



A Virtual Resources Room: A Model in Equity, Access and Communication

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First Year Biology Teaching at The University of Sydney involves repeat lecture series, multiple concurrent laboratory sessions, seemingly never ending reports to mark and vast numbers of examination papers to grade. The sheer size can lead to impersonal interactions between the staff (in dwindling numbers) and the students (in increasing numbers). Since the late 1980's teaching methodologies and scenarios have been put in place to put the emphasis on small group teaching in large classes and student centred learning (Franklin and Peat, 1996). Since 1992 the use of computers in our laboratories has led the way to an explosion of material and delivery modes for teaching (Franklin and Peat, 1995) and assessment tasks (Franklin, Peat and Mackay-Wood, 1997). More recently the web has allowed the development of virtual communication between the staff and students.

The poster will illustrate the use of the web in first year biology for delivery of course materials (such as CAL, Self-Assessment Modules, lecture notes and handouts), for formative assessment and for general communication with students. In particular the evolution of a "virtual" resources room (VRR), a web site accessed via the First Year Biology web address will be described. (http://fybio.bio.usyd.edu.au/FYBSOBS/FYB_welcome.html). The VRR contains many of the resources that are available in the "actual" resources room which is physically present in first year biology. It was developed to provide students with greater access to our materials than they had previously, as a result of the restricted opening hours and accommodation in the "actual" resources room, and to give them greater flexibility in their learning. The VRR is available to all students via log in access with a User ID and Password. The usage by students, and their perceptions of the "virtual" resources room will be presented.

References

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