school system. In 1992, a COL consultancy produced the report:

Distance Learning in Zimbabwe: An implementation report on the establishment of external degree courses for secondary school teachers and of a programme on educational management training and supervision.

The consultancy team also drew up a five-year implementation plan. Prof. Kinyanjui participated in the consultancy, along with Prof. John Turner, of the University of Manchester (UK). Once approved, COL arranged for a programme of staff training, which included support by experts from existing distance education systems at the University of Nairobi (Kenya), Makerere University (Uganda) and the University of Lagos (Nigeria).

Course materials for the Distance Education Programme have also been based on the B.Ed. degree at the University of Nairobi. COL is now also assisting in the development of a non-degree distance education course on land surveying for Zimbabwe, using materials from the Open Polytechnic of New Zealand.



Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme Inaugurated

Shrimati (Mrs.) Sonia Gandhi, wife of the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi, inaugurated COL's Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme on April 18, 1994 at a ceremony held in New Delhi, India. Also present were the Hon. Minister for Human Resource Development, Shri Arjun Singh; the Vice-Chancellor of Indira Gandhi National Open University, Prof. V.C. Kulandai Swamy; and the President of the Commonwealth of Learning, Prof. James A. Maraj.

"The Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme will enable students from Commonwealth countries to register for post-graduate degree programmes and to pursue their studies at a distance, without having to leave their home countries."

The *Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme* is sponsored by The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) in association with Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU) and with support from the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation. The Fellowship Scheme was first announced at the 1993 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Cyprus by President Robert Mugabe of Zimbabwe, on behalf of COL. President Mugabe paid tribute to the part played by the late Prime Minister Rajiv Gandhi of India both in the creation of COL and in the establishment of IGNOU. Those awarded the fellowships will be designated COL/Rajiv Gandhi Fellows.

The *Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship Scheme* will enable students from Commonwealth countries to register for post-graduate degree programmes and to pursue their studies at a distance, without having to leave their home countries. In the first phase of the Scheme, 100 Fellowships will be awarded to graduate students from selected Commonwealth developing countries/regions to enable them to enrol in the two-year Masters of Distance Education Programme offered by IGNOU in India. The courses will be delivered by distance using a mix of media supported by locally recruited counsellors. In addition to meeting the course fees for students selected for admission, COL will also conduct orientation programmes for training of counsellors in the participating countries/regions. Applicants must be nominated by Ministries of Education in their home countries.

To date, the following Commonwealth countries/regions have been invited to participate in the first phase of the Scheme: Bangladesh, Barbados, Eastern Caribbean States, The Gambia, Ghana,

Guyana, Maldives, Mauritius, Nigeria, Papua New Guinea, Solomon Islands, Tanzania, Tonga and Zimbabwe.

As additional resources become available, other universities and countries will be included in the Scheme and the subject fields widened. Ministries of Education will be alerted to any such new developments.

In the speech he delivered at the inauguration ceremony, Prof. Maraj expressed his sincere appreciation for India's commitment to COL and the specific contribution toward the Fellowship Scheme, which would otherwise not be possible:

I would have done less than justice, Madam President, if I did not publicly thank Vice Chancellor Prof. Kulandai Swamy and his colleagues for their generosity and helpfulness in getting this scheme underway. They did not seek to make a profit in monetary terms and will not do so, but they agreed, as a gesture of Commonwealth co-operation and as a tangible expression of sharing their expertise with other developing countries, to embrace the Scheme. We are also indebted to the Rajiv Gandhi Foundation and to Dr. Abid Hussain, of the Rajiv Gandhi Institute for Contemporary Studies for his enthusiastic endorsement of the Scheme, for a measure of financial support and, most of all, for securing the necessary approvals including your own, Madam President, for associating the young leader's revered name with this imaginative endeavour.

How to Apply

Interested individuals should submit an application for a Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship to the Ministry of Education in their home country.

Ministries of Education are invited to forward the applications to The Commonwealth of Learning.

Applications should be made in the prescribed format provided to Education Ministries and include a one- or two-page written submission indicating the candidate's educational and/or professional background and reasons for wishing to pursue a Masters of Distance Education Programme.

