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Designing online courses : reflections from the cyber trenches

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Designing online courses : reflections from the cyber trenches

Abstract

This paper reviews research on the use of instructional design in developing course websites; it then describes the writer's experience creating a supplemental website using Blackboard, contrasting the project with the previous experience of creating an online course using WebCT. The writer analyzes problems with early online courses, reflects on the challenges of becoming an online teacher, documents her methodology, shares the results of the project, and makes recommendations for the design of effective web-based courses. Online teachers incorporate instructional design in many ways: they rethink their courses, analyze learners and content, design on paper first, structure the physical layout for content and interaction, actively engage students in solving problems, and find a variety of ways to evaluate students.

Designing Online Courses:

Reflections from the Cyber Trenches

A Graduate Project

Submitted to the

Division of Educational Technology

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Of the Requirements for the Degree

Master of Arts

UNIVERSITY OF NORTHERN IOWA

by

Cherie Post Dargan

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Abstract

This paper reviews research on the use of instructional design in developing course websites; it then describes the writer's experience creating a supplemental website using Blackboard, contrasting the project with the previous experience of creating an online course using WebCT. The writer analyzes problems with early online courses, reflects on the challenges of becoming an online teacher, documents her methodology, shares the results of the project, and makes recommendations for the design of effective web-based courses. Online teachers incorporate instructional design in many ways: they rethink their courses, analyze learners and content, design on paper first, structure the physical layout for content and interaction, actively engage students in solving problems, and find a variety of ways to evaluate students.

Introduction

The phenomenon of web-based learning has dramatically changed the direction and delivery of distance education in the past decade. Course websites, whether used as supplemental resources for face-to-face courses or for online courses, began appearing in the mid 1990s. By the late 1990s, two and four year colleges alike were racing for seats on this new distance education bandwagon: Pastore (2001) estimated that 1500 colleges and universities were offering web courses by 1999, and this was expected to double to 3,300 by 2004. Wright and Yates (1999) cited statistics from the U. S. Department of Education that there were then 26,000 online courses, with the estimate of 100 new college courses going online every month (cited in James & Voigt, 2001).

The Pew Internet and American Life Project (2001) reported that an estimated 5% of adult Internet users had taken a class online for college credit: this was an estimated five million people at the time of the report's writing. "On any given day, 1% of internet users are taking a class online. That amounts to one million adults," (Lenhart, 2001, p. 9). More recently, this writer discovered www.eLearners.com, a website that claimed to list 23,000 online and distance learning courses and 2,300 degree and certificate programs from over 1,600 colleges.

What has driven this phenomenon? Faster Internet connections, sophisticated browsers, powerful computers, and the demands of adult learners for flexible learning environments led many colleges and universities to realize that web courses could be a potential marketing tool and a source of significant revenue. However, in the rush to develop and deliver online courses, instructional design appears to have been ignored, or used only when it was deemed convenient. Hopper (2001) expressed his concern about

the failure to use instructional design when developing online courses; after reviewing a number of online courses, he described them as "'shovelware' from the hurried attempts of 'shoveling text onto a website'" (p. 37).

This writer was given the opportunity to develop two course websites, using two course delivery platforms (WebCT and Blackboard) for two different institutions over the past two years: the first course website was an online business writing course developed for a community college, using WebCT, and the second course website was a supplemental one, developed using Blackboard, for a hybrid psychology course at a private university in the midwest.

The second course was developed as part of an independent study, and it became the focus of the project described in this paper. As an experienced distance education teacher, and a graduate student who had taken multiple online and hybrid courses, it gave this writer an opportunity to reflect on the dual perspectives of online learner and teacher. It also gave her a chance to gather research on the use of instructional design in online courses, as well as to learn more about using various course delivery tools. Finally, not only did the writer want to avoid creating more of Hopper's (2001) shovelware, she wanted to document the process of how to design and develop a course website. So, one of the important outcomes of the project was to develop materials to assist others in developing online courses.

This paper will review the research on instructional design and online course development, in an effort to answer two questions, and then focus on the writer's experience of creating the second online course.

First, what does research have to say about the value of instructional design in developing online courses, and why was it not it used more consistently in earlier efforts to develop online courses?

