
Reports on Past SIG Events

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Distance Education, Language Teaching and the World Wide Web

Saturday 28th February, 1998, Canterbury Christ Church College, Canterbury, UK

Report on Evaluations

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Overview

This event was organised by [Alejandro Armellini](#), IATEFL Committee member (and until very recently, IATEFL Computer SIG Web Wizard) and [Stephen Bax](#) of [Christ Church College, Canterbury](#).

It was a thoroughly successful day from the point of view of content (excellent speakers), computer facilities (no technical hitches!), participant interest (it was fully booked) and satisfaction. Of the 40 participants, most (33) filled out evaluation forms, many in great detail with useful suggestions for future events. None of the evaluations was dissatisfied with the content or organisation of the day and 6 of the 33 had unmitigated praise for all 5 speakers.

The evaluation sheet gave space for speaker by speaker feedback as well as general comments, so here is a summary of what was particularly appreciated from each speaker, followed by more general points about the venue and facilities.



Wayne Barry

As the first speaker of the day [Wayne Barry](#) gave an excellent introduction to the day as a whole. Participants (some of whom were 'beginners' and therefore possibly apprehensive about

understanding the content) found it pitched at the right level, clear, full of useful information and tips.

Extracts from Evaluations

- 'A vital, technical, introductory overview.'
- 'Interesting, well-planned & presented, good timing. Full of useful tips which are also on-line. Very useful.'
- 'Pitched at the right level and informative. A good opener for the day.'
- 'A very useful, well delivered and easy-to-understand explanation of some of the issues and pitfalls in Internet based DL and OL.'
- 'Targeted and focused - a very good start to the day as it provided an overview of issues raised in subsequent sessions.'
- 'Given that I knew very little about how to use the Net for teaching, the information was very useful, I found advice on using information gateways most helpful.'
- 'A fascinating introduction - a real eye-opener to someone (me) who didn't know anything.'
- 'Useful background for novices and framed the subsequent sessions well.'
- 'Very useful to get tips on open learning sites. Put some impressions into perspective.'
- 'Very useful overview. Although a lot of info was provided, it was definitely needed.'
- 'Very nicely delivered and structured. Congratulations on the way everything worked and was clearly well planned and thought through.'
- 'It was clear and well-presented. Good speed of delivery. A lot of work went into producing these presentations.'
- 'Useful info on some of the terminology I wasn't familiar with (eg Information Gateway). on copyright issues, HTML on line guides - this is all v. helpful for me.'
- 'Well presented and "chunked"! Very clear.'
- 'Simple presentation style with good content appreciated - eg URL.'
- 'Was informative and clearly structured. Helpful with 'hands-on' coaching.'
- 'Lots of information but never boring! There was a good balance between input and hands-on experience.'
- 'Very clear overview backed up by attractive screens with headline points. Pleasant manner of presentation. Looking forward to website with this presentation.'
- 'Well-structured introduction. Caught my imagination and set me up for the day - many thanks.'



Alejandro Armellini

[Alejandro Armellini](#) described an actual project that he has worked on, and the practical realism of this approach was universally

appreciated. Many participants commented on the clear delivery and on fact that they liked being given a handout even if there is also a PowerPoint presentation.

Extracts from Evaluations

- 'Very useful experimental results for creation of distance-teaching / learning documents very clear delivery'
- 'It was useful to see the "interactive" web pages. Thanks for the handout. Raised and clarified to some extent some important issues'
- 'Excellent and included some good hints. It was helpful to have the printout of the screens. Jargon was clearly explained.'
- 'Very good & a useful eg of what can be done. Well presented.'
- 'Very good ideas provided for designing a course: nice to get a view of how an on-line course can evolve.'
- 'It was certainly an informative presentation about an innovative way to teach language [gave] me some ideas for future curriculum planning'
- 'An absorbing educational perspective'
- 'Very useful to consider the WWW from students' perspective. V. useful to look at exercise types.'
- 'Interesting and useful - good to have complete 'handouts' for reference / time saving / eyesight! I found the importance of 'chunking' material useful. Good timing - opportunities to try things out.'
- 'Interesting to see how the pilot course went. Well presented.'
- 'Nice examples of the potential of distance learning. I liked the discussion of what the difficulties are and feedback from students.'
- 'Useful to see how it worked in practice - particularly the students' reaction.'
- 'It was useful to see and have hands on practice using material that students actually use. good speaking skills.'
- 'V. Clearly presented - I appreciate the printouts of .ppt files as a record of what happened in the talk.'
- 'Well presented. Clear. Sold me on the idea to keep the level of text to a minimum.'
- 'Personal experience liked'
- 'Very interesting and well-structured. Having the handout helped. It was also useful to talk about a specific project and its stages - to show what could be done. Dealt well with questions and gave helpful hints when working individually at computer.'
- 'Useful prescriptions for using the Web for open learning / distance learning applications - interesting opportunity to look at materials esp. SAQs.'
- 'A lot of interesting ideas and materials'
- 'Great presentation. It was good that we had the screen and a handout. The most interesting thing was that it showed something under construction & we could see how to learn

