

and the creation of an information-poor underclass.

Law firms will be major beneficiaries of the information revolution. Precedents, client marketing, in court presentations, in-house training, World Wide Web kiosk information and marketing sites for foreign clients are all set for drastic changes. There have already been obvious advantages in cost reduction and speed offered by the availability of cases and legislation in full text search and retrieval systems. One can expect to see links between law firms and the universities' virtual library opening up even greater possibilities.

Where does computer aided learning fit in the tertiary education equation?

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There is evidence that computers are having an impact on curriculum development, instructional planning and assessment as well as on student learning. In the area of curriculum development, there are two basic strands for a syllabus comprising computers and the law. First, computers may be relevant as a specialist subject examining legal issues raised by the manufacture and use of computers. Secondly, there is the use made of technology by lawyers — the collection, classification, storage, retrieval, manipulation and evaluation of information by means of computers.

There are various instructional strategies available through the use of computers. In the domain of knowledge representation, the innovation of hypertext technology is beneficial. Research shows that improved learning occurs where students are not just passive recipients of knowledge but are actively involved in the process of learning, in constructing their own world picture from experience. Learner control of

the learning experience is an important instructional design feature of hypertext used in multimedia. But computers can also provide students with the opportunity to test their ability to apply knowledge by testing their problem solving skills. Computer aided learning of basic principles may be valuable in these days of burgeoning curricula and larger classes and can free up precious class time for tackling more open ended problems.

While problem-solving exercises may also be used for assessment purposes, there are significant difficulties in using computers for assessment. These include the large investment of time and effort required to write data banks of questions, particularly if a range of question types is used. The items need to be unambiguous, capable of discriminating between high and low achievers and free from cues that might lead to response biases. More worrying is the possibility that questions may be directed at factual knowledge and not test higher order skills and the objectives of the course.

The more fundamental problem with using computer-aided learning programs is their lack of integration into the assessment regime. Unless students can see that working through computer programs will improve their performance in formal assessment items, such as assignments and examinations, it is unlikely that they will make use of them.

In a general sense, computers may contribute to learning through word processing facilities and electronic database searches. On the specific matter of student learning, empirical studies on available research indicate that computer assisted instruction in classroom teaching may improve learning and consistently reduce the time needed for instruction; is reasonably well liked by the students; and is probably most effective when used with conventional instruction.

Students appreciate the anonymity, politeness, and patience of the computer, the immediacy of the feedback, the specific guidance and being able to learn what they want to learn at their own pace. Negative comments are that the exercise may be treated as a game rather than a serious academic activity and the fact that computers cannot pass judgment on student queries.

Given the multidisciplinary nature of development teams, their technological complexity and their high cost in terms of time and resources, infrastructure support in the university context is particularly important for the development and implementation of computer aided learning. Infrastructure support also involves implementation of computer aided learning programs. For example, whether the institutions deliver multimedia educational technology on campus once the programs are developed. The final point on infrastructure support is that the degree of commitment of the university, the department and the teaching team to integrating the new technology, is crucial. Numerous commentators warn of the need to approach the issue of computer aided learning as part of an educational strategy, not as an end in itself.

Teaching a law seminar over the Internet

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Once communication is unshackled from the confines of place, the world becomes a classroom occupied by a world of students and a world of teachers. For students looking for coursework, the Internet may provide learning opportunities without limitation. Internet email is fast and so cheap it is virtually free. But speed and cheapness also constitute the major drawbacks of email because without some sort of self-imposed controls or software-managed filters,