Second, how can teachers avoid creating more of Hopper's (2001) "'shovelware'" (p. 37) when what is needed is "a rich learning environment that encourages human interaction and cooperative learning"? (James & Voigt, 2001).

Methodology

One of the first tasks was to gather information on designing online courses: A traditional literature search was done of education journals, using such general search terms of "instructional design and online courses," "design and web-based courses," and "instructional design in online learning." A number of articles were located at the University of Northern Iowa's Rod Library. Several additional articles were found at the Hawkeye Community College library, as well as several books.

Next, Internet searches were done using Google, Surfwax, Infogrid, and other metasearch engines, using the same search terms used in the search for periodicals. Several national educational websites were also searched, as were distance learning organizations' websites and online periodicals such as The United States Distance Learning Association and its USDLA Journal; several additional articles were located. Internet searches were done to find current statistics on the numbers of online courses. Instructional design textbooks were also consulted and referenced as needed. In addition, this writer kept a detailed log of activities carried out in the design and development process of the Blackboard course last summer; these notes provided assistance, as did the

survey instrument, the completed student surveys, the compilation of responses, and planning documents.

Sources were evaluated on the basis of their relevance to the topic of using instructional design to develop online classes; their date of publication; their references to research on online course development; their connection to the practical application of instructional design; their publication source, sponsoring agency, or other credentials. The majority of the articles came from professional education journals: many of them were peer reviewed. Efforts were made to incorporate articles that discussed current research and practice.

Literature Review

Traditional instructional design models, including the one developed by Dick and Carey (1996), focus on a systematic approach to designing instruction. Dick and Carey's model is often abbreviated as ADDIE for analysis, design, develop, implement, and evaluate. Smith and Ragan (1999) broke the instructional design process down into three activities: analysis, strategy, and evaluation, with the reminder that revision must also be built-in to the process. Their instructional design model (Smith & Ragan, 1999) contained most of the items of Dick and Carey's model, but was somewhat more streamlined in appearance. However, neither Dick and Carey nor Smith and Ragan addressed web-based learning, or how the instructional design model is affected by the use of the Internet to deliver or supplement instruction.

In contrast to other models, Newby, Stepich, Lehman, & Russell (2000) presented a simple instructional design model geared for pragmatic classroom instructors: PIE, which stands for plan, implement, and evaluate. They addressed web-based learning

indirectly, "the boundaries separating schools from each other and from the community will blur...students may learn from teachers at other locations and collaborate with students at other locations." (Newby et al 2000, p. 264).

All of these models or systems addressed the same core issues of carefully analyzing the learner and subject matter, of writing goals and objectives that will drive the curriculum, and so forth; however, have they been effectively utilized in developing online courses? What does current research reveal regarding web course development and the use of instructional design principles?

Early online courses. Initial research made it clear that the push to offer web courses created failures as well as successes. Hopper (2001) stated that by 1999 over 9,000 web-based courses had been developed. Moreover, he described many of the courses he reviewed as "hasty, uninspired attempts to digitally replicate and transmit the traditional chalkboard and lecture teaching paradigm" (Hopper, 2001, p. 35-36). Foshay (2001) agreed that the demand for e-learning resulted in many courses being quickly developed that were of poor quality; he attributed that to the fact that many courses were being developed by people who did not have any training in instructional design.

Muirhead (2002) described the struggles experienced by one of the first universities to offer online courses: New York University spent $25 million to develop seven courses in a venture they were going to call NYUonline. However, before that could happen, administrators halted the project, deeming it too problematic to be fixed. Some of the problems included a lack of faculty involvement as well as the lack of market research to see what courses companies most needed. In other words, the project administrators had ignored one of the primary tenets of instructional design: to analyze

needs, including assessing their potential students. Muirhead (2002) also remarked that more successful online courses were student-centered and promoted a higher level of interactivity, but that it took time and planning to build, or design, this feature into the course. He cited Sptizer (1998), who acknowledged that distance learning was rarely designed to be learner-focused, due to "technical, administrative, political, and financial considerations" (cited in Muirhead, 2002).