COL and IGNOU will communicate admission decisions to the Ministries of Education and students respectively.

COL in Action:

TWO COL REGIONAL CO-ORDINATORS APPOINTED

COL has appointed new Regional Co-ordinators. Mr. Naran Kala has been appointed Co-ordinator of COL Programmes for East and Southern Africa and is based in Harare, in offices provided through the courtesy of UNDP. Mr. Kala has recently retired from Zimbabwe Government Service as Chief Education Officer, Adult and Distance Education, in the Ministry of Education and Culture.

Dr. Dennis H. Irvine has been appointed Co-ordinator of COL Programmes, Caribbean Region. Dr. Irvine retired in July from COL's headquarters staff where he had been Director of Caribbean Programmes and Materials Acquisition and Development. Effective September 1, Dr. Irvine takes over regional co-ordination responsibilities from Prof. the Hon. Leslie Robinson, who has completed his three-year appointment. Joining COL in its early days, Dr. Irvine was instrumental in helping to shape the initial direction for the organisation. He now returns to his native Jamaica, after many years of working abroad. Offices for the Regional Co-ordinator have been made available in Kingston through the courtesy of UNESCO.

COMMONWEALTH ORGANISATIONS TO PROVIDE COACHING MATERIAL

The Commonwealth of Learning, the Commonwealth Games Association of Canada (CGAC) and the Coaching Association of Canada (CAC) have agreed to co-operate in providing audio-visual material for use in the training of athletes and sports coaches within the Commonwealth. Recognising the importance of sport in furthering international understanding and the need to ensure that all member countries of the Commonwealth have access to scientific training techniques, the three organisations are working together to identify, acquire and distribute coaching videos to Commonwealth sport associations.

Marking the holding of the 1994 Commonwealth Games in Victoria, British Columbia, Canada, this continuing, co-operative effort of sports and educational organisations is intended to enhance performance levels and to promote excellence in athletic achievement throughout the Commonwealth.

The CGAC and CAC will co-ordinate steps required to acquire the rights for the programmes from the various Canadian national sport associations. Through its links with Commonwealth ministries and educational agencies, COL will distribute the materials. The first set in the series of selected videos dealing with coaching techniques and leadership skills will be made available later this year.

These and other co-operative ventures form part of a longer term collaborative effort among the three organisations, consistent with the objectives of the Commonwealth Sport Development Program of the CGAC. That Program is supported by a Canadian government contribution of \$5 million over five years and is designed to strengthen sporting activities as recommended at the 1991 Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting in Harare. Under the Program, regional centres have already been established in the Eastern Caribbean and in Southern Africa.

The Commonwealth Games Association of Canada maintains close working relationships with national Commonwealth Games Associations and Olympic Committees in over 60 countries.

The Coaching Association of Canada administers the National Coaching Certification Program, a Canadian coaching education programme that has been a model for similar programmes in developing countries around the world.

COMMONWEALTH ASIA TO SHARE EDUCATIONAL MEDIA

The Commonwealth Educational Media Centre for Asia (CEMCA) has been established by The Commonwealth of Learning (COL) to promote co-operation and co-ordination in the use of educational media resources for distance education in Asia. This initiative was developed by COL, in co-operation with Ministries of Education and educational institutions in Commonwealth member countries located in South and Southeast Asia, in response to needs expressed for a more effective utilisation of existing resources. CEMCA became operational in July 1994 in its location at the Indira Gandhi National Open University in New Delhi, India.

CEMCA will serve as a regional resource centre and will facilitate the exchange of educational television productions, videos, audio/radio programming, and communications technology to enhance the quality of distance education. Many countries in Asia have turned to distance education in their search for appropriate ways of tackling the urgent problem of educating their large and diverse populations. There has been a phenomenal growth in distance education programmes and institutions in the countries of Asia and the Pacific region over the last two decades. Over two million students are enrolled in formal and non-formal distance education programmes in this region alone.