by the mistakes of the initial material.'



Stephen Bax

Stephen Bax demonstrated how teachers can use authoring software to produce their own interactive web materials. Many enjoyed the hands on practice in this session and felt that this was something they will follow up in their future work as teachers.

Extracts from Evaluations

- 'More specifically for language teaching / learning in relation to new authoring resources (interactivity)'
- 'V. good - directly useful and practical - some good practical advice and suggestions'
- 'Interesting and informative'
- 'Very useful to see "authoring". Finally managed to understand some key concepts which I had only half-grasped. Made authoring much more accessible. Useful to see evolution of interactivity here as well'
- 'This session was perhaps the most enriching. I had no idea what was available, eg. Shockwave and Authorware. I actually felt challenged to try out some of the applications myself when back at work.'
- 'Informative intro to Authorware. Well explained'
- 'Very good - lots of ideas and examples: hands on is important and this was incorporated.'
- 'Once again as a computer neophyte, I learned a lot from this session about how web pages are constructed'
- 'Made me want to get going on Authorware although I haven't got a computer at home'
- 'Good introduction to the potential of authoring work'
- 'Interesting again and interesting delivery - fun. -information about software esp.'
- 'A lot of useful information on authoring & has given me some useful info on choosing software.'
- 'Excellent. Very clear. Well presented. I want to learn how to do it.'
- 'Very well delivered and paced. Nice mixture of practical and critical thinking.'
- 'Infectious enthusiasm, thrilling authoring program'
- 'Very informative. Useful hands-on time again. Made writing a web page look a possibility.'
- 'Great! A v. useful introduction to authoring - practical, clear and informed'
- 'I was grateful for the chance to learn about the potential of Authorware and Shockwave. Mr. Bax made it sound so easy I think I'll give it a try.'
- 'For me this was the most interesting and 'user friendly' session - plenty of egs and lots of 'hands on' stuff. I was really pleased to see - through the demonstration - how easy the authoring tool was.'

- 'Inspiring! I want to have a go at "Authorware"'
- 'A very good speaker - lively and knows how to use his voice and to pitch his input at the right level of challenge. Nice mixture of lecture, discussion, hands on. Interesting content.'
- 'Useful. Hands on approach appreciated.'
- 'Simplification of complex technical issues appreciated.'
- 'V. informative - together with Alejandro Armellini's session - these were for me the most useful and motivating. Enjoyed hearing about Authorware and Shockwave.'



Chris Warren

Chris Warren gave his vision of the use of the Internet in education both in the present and the future. Although some participants commented on the fact that he did not address the ELT context directly, others saw the view of the educational world outside ELT as a refreshing bonus

Extracts from Evaluations

- 'Extremely stimulating: away from the linguistic ghetto into communication, with practical ideas and enthusiasm - very inspiring.'
- 'Interesting. Chris was obviously keen, enthusiastic, knowledgeable with wonderful delivery.'
- 'I particularly liked the way he presented the Internet from a 'non-graphical' point of view. The power of words!'
- 'Good - nice to have the focus taken out of pure EFL and into the 'real' world. Very stimulating with lots of ideas and a broad spectrum view - culture'
- 'A real enthusiast, proponent of a philosophy which could stimulate multitudes'
- 'Very interesting focus from a teachers / classroom point of view. Helpful mix of motivating possibilities and realistic scepticism. I really enjoyed this and found it very useful. Thanks - great sites too!'
- 'Extra dimension provided. The light bulbs power the power-station! Essential concept / metaphor!'
- 'Very refreshing and perfect in the after lunch slot. Nice to have outside input - non EFL especially as such interesting things are going on with the Web.'
- 'Great content - a way with him'
- 'Very useful examples given of using Internet in teaching situations.'
- 'Great session - motivating, encouraging - a man with a view!'
- 'Good to widen out consideration to education in general.'
- 'Very interesting to me as a parent.'
- 'Enjoyable, largely because of his enthusiasm.'
- 'Thanks to Chris for his input. He's very encouraging.'
- 'Stimulating, v. enthusiastic session. I think this will trigger

