

FLEXIBLE DELIVERY - A USEFUL TOOL FOR TECHNICAL STAFF IN A TEACHING ENVIRONMENT

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For the context of this talk, Flexible Delivery, refers to electronic resources, delivered over the internet, giving students the flexibility and choice of when and where they access these resources. A number of ways technical staff might become involved in flexible delivery were suggested including 'pre-lab preparation', supplementary resources for aspects not covered in depth in class/prac or resources for revision.

Examples of 'pre-lab preparation' include techniques which are hard to demonstrate to large groups or difficult for students to master, a preview of methodology so students know what to expect & do, a 'virtual' introduction to equipment or safety information (dos and don'ts). Supplementary resources could include how some experimental components are pre-prepared for the class or more information on the principle of operation of equipment. Material for revision could include 'things that a student cant take away from the prac' – eg photos of what was seen down a microscope or video/animation of how a piece of equipment reacts during an experiment. Resources of these types could result in better prepared students who gain more from the practical session.

During this talk, a variety of examples which the Flinders School of Medicine CAL Unit have been involved with the development were shown. These ranged from simple web pages including a photo of an organism as viewed under a microscope with a small amount of supplementary text; annotated movies of techniques that the user can pause, rewind, replay as often as required; simple Flash animations (some with interactivity), to Multimedia "pre-lab" online tutorials which include text, glossary definitions, diagrams, animations, photos, rollover pictures of equipment with popup labels and narrated movies.

The last part of the talk focussed on finding existing resources on the internet. The website Merlot (Multimedia Educational Resource for Learning and Online Teaching <http://www.merlot.org>) is designed primarily for faculty and students of higher education to share online resources. Links to online learning materials are collected via this website with annotations such as peer reviews. The website categorises the resources and is searchable. Merlot is well worth a visit.

Chances of a useful internet search can be enhanced by utilising some of the advanced search features in some of the common internet search engines. Restricting the domain of a search to just search university web sites eg '.edu' '.edu.au' '.ac.uk' '.ac.nz' (Google <http://www.google.com.au>, Yahoo <http://au.search.yahoo.com>) or using an 'Image Search' (Google, Yahoo, Alta Vista <http://au.altavista.com>), 'Video Search' (Alta Vista) or 'Audio Search' (Alta Vista) should improve the relevance of search results.