CEMCA represents COL's integrated approach to harnessing the potential of electronic media resources for education. It will help member countries by enabling them to have access to a database on educational media resources in the region and assessments of the relevance of such resources. CEMCA will also serve as an information centre on communications technology, developments in broadcasting and media research. Technical services, including stock footage, dubbing, editing, format conversion, translation and programme packaging, will also be available from CEMCA.

Christmas donation in lieu of cards

Once again this year, COL will make a donation to a local charity, *Save the Children Canada Fund*, in lieu of printing and sending "Christmas cards."



COL'S STUDENT RECORD/MANAGEMENT SYSTEM

As a result of a number of requests for assistance with the management and administration of student records in an open learning/distance education situation, COL undertook the development of a software system to meet the requirements identified as being important. A computerised database system, the *Student Record/Management System* (SRMS) was completed in 1993 in collaboration with the Systems Management Group at Camosun College (British Columbia) who were contracted to do the programming work. A second Canadian Community College, Grant MacEwan (Alberta) pilot tested the completed system and developed a User Manual in exchange for the rights to use the software at their institution.

The SRMS has now been supplied, in response to specific requests, to more than fifty institutions. Most institutions use the software in its executable form but others have requested the *source code* in order to modify it to better suit their needs. Notably, the University of the South Pacific is adapting it to meet the specific requirements at ten university extension centres.

Recently, COL signed an agreement with Camosun College to develop an updated (second) version of SRMS. Improvements in the new version include using the "Windows" platform and having a LAN (local area network) option. The revised version will also allow data from a number of sites to be merged in order that global reports can be produced. In addition, other features and enhancements, that have been suggested by users since the System's initial release, are being incorporated where feasible. The revision process is jointly sponsored by the Health Division of Grant MacEwan Community College and COL.

CONTINUING JUDICIAL EDUCATION

COL has developed a framework for two major pilot projects in continuing judicial education, based upon the use of distance education and modern communications. COL has been assisted in this activity by The Hon. Mr. Justice Kenneth Lysyk, of the Supreme Court of British Columbia (Canada) and Dr. Dennis Catlin, Director of the Judicial Education Institute of the Michigan Supreme Court.

Activities have involved the preparation of a concept paper, following from the discussions and recommendations of the 1992 COL judicial education symposium, and testing against regional needs in the Eastern Caribbean and Africa, starting with Botswana. The Chief Justices of Barbados, Trinidad & Tobago and St. Lucia (base of the regional court), together with the Law Faculty of the University of the West Indies (at all three campuses) have been the centre points of a wide consultation.

The framework will provide a comprehensive basis for seeking international financing for a significant project.

GLOBAL ACCESS TELEVISION (WETV)

Under the leadership of Canada's International Development Research Centre (IDRC), COL has partnered with a number of national and international agencies to examine the requirements for establishing a satellite-based global television service (WETV), designed to furnish an effective vehicle for North/South communications and for expressing and reflecting the cultural diversity of the world community as a whole.

As part of its partnership in this enterprise, COL has explored the possibility of incorporating an educational programming component into the global television service, thus providing educators internationally with access to high-quality learning material, as well as providing the public with informative, enlightened television programming.

To carry out this purpose, COL convened a meeting of experts in education, media and development, in co-operation with the WETV Secretariat, which took place in Toronto, Canada, in April 1994. COL staff prepared a document entitled *Education and Global Access Television: A Concept Paper* for discussion purposes, and following the meeting circulated an official summary which records the general points and conclusions reached at the meeting. Apart from the specific follow-up activities relating to WETV, the meeting also gave COL the opportunity to compare notes with two other international organisations, the International Council for Adult Education and UNICEF (Canada), both of which expressed strong support for COL's goals in relation to WETV and other like initiatives.

VIDEO-TELECONFERENCING

With technological advances, the emergence of international standards, and rapidly declining transmission costs, video-teleconferencing will become a major vehicle for communications in the 1990's. In addition to its employment for business consultations of all kinds, the use of video-teleconferencing for instructional purposes has begun to grow; initially, for industrial training purposes, and increasingly for distance learning purposes within formal educational programmes.