Whether or not other universities learned from the mistakes of New York University, the trend to offer courses via the web has accelerated. According to Pastore (1999), research done by the International Data Corporation (IDC) estimated that 2.2 million college students would enroll in distance learning courses in 2002; this represents 15 percent of all higher education students. In addition, IDC predicted that 85 percent of two-year colleges would offer distance-learning courses and 84 percent of four-year colleges would offer distance-learning courses by 2002 (Pastore, 1999).

Therefore, as more institutions schedule courses to be developed and delivered online, more faculty will be faced with the task of transforming traditional courses into online courses. As they do, they should be cognizant that many of the problems with early online courses resulted from not using instructional design consistently, and that researchers and practitioners alike now emphasize the importance of effective design (Elsenheimer, 2002; Hricko, 2002; James & Voigt, 2001; Moore, Winograd, & Lange, 2001; Sheinberg, 2001).

Transitioning to online. Hopper (2001) cautioned faculty developing online courses that very little research has been done on the effectiveness of online learning, and that much of what has been done was flawed or more anecdotal than research-based. Many of

the articles located were based on a teacher's account of planning and teaching his or her first online course. For example, Olivas (2002) shared his initial reaction to the idea of teaching online, stating that he thought "I'd just put my course syllabus on the Web, rev up my e-mail system . . . get a nice comfortable ergonomic chair, and voila! I would be an online instructor." However, he soon discovered that he had to expand his course materials, such as his syllabus: "One of my traditional classroom course syllabi grew to about four times its size once I had adapted it for use in my online course" (Olivas, 2002).

He found that it was important to provide thorough explanations for assignments, expectations, and any instructional materials; if he did not, he had to spend a great deal of time answering the same questions from multiple students. While Olivas (2002) did not formally address many of the tenets of instructional design, he found Bloom's taxonomy useful for developing questions and writing prompts to encourage discussion.

Another online teacher, Orwig (1999), described his experiences developing and delivering an online class using WebCT. His college gave him release time, training, equipment, and graduate assistant support, as well as assistance from the office of course development, including instructional designers and graphic artists. Orwig detailed the time spent on various tasks, including 72 hours for course design, and it totaled over 222 hours. However, he commented on being surprised at the effort required to convert a traditional course into a web-based course, because he had to create a great deal of new material (Orwig, 1999), which confirmed Hopper's (2001) statement that it was not enough to simply shovel existing lecture notes onto a website.

Pedagogy and instructional design resources. One of the most intriguing sources found was a web site, Learning to Learn, which is an online course about instructional design. Developed by Gay (2001), the website was established to train Canadian high school teachers to teach children with learning disabilities. The website presented strategies for developing educational websites. The course is a blend of solid instructional design, web page design, and pedagogy, and focused on adapting instruction for students with learning disabilities (LD). Gay (2001) included several possible models of how to organize a web site and provided a number of strategies to help LD students: provide redundancies in navigational aids, match course design to content when possible, and use a simple yet consistent page layout. All of these strategies would help inexperienced online students find their way around a course website. The Learning to Learn website would be valuable to anyone interested in learning more about instructional design and web-based courses, with a caution: while the content and design are solid, more than a few typos were noted, demonstrating the need for careful editing before publishing on the Internet.

Campbell (1999) addressed several principles of instructional design in her article, "Learner Characteristics and Instructional Design," which was found on the University of Alberta's Academic Technologies for Learning website. First, she presented a summary of research on the adult learner, which includes a review of Knowles (1984) and his theory of andragogy. She also presented a checklist that applies theories about adults with ideas on how to build the theories into the design of online courses, as shown in Table 1 (Campbell, 1999).

