



E-Learning in the News: Recent Achievements and Challenges

“...soon medical students may be able to study medicine for two years without getting near a cadaver, or even a fellow student...”

in what may be the most extreme example of the trend toward Internet-based education.”

(“Virtual Universities to Train Real Doctors,” [International Herald Tribune](#), 7/31/03)

Thanks for the positive feedback about BEEP's new format, which premiered in the last issue, Number 34, on September 1, 2003. Please continue to send comments and suggestions to the Project Eagle Manager at lechnerj@spcollege.edu.

The subject under consideration this time is the state of e-learning today. When the new academic year began, it was evident immediately that online education had become front-page matter. News sources everywhere featured articles and reports on the current good, bad and ugly associated with Web-based learning. The links that follow reflect some of the most noteworthy recent accomplishments, as well as a number of troublesome developments and how some institutions are trying to cope with them.

Achievements

- [“Anyone, Anywhere, Can Feed Their Mind.”](#) Article by Jennifer Sharples for the *London Weekly Telegraph*, 8/9/03, that surveys the scope of e-learning internationally. Focusing on recent additions to the online degree repertoire offered in England, it even mentions a university that now offers its courses in Chinese, Japanese and Korean. A related report by *Distance-Educator.com*, 9/17/03, [“The Open University Ranked in Top Five for Teaching Quality,”](#) announced the inclusion of the United Kingdom's largest e-university on a list of the nation's best.
- [“Cyberstudies Appeal Grows.”](#) [“Virtual High Schools Mushroom.”](#) [“Virtual School Daze.”](#) Two articles from newspapers (San Diego and Chicago) and one from *ABCNews.com*, all written in September 2003, that examine the explosion of e-learning at the K-12 level. Related to the increase of e-students in these grades is the unveiling of a new online tutoring program by Smarthinking.com, a pioneer in similar services for higher education. Called the [Supplemental Service \(SES\) Program](#), it offers up to 18 hours of free help, 24/7, to middle and high schoolers.
- [“Distance Education – The Future of Independent Learning.”](#) Article by Sarah Watson in *Home Educator's Family Times* (11:5), September/October 2003, that counsels homeschoolers on and provides links to opportunities for completing all their education, at whatever level, in whatever field, electronically.
- [“Earning a Degree Online.”](#) News story on *CBSNews.com*, 8/27/03, proclaiming the respectability of getting an online degree. It offers the sluggish economy, flexibility of schedules, availability of courses, and quality of programs as reasons for e-learning's rise in popularity.
- [“MIT Publishes 500th Course On OpenCourseWare.”](#) Report by *Distance-Educator.com*, 9/30/03, on Massachusetts Institute of Technology's latest accomplishment. Since 2001, MIT has been putting its course materials online free, with open access to anyone worldwide.
- [“Virtual Universities to Train Real Doctors.”](#) Article by Marcella Bombardieri in the *International Herald Tribune*, 7/31/03, on IVIMEDS, to date the most extreme example of online learning. A [similar article](#) by Jessica Orr focusing on the University of Florida's IVIMEDS participation appeared in the *Alligator Online*, 9/5/03, and [“Technology Transmits Sense of Touch Over Web,”](#) by John Della Contrada in the *University of Buffalo Reporter*, 6/19/03, announced an embryonic technology of potential value in training surgeons and others in the medical field.

Challenges

- [“Colleges Respond to Wave of Internet Infections.”](#) Report by *CNN.com*, 9/5/03, on the steps taken by a number of colleges and universities after a rash of viruses and worms attacked computers worldwide just before the start of the fall semester. A related article, [“Geeks Grapple with Virus Invasion,”](#) in *Wired News*, 8/21/03, contains links to similar information.
- [“Florida Dorms Lock Out P2P Users.”](#) Article by Katie Dean in *Wired News*, 10/3/03, about the University of Florida’s open-source program, developed to cut off file sharing among students.
- [“Online Learning Hits a Bump.”](#) Article by Lisa B. Deaderick in *Public Opinion Online*, 9/9/03, about problems surrounding Pennsylvania K-12 cyber schools. Included on the list of negatives were cost per e-student drained from traditional school district budgets, lack of interaction with students, and non-certified instructors. At least one cyber school has had its charter revoked.
- [“Plagiarism Receives Greater Scrutiny at Boise State.”](#) Article by Monica Price in the *Online Arbitrator*, 8/28/03, examines the problem of online plagiarism and how one Idaho school is encouraging instructors to report incidents and taking subsequent disciplinary actions.
- [“RIAA Sues 261 Music Uploaders.”](#) Article by Grant Gross, *IDG News Service*, 9/8/03, on the filing of civil lawsuits by the Recording Industry Association of America. RIAA previously sued four students who set up file-trading networks on university campuses. The current suits are against those who each uploaded an average of 1000 songs to peer-to-peer networks. Meanwhile, [another article](#) reports how Massachusetts Institute of Technology is trying to solve the student download problem by examining two options: a subscription-based streaming model for a monthly fee and a pay-per-download model with rights similar to those of CD purchasers..
- [“Their First Test Is Affording the Textbooks.”](#) Article by Anita Kumar in the *St. Petersburg Times*, 9/29/03, examining the rising cost of textbooks bundled with CD-ROMs, and the inability of students to sell or buy them used, because of the non-transferability of the CD. While the article offered few solutions, it did mention that at Eastern Illinois University, students pay \$7.95 per credit hour to rent basic texts, rather than purchasing the books outright.

BEEP’s Best Bets

E-Learning Administration

- [“Motivation and Incentives for Distance Faculty.”](#) Article by Angie Parker, Yavapai College (AZ), that presents the results of a study on what motivates e-faculty. Analysis of more than 100 articles showed that e-faculty teach for self-satisfaction, flexible scheduling, wider audience, stipends, decreased workload, release time and using new technology.
- [“A New Definition of Technological Literacy.”](#) Worth-reading editorial by Geoffrey Fletcher in *T.H.E. Focus*, 9/25/03, on how the 1980s definition of computer literacy has given way to the new concept of technological literacy, The latter, far more integrated than the first, is one of using technology to learn, rather than simply learning about technology.

Free Information Sources

- [Bookcrossing.com](#). There has to be a more efficient way of getting books from one reader to another than this one, but the concept of dropping a previously read book literally anywhere on earth, then reporting its location on the Web, is unique and thought-provoking, at the very least,
- [LibrarySpot.com](#). Established but not before mentioned in a BEEP, this site is an award-winning, free, reviewed, vertical information portal for easily finding topical information of all kinds.

Innovative Technologies

- [N-Liter Golden Retriever](#). Low-cost (\$14.95) software that allows a user to e-photocopy Web pages with added notes and highlights right on the page, then later retrieve online or offline.
- [“New Electronic Paper Displays Video, Too.”](#) *Reuters* report, 9/24/03, on a new generation of e-paper that can bring moving images to a foldable screen which can even be sewn into clothing.

Instructional Resources

- [“E-Learning: It’s More Than Automation.”](#) Article by James Kilmurray, University of Phoenix, in *Commentary*, September/October 2003, on the need for online instructors to develop new skills, which are not those of traditional, instructor-directed courses, to suit the needs of adult students.

www.spcollege.edu/eagle/research/BEEP/BEEP35.htm

For a subscription to BEEP, contact the project manager: lechnerj@spcollege.edu

The contents of BEEP were developed under a grant from the U. S. Department of Education (DOE). However, those contents do not necessarily represent the policy of the DOE, and you should not assume endorsement by the Federal Government.