The acquisition of a video-teleconferencing capability for COL, starting with the headquarters facility in Vancouver and the one at the COL/Brunei Centre for Professional and Continuing Education, represents an invaluable instrument for improving inter-institutional communications and positions COL in the forefront of examining innovative applications of video-teleconferencing for remote learning. COL has been establishing connections with members of the international educational community, who have access to compatible video-teleconferencing capabilities, and has been designing and testing applications.

In some cases, COL has established the first overseas video-teleconference link from North America to the institutions involved. Among the many video-teleconference sessions conducted at COL's headquarters facilities were a series of events organised with the University of British Columbia (UBC) Faculty of Music linking UBC and Vancouver-area professional experts with their counterparts in Australia.

"The SRMS has now been supplied, in response to specific requests, to more than fifty institutions."

AUDIO-TELECONFERENCING

The application of voice-based teleconferencing technology has gained increasing prominence in modern distance education, especially as a complement to traditional print and postal-based methods. In contrast to more passive, static techniques of instruction, telecommunications-based technologies such as audio-teleconferencing allow for fully interactive communication between the students and the instructor/tutor. Audio-teleconference systems, which consist of special loud-speaking telephones interconnected by means of a conference "bridge," enable multiple locations to be in simultaneous communication with each other, creating a *virtual* classroom. The addition of computers to such a network permits the transmission of simple pictures and diagrams in both directions over the same basic telephone circuits, thus creating an electronic "blackboard" that adds further realism to the "distributed classroom" concept.

The recent completion of audio-teleconferencing projects in Kenya, India and St. Lucia (all during COL's 1993/94 programme/budget year), brings the total of COL-supplied teleconferencing systems in place to seven, and increases the number of sites in operation to more than fifty. (COL installations are also in place in Guyana, Malaysia, Mauritius and the Solomon Islands.) Apart from their usefulness to the institutions served, these systems have become important models for the innovative use of affordable communications technologies for distance learning.

MALAYSIAN HEALTH NETWORK

The Ministry of Health, the Universiti Kebangsaan Malaysia (UKM) in Kuala Lumpur, and COL co-operated in a joint project to create a distance education network for health training. In July 1993, with technical assistance from COL, an audio-graphics teleconferencing system was installed at the UKM Faculty of Medicine with remote sites at Alor Star and Penang in the north, Kuantan in the east, Johor Baru in the south, and Kuching in Sarawak. The network is being used to provide the delivery of a training programme in family medicine, continuing medical education, post-basic nursing, health services education, community education services, and Ministry of Health management. The system was officially inaugurated in September 1993, with the President of COL participating in an international teleconference connecting Malaysia, New Zealand and Canada.

ASIA REGIONAL WORKSHOP ON TRAINING

A four-day workshop, jointly sponsored by COL and the Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE) at the Indira Gandhi National Open University was convened in Delhi in July 1994. Participants included representatives from Bangladesh, India (open universities, directorates/correspondence schools, All India Council for Technical Education), Maldives, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, and observers from Bhutan and Nepal.

Meeting participants considered the training needs and priorities of the various institutions and countries within the region and, based on this information, developed a five-year regional training plan in distance education. A report on the proceedings and outcomes is under preparation.

COMPUTER AWARENESS PROJECT – SRI LANKA/ZAMBIA

The National Correspondence College in Luanshya, Zambia, has recently graduated the first ten students from the Computer Awareness course offered through the new COL-sponsored Computer Centre. Seven of those who completed were women. Most of the students that are being attracted to the course are already employed and are seeking higher level skills to enable them to advance in their organisations. However, the course has attracted some school leavers who are hoping to gain employment in the field of computer applications. It is hoped to be able to trace the progress of "graduates" to identify the impact that the Centre and the distance education programme is having on the workforce. COL's *Student Record/Management System* was recently provided to the Centre to enable the staff to more efficiently track the progress of their students.