Table 1. Checklist for designing and evaluating interactive materials for adult learners

Theory Implication	Applications to Design
Provide adults with opportunities to set their own goals	• clear menu structure • search-and-find function provided
Establish a need to know and readiness to learn	• self-tests included • practice with feedback provided
Provide opportunities to link new information with prior knowledge	• record-keeping among sessions • problems established
Provide adults with individual responsibility for their learning	• testimonials included • relevant examples included
	• frequent responses required • frequent entry and exit points possible

Note: Adapted from: Cennamo & Dawley (1995)

Campbell's (1999) ideas provide beginning and experienced teachers alike with the reminder that there are many ways to help adult learners be successful, starting with course design. While this was an older source, it was the first one located that addressed the needs of adult learners when designing online courses. However, in spite of locating these sources, it became clear that not much formal research has been done on the design, effectiveness, or overall "success" of online courses, since many universities have only been offering them for two or three years. Hopper (2001) stated, "Internet course development and marketing have occurred at a furious pace, and without a foundation of research" (p. 37). Paradoxically, the web has become a rich resource in locating information about instructional design itself. Ryder, (1999) at The University of Colorado School of Education, presented a comprehensive list of instructional design resources on the University website. However, few—if any—of these sources address the issue of transforming a print-based curriculum into a more interactive one delivered online.

Barriers to the use of instructional design. There appear to be several reasons to explain why instructional design has not been used more for designing online courses. They include: time and money constraints, lack of instructional design expertise, training that focuses on how to use the technology (course management tool), not instructional design or pedagogy, and an inability to apply the traditional models to the unknown territory of online learning.

Hopper (2001) pointed out that instructional design models do not translate automatically to the web because they are so labor-intensive: "An hour of meticulously designed commercial caliber CBI...may require 400 to 500 hours of skilled labor. . . "(p. 36). He cited Smith and Ragan (1999), who observed that given three criteria for doing a good job—high quality, low cost, and rapid completion—you can have any two. In other words, something has to be sacrificed, and that something is generally high quality.

In addition, since many of these courses are being delivered by two-year colleges—where research may be valued, but is not expected, nor built-in to teachers' workloads—most of the articles being written by teachers at two-year colleges are based on anecdotal reflections or consist of lessons learned and suggested strategies for beginning online teachers. Two-year colleges are also less likely to have a full time instructional designer on staff to assist faculty in developing online courses.

Rethinking the online course. How can teachers avoid creating more of Hopper's (2001) "'shovelware'" (p. 37) when what is needed is "a rich learning environment that encourages human interaction and cooperative learning"? (James & Voigt, 2001). Since shovelware results from trying to transfer content from the printed page to a web page, the remedy is to "rethink the methodologies, criteria, and approaches

normally adopted for conventional educational design/planning" (Trentin, 2001, p. 49).

Trentin (2001) stated further that the design of an online course involves two things: the

course plan and what he called the communication architecture (p. 60), which referred to

planning how communication will be used in the course.

Several themes emerged about the process of creating online courses: first, it is

essential to analyze the audience and content. In addition, several articles recommended

creating a detailed plan on paper before building the web site, and others discussed the

importance of designing the course website to be easy to navigate and use. Next, the

following things must be built into it: interaction, collaboration, and active learning. One

of the most commonly used strategies was a series of questions to help generate and

organize data.

Analyze the learners. Moore, Winograd and Lange (2001) described what they call

the "changing face of students" in their book You Can Teach Online. Many online

students are female—who have become the leading users of online learning. They listed

four groups of people especially motivated to take online courses:

- The non-traditional student (working adults)

- Knowledge workers (needing ongoing training)

- Life-long learners

- The homebound student (Moore et al, 2001)

Unlike some other writers, Moore, Winograd and Lange (2001) directly addressed

the overall Instructional Design process: they emphasized the need to analyze students,

develop goals and objectives, present material in a systematic way and then assess

learning. They also explained Gagne's nine instructional events and described how to apply them to an online course.

Simonson, Smaldino, Albright, and Zvacek (2000) provided insight into distance-learning students in their book <u>Teaching and Learning at a Distance</u>, "For the most part, these learners are self-starters and appear to be highly motivated" (Simonson et al, 2000, p. 128). They suggested that students be surveyed so that teachers can better understand their needs, background, and interests.

While other researchers had mentioned using student surveys as well (Orwig, 1999), Sheinberg (2001) simply encouraged designers to gather as much information about the learners as possible, and did not specify the method. He presented a list of factors to consider, and then discussed their implications on a number of things ranging from language choices, pacing, amount of interaction, and access to technology, to teaching methods. He listed a series of questions throughout the article, which would be useful for new and experienced instructors alike.