- off a lot of new ideas.'
- 'Interesting overview. The emphasis on the creative uses I found very interesting.'
- 'Very interesting - very entertaining speaker, full of enthusiasm. V. interesting content, imp. issues raised.'
- 'Ideas again and explanation of actual programs involved in useful.'
- 'Excellent!'
- 'Very interesting to hear about real projects and what's possible. Good to hear from someone who is really passionate about it.'
- 'Informative about an area outside EFL - good variety - input and hands on. It was interesting to know what's actually going on in schools.'
- 'Infectious enthusiasm - enjoyed hearing about projects he was involved in and his futuristic visions. Attractive visually impressive website.'



Joanna Teague

Joanna Teague discussed the issues surrounding the building of a promotional website. This session gave participants a chance to work together in pairs and groups which was a welcome change of pace. Again the practical nature of the session and the useful ideas that were offered were the aspects which participants most appreciated.

Extracts from Evaluations

- 'The presentation of factors influencing the design of Manchester website was interesting'
- 'Good practical information'
- 'The presentation of the feedback on the EFL Section was very interesting'
- 'Gave a good opportunity for reflection. It was nice to be able to 'pick at' an actual website'
- 'At last! Some female representation. Good - nice to get a profile of a site development'
- 'This was very interesting and I will definitely be able to apply this knowledge to classes for my own students.'
- 'Very useful overview of how to set up a promo website. Thank you'
- 'Suffered by being at the end of the day when energy and caffeine levels were low, but was very useful and productive.'
- 'Useful to see a case study - brought some of today's points together'
- 'V. Useful to see a site in action and to get hard facts on how to do it.'
- 'Very nice last session with practical tasks'
- 'Very directly useful. Will now look at Pilgrims site with new eye. Thank you Joanna.'

- 'Putting earlier sessions into practice by assessing a website. V. interesting'
- 'Information on approaches to design useful. Worthwhile.'
- 'Opened up lots of avenues to develop within our institutions.'
- 'Very clear and covered all the important points'
- 'A v. good presentation. Very helpful to see and meet the developer (one of them!) It was really good to have criteria described and discussed which we then used to assess and talk about the website.'
- 'As I'm in the process of building a website it's always helpful to get some clear guidelines. The point about most of the design decisions taking place at the pre-coding stage is well worth remembering.'
- 'A good way to consolidate the day. Very clear and thoughtful.'
- 'Well structured and delivered. A refreshing change of activity and pace. Nice to look at practical ideas.'
- '5 steps good'
- 'Nice balance between presenter talk, pair/ group work and on-line browsing.'



Facilities

It was generally agreed that the facilities at [Christ Church College, Canterbury](#) were second to none in efficiency and speed. The positive, relaxed feeling which the day engendered was doubtless largely due to the smoothness of the technical arrangements.

Extracts from Evaluations

- 'Good access to equipment'
- 'Hands on experience with wonderfully fast equipment was a definite bonus'
- 'Wonderful computer room'
- 'Excellent facilities'
- 'The centre's computer facilities are excellent for a workshop such as the one today'
- 'Very well organised in terms of computer room and access.'
- 'Facilities very impressive'
- 'Lovely facilities. No technical hitches!'
- 'IT facilities were impressive'



Venue

Apart from the praise for the facilities, the main comments about the venue focused on the fact that participants found it hard to get to, both in terms of travelling time and in terms of the directions that they were issued as well as signposting put around the site on the day. Another problem was that the computer rooms were

overheated in the morning. One comment mentioned the friendliness and helpfulness of the College staff.

Extracts from Evaluations

- 'I think it is a lot to pack into one day. After a hard week, getting to a conference for 9.00 am is a real strain. A shorter day would have been better.'
- 'Next time I will come down on Friday evening to avoid the 4.25 start from Norwich!'
- 'I think 9.30 is too early to start.'
- 'Clearer sign posting to events would have been useful'
- 'The route to the SCR was tricky to find'
- 'Poor directions'
- 'I got confused over car parking. The car park indicated on the directions was closed and the college car park had intimidating signs warning of clamping etc. Made me anxious'
- 'Poor signing on campus'
- 'Map for coming from station'
- 'Perhaps a few signs to direct people (you know your campus well)'
- 'Better signposting needed - a map of Canterbury should have been sent out.'
- 'Map of how to get to centre was confusing'
- 'Clearer signposting would have helped as to location of the College within Canterbury Town Centre.'
- 'Staff at Christ Church were very friendly and helpful'
- 'Computer rooms hot and uncomfortable during morning session.'