EDUCATIONAL MEDIA SERVICES IN MALDIVES

The Ministry of Education in Maldives have requested COL's assistance in a number of project areas, including electronic/audio-visual equipment and training for the Ministry's Educational Media Services Unit (EMSU). Immediate requirements for the country's distance education programmes have now been addressed by COL with the development and implementation of a training, equipment and consultancy package, which includes: training in script writing and production of educational radio and television programmes; the attachment of technical staff of EMSU to the Communication Division of Indira Gandhi National Open University in New Delhi; and the design and supply of some basic post-production video equipment.

CANADIAN FOREIGN POLICY REVIEW

As senior Canadian staff members, Mr. Lewis Perinbam, Special Adviser, and Mr. Richard Simpson, Director of Communications Technologies and Information, delivered presentations on behalf of COL before the Special Joint Parliamentary Committee reviewing Canadian Foreign Policy (Vancouver, May 1994). In response to the presentations and the questions fielded, both Senators the Hon. Patricia Carney and the Hon. Raymond Perrault made very complimentary remarks about COL's work and about its unique status as a Commonwealth institution located in and supported by Canada.



NEW PUBLICATIONS

The following titles have been published recently by The Commonwealth of Learning and are available upon request. COL has a policy of charging nominal shipping and handling costs on publications orders from institutions in *developed* and *non-Commonwealth* countries. Pre-payments or purchase orders are required.

A Compendium of Activities, September 1994: Since 1990, The Commonwealth of Learning has published *A Compendium of Activities* to provide a detailed account of the work and history of accomplishments of the organisation. In addition to being a reporting vehicle, the *Compendium* also serves as a reference for practitioners, with an interest in distance learning in Commonwealth countries, in the major areas on which COL's programmes are focussed. (150 pages)

Annual Report 1993: eight pages, including financial summaries.

Perspectives on Distance Education: Student Support Services: Towards More Responsive Systems. Edited by Robert Sweet, 1993. The report is in two parts. The first reviews the literature associated with recent developments in post-secondary distance education. The literature review builds a context for changes in student support services by outlining developments in the mandate, operating principles, and practices, and curricular emphases of the distance teaching universities. The literature review not only introduces the case studies but informs their interpretation and the recommendations of the participants at the symposium. Generally, the literature review shows that, to the extent that support services reflect changes in the institutions of which they are a part, their direct support activities must include the intellectual and personal development of students as well as their problems. This means an expanded role for the traditional support service. Where energy and resources previously were directed exclusively to helping the distressed student, there now is a requirement to redefine the tasks of advising and tutoring to better support the instructional transactions required of an altered view of learning – one that sees students as actively engaged in constructing meaning and shaping a personal understanding of their studies.

The second part of the report presents eight case studies that describe the operation of student support services at institutions represented at a symposium convened by COL in Delhi, India, in June 1992: four open universities in India, the new distance education programme at Bangladesh's

national university, and institutions in two non-Commonwealth countries, Thailand and Indonesia. The case studies are followed by a summary of issues raised in the discussions of the cases presented at the symposium. The report concludes with a list of research priorities aimed at the development of more responsive support services.

The issues and trends revealed in the literature and the stated experiences of the participants clearly intersect. While the cases reflect the constraints (and opportunities) of day-to-day support service practice in South Asia, their concerns coincide with those expressed in print by researchers, theoreticians, and policy analysts. In particular, both the literature and the cases document attempt to make student service systems more responsive to the needs of learners. (115 pages)

Directory of Courses and Materials for Training in Distance Education. Third edition, 1993. This Directory lists training opportunities and materials in six categories: introduction to distance education, planning, management and administration, course design and development, using technology in distance education, student support and tutor training, and research and evaluation. (42 pages)

Roles and Competencies in Distance Education. Prepared by Ms. Jennifer O'Rourke, 1993. This report is designed to be used by planners, policy makers and other decision makers who are instrumental in setting up and/or managing a distance education system, and who are planning for staffing and training needs. It provides guidelines on the basic tasks involved in managing a distance education programme and the staffing required to handle those tasks. (36 pages)