Create a written plan. Hricko (2002) referred to each of the components of the instructional design process: design, development, delivery, and evaluation. She provided a number of detailed explanations for each stage, as well as examples and resources, and cited pertinent research to support her points. One of her suggestions was to create an outline that included details about the audience, course objectives, and other matters before beginning the construction of the web site. Hricko (2002) stated that it is important to teach students the content of the course as well as to build their confidence in their technology skills. Her article would go on this writer's list of resources for new online teachers.

Learn what works: five crucial elements. Bi (2000) included the instructional design process as a factor when she described the results of examining nine online courses from three different universities. She concluded that there are five things crucial to effective web course design: First, instructors, instructional designers, and administrators must work together as a team. Second, students should be engaged in collaborative learning and interact with other students, the teacher, and the content/course. Further, teachers should find ways to get students involved in active, real-life, and problem-solving learning experiences. Third, the technology (courseware management tool) should be compatible with the specific instructional goals and learning outcomes. Fourth, teachers must be prepared (trained) to meet the challenges of online learning. Finally, students need timely feedback from instructors and tutorial materials for help with technical skills (Bi, 2000).

Bi (2000) remarked that the most important relationship in online courses is that between the teacher and the students, and that the skillful use of technology can empower

students and teachers, and reduces the distance between them. She also commented on how interaction must be part of the course design itself: ". . . a built-in intention to increase student interaction. . ." and that various communication tools, such as chat or discussion boards could be used to achieve specific course objectives (Bi, 2000).

Promote active learning. Another distance educator, Thornburg (1996), included the ideas of interaction and active learning, among other things, as he addressed the issue of how to design a web course in his book Campfires in Cyberspace. He suggested teachers begin by asking six questions:

- How do course materials take advantage of the fact that web-based communication is on demand? Can they (learners) access materials anywhere, any time?

- How does the course incorporate interactivity? Are learners actively engaged?

- How does the course support multiple expressive modes, such as oral and visual?

- How does the course support representational choices?

- How does the course support the wide distribution of information? Can material be downloaded and looked at off line?

- How does the course support publication of a learner's work? (Thornburg, 1996).

Active learning became a familiar theme in much of the research this writer reviewed. Campbell (1997) focused on designing instruction that promotes active learning in her article; she also quoted Merrill (1997) in saying that "Information is not instruction" (quoted in Campbell, 1997). So, simply posting informative content on a course website will not ensure that learners will learn; it is the design of activities that

promotes learning. The technology becomes a tool designed to help people interact with each other.

Kruse (2000) explained the context of Merrill's (1998) now famous quote: it was made during an interview with *Training* magazine in 1998. Merrill was frustrated with the inadequacies of web-based training, and the tendency to rush to put content onto the web; however, Kruse (2000) stated, "it has always been too easy to become enamored with the technology side of technology-based training—at the expense of proper design and learning outcomes."

Another proponent of active learning, Alley (2000), presented a session at the EduCause 2000 conference that stressed the need for "interaction between instructors and students, a student-centered approach, and built-in opportunities for students to learn on their own." Alley (2000) stated that there are numerous course builder tools such as WebCT and Blackboard, but few Instructional Development software tools; furthermore, the majority of them are in the corporate trainer's domain, and not suitable for higher education.

Communication, collaboration and interaction. Other sources focused on the need to analyze the students. Palloff and Pratt (2001) presented three questions, which were originally asked by Boettcher and Conrad (1999):

- Who are my students?
- What do I want my students to know, to feel, or to be able to do as a result of this course?
- Where, when, and with what resources will my students be learning?

Palloff and Pratt (2001) used those three questions to create a series of more specific questions designed to help teachers gather better data as they begin planning their course. They stated that course development should focus on interactivity, not content, because interaction deepens the learning experience, and content can be delivered through a variety of techniques requiring teamwork and interaction. They also pointed out that the roles of teachers and student must change, as teachers surrender some control and students become more actively engaged with their own learning process. However, this requires planning, and the use of instructional design. Overall, they stressed, "It is pedagogy and not technology that is critical to the success of an online course" (Palloff & Pratt, 2001, p. 153).

