

Reports on Past SIG Events

Last updated: 9 October, 2002

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IATEFL Computer SIG / Canterbury Christ Church University College

Using the WWW for Language Teaching

February 27th, 1999

Feedback Report Summary

Written/compiled by [Tilly Warren](#) (E.Warren@westminster.ac.uk)
IATEFL Computer SIG Events Co-ordinator
Lecturer in English Language and Linguistics
University of Westminster

Overview

The feedback was detailed, constructive and almost unanimously positive about the day as a whole. 35 completed sheets (from a possible 45) were returned many of them filled out in detail with suggestions, showing the interest there was in the day and a willingness to help event organisers improve workshops like this year by year. Each speaker received a mixture of praise and reservations, some more of one than the other.



Video via the WWW

Paul Brett

Paul Brett's talk was appreciated for its clear, well-paced delivery. For many it raised new possibilities for classrooms activities and perhaps for this reason there was much demand for lesson plan ideas and practical tips.

A selection of comments:

- Excellent speaker.
- I've seen this site before so would have liked to hear exactly how Paul used it, i.e. lesson plan ideas.
- Good practical input I feel I could apply to my teaching situation.
- Cutting edge stuff.
- Well planned and executed. Still to be convinced of value but welcome this introduction.
- Very professional indeed. Paul has made me think using video via the WWW can really work.
- Practical, useful and accessible lots of ideas for teaching good resource of addresses given.
- V. useful, quick and easy way to produce activities for students. I already have ideas.



Supporting teachers via the web

Tamsen Harward

Tamsen Harward spoke on Supporting teachers via the web, focusing particularly on the BBC's site for supporting modern language teachers who use the TALK! Series. This was interesting to some although many complained about the lack of direct reference to English language teaching. Considering that this was Tamsen's first public presentation she had the toughest type of audience there is a group of teachers, and many gave her tips to improve her presentation style.

A selection of comments:

- Excellent ideas from the BBC. Pity there isn't anything for English. I'd expected support for EFL teachers eg. resource sites etc., but the insight into what's possible in general lang. learning was valuable and inspiring.
- I thought the talk was very interesting and I found some of the final points extremely interesting. However, Tamsen, it was very difficult to hear you! Stand up when you talk!
- Very instructive, I would not normally have looked for this web site. Good update on BBC activities.



Introduction to JavaScript

Stephen Bax

A frequent comment on Stephen Bax's talk (Introduction to Javascript) was that it was too short many wanted to carry on after the 55 minutes. This suggests that more hands-on time should be allowed when the content is skills training. The pace and content were well received and some were inspired to continue learning Javascript.

A selection of comments:

- Pitched at exactly the right level for me! clearly delivered and achievable tasks. Made me want to go away and do more.
- Short and sweet! But so useful! Great references to continue my development and expertise with!
- Excellent - it took me weeks to get to the stage he got us to in 55 mins!
- Inspiration for a total beginner.
- Very useful. I thoroughly enjoyed this it was at just the right level and I learned a lot! I hope to see part II!!
- A model of clarity on a potentially terrifying topic.
- It was excellent. I hadn't realised Javascript might be so straight forward. I would love to learn some more.



Techniques for making Real Audio available on a website

Hazel Spokes and Paul Scott

Hazel Spokes and Paul Scott demonstrated techniques for making Real Audio available on a website. Although generally well liked, many found this session too technical, whereas for others it was just at the right level. This would suggest that in future, workshop participants should be differentiated by expertise so that Beginners groups are spared technical content, whereas the already semi-experts can practice and hone their skills at their own pace.

A selection of comments:

- Interesting its not that difficult to do!?? Also interesting to see what the BBC ELT section is in and up to.
- Technical but not completely over my head. Don't know if I'm ready to do this yet but am thankful for the good notes. Maybe in the future I'll try.
- Great! I'm just about to try something similar. It was clear, concise and practical. I now know how to do what I'd wished I could do.
- Very important stuff! Please, could we have what Hazel talked about in a full session workshop?
- First class! A great way to finish the day. Interesting well presented, esp. the end about how to use in the classroom



Practical issues in using the WWW in ELT

Clive Newton

Clive Newton's presentation delivered exactly what it promised to

the great appreciation of the audience of teachers. Requests to have Clive back for more similar sessions were voiced which sounds like a sensible idea if he is willing. Perhaps even technical workshops should have at least one session which is purely classroom teaching oriented and practical as many participants like to have the relevance of the technology to their own situations made clear. (Stephen Bax's contribution to Hazel and Paul's talk did just this and comments showed that participants had appreciated that especially.)