Perspectives on Distance Education: The Funding of Open Universities. Edited by Dr. Ian Mugridge, 1994. A collection of case studies, based on papers prepared for the COL/International Council for Distance Education (ICDE) symposium on funding and costing of open universities at the Asian Association of Open Universities (AAOU) conference in Hong Kong (November 1993). (122 pages)

Perspectives on Distance Education: Quality Assurance in Higher Education. Edited by Prof. Prakash M. Deshpande and Dr. Ian Mugridge, 1994. Papers presented to a symposium on quality assurance (New Delhi, India; July 1994), including a commissioned literature review on quality assurance as well as a series of articles written by experts in Australia, New Zealand and India. (105 pages)



"Should your example be followed, our task would, indeed, be much less frustrating than is proving to be the case in the changed international atmosphere."

Women: Key Partners in Sustainable and Equitable Development. Resource materials on women and sustainable development. Prepared by Waafas Ofosu-Amaah, 1994. This report responds to Commonwealth mandates by producing training materials on women and sustainable development. It extrapolates, from selected "success stories," the common lessons for learning and teaching about the effective integration of environment and gender. The success stories demonstrate that women have developed new approaches to environmentally sound energy production in rural areas, improved conservation of energy in community settings, found ways to deal with waste economically and safely (whether by recycling or responsible consumer behaviour) and re-introduced effective indigenous methods that are economically feasible and environmentally sustainable. These training materials are presented in a format that will make them adaptable for use by a variety of interested parties, from policy makers to practitioners, and in a variety of settings, from classroom instruction to radio broadcasts. (113 pages)

European Distance Education: A handbook of current European programmes and networks. Prepared by Janet Jenkins, 1994. The purpose of this handbook is to provide accessible information to personnel in ministries, educational institutions and other bodies concerned with education and training in order to inform them of new developments in Europe and enable them to select, make contact with and obtain further information about programmes of interest as possible models or as potential partners in development. (60 pages)

Colleges Reaching Out: Report on the Status of Distance Education in Canadian Colleges and Technical Institutes. Edited by Patricia McWilliams, 1994. This report provides a "snap-shot" of the scope and breadth of distance education activities in the college sector in Canada. It consists of two parts. The first section presents the institutional and programming information collected through a survey distributed to the 120 Association of Canadian Community Colleges (ACCC) member colleges. The second section illustrates notable approaches to programming, technology applications and other areas through case studies and issue papers drawn from a cross-section of colleges and regions. (41 pages, plus appendices)

Visiting Fellowships Programme (Papers presented by the 1993 Visiting Fellows, October 1993). Visiting fellowships to British Columbia (Canada) in 1993 represented eight Commonwealth developing countries: Antigua & Barbuda, Belize, Grenada, Singapore, St. Kitts-Nevis, St. Lucia, Trinidad & Tobago and Western Samoa. (48 pages)

Water Safe: An Introduction to Water Quality Issues. A coursebook for a self-study programme that will help in the understanding of the importance of good, clean, and safe water in everyday lives, but particularly when used in the preparation of food. (77 pages)

Open Schooling: Selected Experiences. Edited by Susan Phillips. This publication contains a series of case studies on open schooling, together with a summary and conclusions. (See article on page two of this COMLEARN) (175 pages)

COL Honoured at Fifth IGNOU convocation

Prof. James A. Maraj, President of COL, was awarded a Honorary Doctor of Letters at the fifth convocation of the Indira Gandhi National Open University (IGNOU), which was held in New Delhi on April 16, 1994. The following is excerpted from the citation:

His services to the cause of distance education during the last six years (as President of The Commonwealth of Learning) bear a mark of his originality of thought, administrative dynamism, intellectual insights coupled with pragmatic operationalisation of ideas and projects. He has contributed to the development of this new mode of education throughout the Commonwealth and in India particularly.

Prof. Maraj also delivered the convocation address, during which he acknowledged that, "today's honour is, in part, a gesture to my colleagues at The Commonwealth of Learning for it is their efforts, too, which are being commended at this ceremony." Prof. Maraj also commended IGNOU and India for their "unselfish, generous and wholly sympathetic approach in enabling us to carry out the mandate given to COL by Heads of Government." "Should your example be followed," he said, "our task would, indeed, be much less frustrating than is proving to be the case in the changed international atmosphere."