Catering

Evaluations which mentioned catering were almost unanimously critical or disappointed. Some made the valid point that the free time over lunch is a valuable chance to meet the other participants. A couple even expressed willingness to pay more to have lunch included.

Extracts from Evaluations

- 'Lunch arrangements in SUP bar weren't very good. Just a tiny, carnivore-oriented range of sandwiches.'
- 'The lunch choice was poor'
- 'Afternoon coffee would have been welcome (seemed mean not to offer it). Refreshments were a long way from rooms where the sessions were being held.'
- 'Catering facilities for the conference as a whole were adequate but networking was not facilitated by the disjointed nature of the various venues (IT rooms - SCR - reception - Student Bar etc.)'

- 'The student Union didn't produce enough sandwiches'
- 'Lunch - bar didn't expect us'
- 'Not enough sandwiches' (x4)
- 'The lack of supplies at lunch time in the Students' Union was a bit disappointing. Did they know we were coming?'
- 'Long walk for a coffee'
- 'Lunch - lost opportunity. It would have been a nice social occasion, very necessary for those up at the crack of dawn. Perhaps an extra fee in total costs would be in order.'
- 'Catering very disappointing - sandwiches ran out and the refectory closed at 1.15 (!)'
- 'Coffee break in the afternoon session, please'
- '£5 more per head and a lunch included would help networking.'
- 'Needed afternoon coffee breaks'
- 'I thought the day was too expensive and could have included lunch.'
- 'No restaurant facilities on site (closed). Food ran out in snack bar (insufficient warning).'



General

Apart from the problems with directions and catering the overall message from the evaluation sheets was very positive. Some other suggestions for future events include: name badges, a participant list with e-mail addresses prepared beforehand, a computerised feedback form (an EXCELLENT idea!!), PowerPoint slide shows delivered through the Intranet etc.

Extracts from Evaluations

- 'Overall, a very useful day and for myself, pitched at the right level.'
- 'Overall, smoothly run'
- 'Well organised and managed. Thank you for a very useful day'
- 'Generally well organised'
- 'A very enjoyable day with very informative presentations and demonstrations. Many thanks to all involved in organising this SIG event. I'm looking forwards to the next one!'
- 'Lack of badges - horrid to wear but they do make it easier to find out who is who.'
- 'Main criticism is that I still have no concept of creating a web-page using HTML or a compatible application or Javascript. I feel this could have been sampled hands on.'
- 'Excellent day for an ITC pre-beginner. Good on you.'
- 'A lot of information but generally very useful. Thanks.'
- 'Excellent quality of input - more than enough for one day.'
- 'A useful and helpful seminar'
- 'An informative and successful day. Thank you'
- 'Generally very good. lots of useful links, generally clear

and useful presentations.'

- 'I thought the sessions were interesting and diverse.'



Checklist for future events

Taking these evaluations and the lessons learned from Waltham Forest IT for ALL day, I suggest the following checklist for future events. Please add anything I've missed. (Please email your suggestions to tilly@southdene.freeserve.co.uk, IATEFL Computer SIG Events Co-ordinator.)

- Where possible, make it a priority to use facilities that are of proven speed, efficiency and comfort.
- Plan a varied program on given topic.
- Concentrate on practical teaching ideas and widely available technology.
- Ensure a 'beginners' track'
- Describe sessions in detail before the day.
- Give more time to hands-on sessions.
- Schedule and stage a discussion and feedback session.
- Book speakers early and budget for their honorarium.
- Provide a clear map of town and route to venue.
- Start later if venue is not central.
- Provide morning and afternoon tea and coffee
- If catering, check for vegetarians and cater for them adequately
- Ensure time for participants to socialise.
- Where possible choose rooms and catering facilities which are close together.
- Give name badges on arrival (sticky labels are adequate).
- On booking form, ask for permission to publish name, address and e-mail address .
- Have a computer feedback form or take feedback by e-mail afterwards
- Have a technician available.
- Contact publishers in good time and set aside a space for their displays.



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