

Additional Posters

Networked Learner Support In Action - Dearne Valley Project

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- The Dearne Valley Project is a partnership between the University of Sheffield and local FE Colleges with funding to create a HE Learning Network to deliver University accredited courses on-line. An investigation of how library services can also be delivered over the network to support these courses was undertaken during the two years of the project.

For students on the MEd in Networked Collaborative Learning, a Library conference space was created on Lotus Notes, the asynchronous conferencing system in use. The Library discussion area is open to all students on the course, in both the 96 and 97 intakes. The focus of the discussion area is on useful information resources, search strategies, the difference between various search engines and information gateways and any difficulties students have in accessing library facilities or any other library related query. In order to evaluate the effectiveness of providing information support in this way all students were e-mailed a questionnaire to try to determine how often the forum was accessed, what benefits or disadvantages were derived from it, and how it could be tailored to suit their needs more effectively.

A trial of Cu-SeeMe, a desktop video conferencing system, was also undertaken. It has been set up on 4 PC workstations in the University Library and the Division of Adult Continuing Education. It is intended to determine its use and effectiveness for reference interviews with distance learners, to facilitate access to subject specialists on the main University campus by students as well as to allow "virtual meetings" between staff when travelling between sites is not convenient. Each member of the evaluation team has recorded their experiences to determine staff time to set up work stations, learn to use the software and train students in its use. Between January and April 1998 it is intended to compare Cu-SeeMe with Net Meeting, another synchronous conferencing system.

It is intended during the poster session to demonstrate the use of both Lotus Notes and Cu-SeeMe as a means of providing networked learner support to distance learners and/or students on on-line courses. It is anticipated that this will lead to a discussion on the potential of various CMC (computer mediated communication) technologies to support students with a comparison of their

benefits and drawbacks, particularly in relation to the needs of the on-line or distance learner for library services and the role of the Librarian in an on-line environment.