On July 13, Prof. V.C. Kulandai Swamy completed a four-year term of office as Vice Chancellor of IGNOU. In response to congratulatory sentiments expressed by Prof. James A. Maraj, President of COL, on the occasion of the Vice Chancellor's retirement, Prof. Swamy wrote:

It has been for me a matter of pleasure and privilege to associate myself with COL in more than one capacity. I should acknowledge that this association has been personally and for IGNOU an extremely rewarding one. I have to record in all sincerity and in the most emphatic language that I am indebted to your help, guidance and what I may possibly refer to as your patronage to IGNOU. It has not only grown in its size as an open university, but has also added many dimensions like the Distance Education Council, Staff Training and Research Institute of Distance Education (STRIDE), the Commonwealth Educational Media Co-operative for Asia and operations in a large number of countries by way of implementing the (COL/IGNOU) Rajiv Gandhi Fellowship. I am sure that my colleagues and my successor will continue this relationship. I am thankful to you for all your kindness and spontaneous support whenever I approached you with any request for assistance to any of our programmes. I also convey my gratitude and that of all my colleagues through this letter.

COL acknowledges with gratitude the whole-hearted co-operation and support that has come from IGNOU during Prof. Swamy's stewardship.



COL and the Information Highway

With a potential reach of millions of users in the education and research community, access to the *Internet* network (or "information highway") could be a powerful resource for Commonwealth educational institutions which are otherwise isolated from other types of information networks. Currently, each member of COL's staff has the capability to communicate directly via electronic mail with any other *Internet* user.

In 1994, COL further enhanced the communications and computer configuration at its headquarters in Vancouver to provide a "hubbing" function into the *Internet* in order to provide sites, which are underserved by conventional means, the opportunity to link with the *Internet* through COL.

This work has been carried forward in two regions, particularly in the island States of the Eastern Caribbean, and in conjunction with the LEO (Low-Earth Orbiting) satellite project, in West Africa. In later stages of its development, the network could enable educators to have ready access to electronic databases and other necessary information resources available by means of computer networking.

Caribbean. In early 1994, COL began testing such a system in locations in the Caribbean, using COL as an *Internet* "hub" site to provide the educational community in countries such as St. Lucia with access to inexpensive electronic-mail. The traffic flows and utility of the St. Lucia site are now being monitored to determine whether similar systems should be established elsewhere in the eastern Caribbean. COL is also engaged in consultations with the Organization of American States (OAS), UNESCO and other organisations which are actively promoting computer networking in the region to determine the best overall strategy for encouraging future network development.

LEO Satellites. Low-cost *Internet* access has been the primary goal of COL's work, in co-operation with the SatelLife organisation (headquartered in Cambridge, Massachusetts) to establish an electronic-mail network based on inexpensive "packet" radio (computer-based radio communication) and Low-Earth Orbiting (LEO) satellite technologies. This network can furnish basic electronic-mail connections to locations in West Africa where the lack of available infrastructure makes conventional methods of computer/communications difficult. At the end of September 1993, COL staff installed a ground station in British Columbia, to serve both COL headquarters and the University of Northern British Columbia (Prince George, Canada). Through SatelLife, which already has licensed ground stations in Ghana and The Gambia for the purpose of sharing medical and health information on HealthNet, COL has established stations in those two countries. Training sessions for the network operators took place in June 1994, and the first test messages have been

exchanged between British Columbia and the West African sites. Installation of the remaining parts of the network awaits licensing approvals.

World Wide Web

As part of its mandate, COL provides information on distance education to organisations and other institutions active in the field of human resource development. Toward this end, in June, COL established an electronic means of accessing COL-resident documents, project data, and general information, through *World Wide Web* (WWW or W3), a new system that facilitates information sharing across the *Internet*.