A selection of comments:

- Excellent in every way. Get him back next time!
- Brilliantly presented common sense approach to using media in the classroom.
- Excellent presentation. You practise what you preach! I've left with a solid framework.
- Absolutely brilliant! Exactly what I wanted from today.
- Excellent! Plenty of practical tips I've been waiting for.
- Best session by a mile tightly organised, cogently and audibly presented, full of practical hints and insights.
- Clearly right on top of his stuff. Very useful to see a lesson being conducted and pitfalls of using the web as a teaching tool.

Overall the day presented a balanced mix of sessions (ELT / non-ELT, technical / non-technical, hands-on / non-hands-on) and this was appreciated and commented on by participants.



General organisation

In terms of general organisation, the vast majority of participants were happy with the payment and registration procedures. Information received before the event was generally reported as good although some participants asked for more background information on the workshops and speakers before the event, as well as more travel and accommodation information. The computing facilities of the venue were enthusiastically praised (Excellent, Very good, and Good were the most frequent comments) although one participant pointed out that the rooms weren't quite so ideal for lecturing.



Catering

Unfortunately, the catering aspect of the day was (like last year) the least well-received with many dissatisfied customers due to the lack of serving staff which caused queues and delays. (Those who had found the pub around the corner were not complaining though!) Since lunch is practically the only time that participants can mingle and network it seems a shame that it cannot be done in

a relaxed and pleasant atmosphere. Perhaps the canteen area would be better for next year, with lunch provided and included in the cost. Tea and coffee served in a room nearer the workshops would also be appreciated. Overall the organisation of the event was well received with one participant aptly commenting Well done! Its a tough job to satisfy everybody.



Suggestions for future workshops

As far as suggestions for future workshops go the topics suggested were:

- More on practical English language teaching uses of the Web (several asked for this)
- Hardware and software for small schools without technicians
- Evaluation of CD-ROMs for English learning
- Audio on the Net
- Personal web access as a resource in web-less schools
- Compare the vocabulary we are teaching with the real language (databases / corpora?)
- Creating ones own materials (including audio and video on the web)
- Copyright Issues
- Web development beginners and advanced
- Using MS PowerPoint
- Teachers creating multimedia materials : is it worthwhile?
- Children's web publishing etc.
- A lesson plan exchange (bring 50 copies of one plan and take away 50 different plans)

There are some excellent suggestions here enough for several events which will take us well into the new millennium. The definite favourite though was practical workshops which are classroom orientated, so we should work on this for a future event possibly in London?

The interest in attendance at more technical and specialised sessions at next year's Canterbury event was high (24 / 35) and one participant has offered to teach a web design workshop, so it seems that this would be a popular development. In terms of previous web design experience, 13 had some experience although 5 of those said very little whereas 13 said they had none. Interest in a two day event was also good (20/35) although various drawbacks were mentioned (family commitments, cost, Sunday travel). However participants commented on the advantages, which would be more time to develop hands on skills and time to meet and chat with other participants. Another theme that came through the feedback (also mentioned above) was the desire to see some element of streaming so that beginners and experts do not have to share the same workshops. Some participants also wanted to see a choice of workshops on offer.



Acknowledgements

All credit for this event must go to Stephen Bax who not only made it possible for the workshop to take place in Canterbury again, using the University's superb computer facilities, but also did all the organisation as well as speaking on the day. It becomes clear from the feedback how much these workshops are appreciated - they obviously fill a training need in ELT as shown by one satisfied participant's final comment: 'I really enjoyed the day and I learnt a lot in the talks. My objectives were fulfilled and I will have a lot to report back to my company and other trainers. Thank you.' And thank you too from the IATEFL Computer Special Interest Group Committee.



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IATEFL Computer SIG Home Page:
<http://www.paddocks64.freemove.co.uk/CompSIG2/callsig.htm>
Computer SIG Co-ordinator: tilly@southdene.freemove.co.uk
Computer SIG webmaster: gjtaylor@btinternet.com

IATEFL, 3 Kingsdown Chambers, Kingsdown Park, Whitstable, Kent
CT5 2FL, UK.

Phone: +44(0)1227 276528. Fax: +44(0)1227 274415

IATEFL Home Page: <http://www.iatefl.org>

Email: generalenquiries@iatefl.org