Muirhead (2002) addressed the issue of interactivity as well in his recent analysis of E-tivities, a five-stage model designed by Salmon (2002) to help teachers get students actively involved, taking ownership of their own learning and becoming reflective. However, instructors need training, technical support, and educational resources to be able to design interactive courses. Muirhead (2002) also explained the concept of an e-tivity: it involves an initial posting by the teacher that invites others to respond and then, once others have responded, ends with a brief summary statement or feedback from the teacher.

He then described Salmon's (2002) five-stage model:

Step 1 – Access & Motivation. In this stage, students learn how to use the course software; moreover, it is likely that they will need assistance, so instructors should be supportive and send email messages that help create a positive atmosphere, assigning simpler tasks that will build confidence.

Step 2 – Online Socialization. During this stage, students begin to connect with each other online, as they share stories; teachers can use e-tivities to help them recognize the value of diversity.

Step 3 – Information Exchange. At this stage, instructors should promote discovery learning, which will lead students to share what they've learned.

Step 4 – Knowledge Construction. This stage helps students use higher order thinking skills and become more independent learners as they work on solving problems.

Step 5 – Development. During this stage students develop new cognitive skills; they learn to take ownership of their learning experiences and help others. Instructors should encourage reflective thinking (Muirhead, 2002). This model gives online teachers a valuable tool: a way to use communication tools such as the discussion board to strengthen learning and to reinforce content.

Moore, Winograd and Lange (2001) considered interaction at several levels; they stated that the "kind, amount and quality of interaction distinguish the online class from the online resource" (p. 9.12) and encouraged teachers to provide opportunities for critical thinking and reflection that would give students substance to discuss with each other, and with the instructor. However, they also emphasized the importance of getting students interacting with the content of the course, and recommended that teachers use technology to get students actively engaged, with such ideas as the use of a CD Rom, mouse rollovers, and pop up boxes.

Designing the web site. Moore, Winograd and Lange (2001) also discussed the design of the course web site, and presented some practical guidelines. They reminded the reader that building in too many images will make pages take a long time to

download. They also cautioned that screens do not translate to pages; chunk up material and remember many people do not like to keep scrolling down to read online. They also warned that course designers should not get too "click happy," because too much hypertext can be a problem, especially for beginning online learners. They suggested the rule of three, which means to place all essential information within three clicks from the main web page (Moore et al, 2001).

Other points addressed the issues of readability and ease of navigation. They stated that designers need to remember readability issues regarding font type, size, and color, as well as the Americans for Disability Act (ADA) standards. They recommended the use of headings, graphics, photographs, tables and other visual elements. In addition, they proposed putting information about assignments in several places, so that information could be located using several strategies (Moore et al, 2001).

Campbell (1997) also focused on aspects of website design. She commented that good instruction is rich in opportunities for interactivity, and that in a constructivist approach the learner constructs meaning by exploring an environment, solving a problem or applying information to a new situation. These opportunities needed to be reflected in the course design.

Finally, how might the results of the research be used to improve the overall design of online courses? Many of the sources gave further insight into specific course management tools, practical guidelines, and words of wisdom from experienced online instructors.

Use of course management tools. Comunale, Sexton and Pedagano (2001) reported on their experiences using course web sites as a supplement to their traditional

classroom. This enabled instructors to post materials for students and allowed for students and instructors to interact on the course bulletin board. These teachers used either WebCT or Blackboard as a course management tool: this was one of the few articles discussing specific details regarding these platforms. However, they focused the study on a student survey that showed how much students used the class websites, and which features were most important, so course design was not addressed directly. Even so, this writer found value in the article, since she would develop a course in both delivery systems, and because she planned to give her students entry and exit surveys, and was interested in which features were most important to students.

Comunale, Sexton and Pedagano (2001) compared the two course delivery systems: they said that WebCT and Blackboard differed with respect to the details of their organization and appearance, but they were comparable in the functions they support and their ease of navigation. Both systems allowed the instructor to track web site usage, to upload documents, to maintain discussion boards and chat rooms, to keep an online grade book, and to send e-mail to students (Comunale et al, 2000).