The site contains COL documents, news releases, and *UPDATEs*, as well as electronic links to various Commonwealth countries. The appeal of WWW rests on the ease with which users can search for and access the documents and materials on the database, and on its presentation of high quality graphic images and sound along with textual information. It is based on "hypertext" software and operates on a "Windows" platform.

The COL *World Wide Web* site can be accessed from personal computers equipped with *Mosaic* or similar software through the *Internet* address: <http://www.col.org>.

Research Bulletin Board

The Commonwealth of Learning and the International Council for Distance Education (ICDE) have established a jointly-sponsored computer "bulletin board" for the exchange of information about planned and current research projects. Researchers throughout the world can now access a mail distribution list and learn about other research being conducted in their fields. Use of the bulletin board should result in greater co-ordination of, and advance in, research efforts.

There are now almost 200 subscribers to the electronic service. To subscribe to the distribution list, contact colicde-request@unixg.ubc.ca. Further information can be obtained from the list moderator, COL's Senior Consultant, Higher Education (and North American Vice President of ICDE), Dr. Ian Mugridge at imugridge@col.org or by mail to COL Headquarters in Vancouver.

"With a potential reach of millions of users in the education and research community, access to the Internet network (or "information highway") could be a powerful resource for Commonwealth educational institutions which are otherwise isolated from other types of information networks."

Upcoming Events

Education Ministers – Islamabad

COL will be represented at and reporting to the **Twelfth Conference of Commonwealth Education Ministers (12th CCEM)**. COL's Chairman, Dr. H. Ian Macdonald, will lead the COL team. November 26-30, 1994 (Islamabad, Pakistan)

Technician Education – Vancouver

The 3rd International Symposium on Technician Education and Training will be hosted by the Applied Science Technologists & Technicians of British Columbia and the Canadian Council of Technicians and Technologists. *Innovations 2020* will identify, evaluate and promote innovative strategies for enhancing the quality of technician* education and training; create opportunities for advanced continuing education; and facilitate labour mobility, thereby contributing to the effectiveness of trained technicians in science, technology and research. More than 25 countries will be participating, with delegates and experts from education, government, industry, international agencies and professional associations. Distance education and COL will also be featured.

*The term *technician* includes *technologist, incorporated engineer, engineering technician, applied engineer* or other designations as adopted by countries world-wide. Further information is available from *Innovations 2020*, 10767 – 148th Street, Surrey, BC, Canada V3R 0S4; or fax (604) 585-2790. June 10-14, 1995 (Vancouver, Canada)

ICDE – Birmingham

The 17th World Conference of the International Council for Distance Education (ICDE) will be hosted by the UK Open University. The conference theme is *One World Many Voices – Quality in Open and Distance Learning*. Two individuals and one institution will be honoured at the conference with the first *COL/ICDE Awards of Excellence*. Further information is available from the ICDE Conference Office, The Open University, 66-68 High Street, Harborne, Birmingham B17 9NB, United Kingdom. June 26-30, 1995 (Birmingham, England)

Commonwealth Studies course materials

Simon Fraser University (SFU), in Canada, has developed course materials entitled, *Empire and After*. The university has generously offered to make the materials available (preferably on computer diskette, but possibly in camera-ready form) to other Commonwealth institutions. The materials include *A Brief History of the British Empire and Commonwealth*, a book by SFU scholar, Dr. Martin Kitchen; articles on the British political and governmental systems; a collection of documents, from the *Magna Carta* to the 1950s, showing the evolution of self-government and changing ideas about the Empire, by Dr. Martha McLaren; and papers on political systems in the Caribbean, the South Pacific, and Africa.

SFU would expect that institutions using the material would add collections of readings which emphasise their country and/or region in terms of growth of, and changes in, the Commonwealth – and that these additions would then be made available for inclusion in the master set of materials for use by participating institutions throughout the Commonwealth.

Interested parties can obtain further details by contacting Dr. Colin Yerbury, Director, Centre for Distance Education, Simon Fraser University, Burnaby, BC, Canada V5A 1S6. Telephone (604) 291-3524; fax (604) 291-4964; e-mail colin_yerbury@sfu.ca

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