An additional resource, the *Edutools* website (2002), was mentioned in Moore, Winograd and Lange's book, *You Can Teach Online* (2001). The *Edutools* website was designed to help individuals and institutions choose the right courseware tool for their needs, and contained information about the features of various course delivery systems. Initially the brainchild of Landon (2002) and British Columbia's Centre for Curriculum, Transfer & Technology, *Edutools* provided a detailed analysis of course management software and allowed users to compare features of two or more products. Users could also view product information on a single courseware tool. The web site included a

glossary of terms that users could refer to, if unsure of the meaning of a feature. Features were broken down into several categories, such as learner tools, support tools, and technical specifications, with subcategories in each area.

Instructional design issues were addressed under support tools; Landon commented that Blackboard's version 5.5 enabled instructors to create sequential learning paths. In other words, instructors could design material that required users to look at it systematically (Landon, 2002). However, beyond the inclusion of the term in the list of features, instructional design was not one of the major components examined by Landon's website.

Going beyond shovelware. However, as this writer learned, it is not enough to be given an empty WebCT or Blackboard shell (empty course) and start transferring, or shoveling, documents into it. Simply because there is a certain amount of structure built into a course management system, such as having separate areas for course material, communication, and external links, there is no guarantee that the course design will be effective. This realization brings us back full circle to Hopper (2002), who observed that faculty are often taken back when they see their lecture notes "now printed on the computer screen, are not as compelling or even as accurate as they seemed [when] spoken in the classroom…" (p. 37). Moreover, he contended that teaching online forces us to change our strategy altogether:

> To employ the Internet…demands that we start over, reconsidering our bedrock views on what it means to teach and to learn, and design something imaginative, new, and a good fit for the technology (Hopper, 2001, p. 37).

Odasz (2002) agreed, when he stated:

If content delivery is all that's required, teachers may not be needed as automated systems can deliver content. The value a teacher brings to both traditional and online classes is the opportunity for interaction . . . (Lesson Three).

Founder of an online consulting company, Odasz created an impressive set of lessons on developing online courses, which this writer discovered only well into the writing of this paper. What makes for a good online course, according to Odasz (2002), is "student engagement, interaction, and motivation . . . (Lesson Three). Thus, it is not the technology that makes the difference; it is the course plan directing how the students interact with the course content, with the instructor, and with each other that makes the difference.

In summary, then, research reflected several ways that online teachers incorporate the elements of instructional design in their courses:

- Re-think, "re-vision" their courses as they review course goals and objectives in gathering course content and select a textbook (Hopper, 2002; Hricko, 2002; James & Voigt, 2001; Orwig, 1999).

- Assess their students' needs through informal surveys and short, informal assessments (Comunale, Sexton & Voss, 2002; James & Voigt, 2001; Ko & Rossen, 2001; Simonson et al, 2000; Sheinberg, 2001).

- Design the course plan on paper first: chunk material down into smaller documents (James & Voigt, 2001; Ko & Rossen, 2001; Moore, Winograd & Lange, 2001).

- Structure the physical layout of the course website to make it easy to navigate, visual, and rich in interaction (communication and collaboration) and content (Ko & Rossen, 2001; Moore, Winograd & Lange, 2001).

- Build in interactivity and engage learners in activities geared towards solving real world problems; engage learners in more than one learning style/mode (Alley, 2000; Campbell, 1999; Elsenheimer, 2003; Howell, 2001; James & Voigt, 2001; Odasz, 2002; Palloff & Pratt, 2001; Sheinberg, 2001; Thornburg, 1996).

- Include opportunities for active learning, critical thinking and reflection (Alley, 2000; Campbell, 1997; James & Voigt, 2001; Muirhead, 2002; Odasz, 2002; Palloff & Pratt, 2001).

- Find various ways to evaluate students, using alternatives like electronic portfolios, surveys, self reflective essays, pretests and posttests, collaborative projects, and project based learning (Hricko, 2002; James & Voigt, 2001; Ko & Rossen, 2001; Moore et al, 2001; Odasz, Orwig, 1999).

Methodology Described

The project began during the summer of 2002, after being asked to teach a summer course for a small Midwestern university; since this writer lived sixty miles away from the center where the course was being offered, we agreed that I would teach it over the Iowa Communications Network (ICN) and develop a website in Blackboard as a component of the course. We thought that a course website might be useful for the class because it would create a community of learners, give them an opportunity to interact with each other on the discussion board, and serve as a convenient place to post course materials.

Shortly afterward, arrangements were made to do an independent project for graduate credit. First, I read *Instructional technology: the definition and domains of the field*, by Seels & Richey (1994) to gain further insight on instructional design and then began to do research on designing web courses and teaching online in order to increase my knowledge base and incorporate best practices. Since this writer had already developed one online course, using WebCT, and had been taking courses herself as an online student for two years, the process of planning, developing and implementing an online course was not an unfamiliar one, but there were few established guidelines given for the process.

Reflecting upon the writer's previous online teaching and learning experiences, the following strategy was adopted, loosely based on PIE (plan, implement, and evaluate) as explained by Newby, Stepich, Lehman and Russell (2000). This list of activities became my informal model for approaching the project:

- Arrange for training in using Blackboard.

- Gather information about the learners as well as the course content, to best determine such things as language level, pacing, and depth of coverage.

- Design the plan of instruction on paper first and decide how it will be laid out on the course website, chunking information down.

- Locate a textbook that matches the objectives and check with the publisher to see what supplemental materials may be available, including electronic ones.

- Develop the course materials (produce handouts, PowerPoint presentations, assignment sheets and so forth) and assessment tools and upload them to the course website.

- Design the activities, assignments, and opportunities for communication and interaction between students and the instructor. Find ways to incorporate active learning; write the prompts for the various topics on the discussion board; look at ways to use regular group email messages to communicate with the class, and design ways to build in interaction of students with course content as well.

- Shape the class environment while adding content to the course shell.

- Design the course for easy navigation so that students can locate materials quickly and easily. Each unit folder should follow the same pattern as much as possible.

- Evaluate learners using a combination of strategies, including essay tests, surveys, group projects, and writing assignments.

The Project

The First Course: Using WebCT

To provide some background information, this writer, a full time teacher at a community college in the midwest, had developed her first web-based non-transfer level writing course (Applied Writing) for the spring semester of 2002. The platform used was WebCT; unfortunately, only minimal training and tech support were made available, and these services were located 60 miles away, at another two-year college. However, I felt equal measures of determination and optimism as I began the task.

Others felt that I would be up to the challenge as well, since I had taught on the ICN since its beginnings in 1994, and had experience in developing and maintaining an extensive faculty web site, using Front Page. In addition, I had already taught several hybrid courses as an adjunct for a small university; these courses met over the ICN and used a supplemental website. I used Pageout (a free web site building tool from McGraw

Hill), which is an excellent system, for one course and for another course I designed a simple website in Front Page, posted it on a link off my community college web page and used a free discussion board online.

The decision to offer an online version of Applied Writing was made in the spring of 2001, but efforts to develop the course did not begin until the fall of 2001, when three hours of release time were given. Moreover, the task was seen as less daunting because by then the course was being delivered in a computer assisted classroom, and the textbook publisher supplied a number of resources, including PowerPoint presentations and web links. The textbook itself was visually engaging and geared for the practical application of written communication skills. The goals and objectives seemed clear, as stated in the syllabus, and the writing assignments had been developed for use in the computer classroom. Therefore, much of the formal curriculum appeared to be in place.

The most difficult part of the experience was mastering the WebCT interface itself. Since I was a graduate student and had been using WebCT in a number of my courses for two years, I was hoping that the software would not be as daunting from the instructor's side. Certainly it was helpful to have a working knowledge of the various components of the courseware tool, and to have several years of experience doing postings and using the internal WebCT email. I attended several training sessions at another college but they were so perfunctory in nature that they did not address any of the substance of adding content to the course, nor did they discuss instructional design issues. Therefore, I spent a great deal of time trying to figure out the procedures of building a course in WebCT on my own, using trial and error, and printing out copious amounts of pages from the online instructor's manual; however, without knowing more of the

terminology, it was difficult and frustrating. Furthermore, since no one else had done this at my college, there was not anyone to ask for help; my only recourse was to post a question on the Ask Dr. C discussion board. Fortunately, several experienced online teachers responded to my questions and I mastered the basics.

Having taken several courses in instructional design in my graduate program, I tried to apply as many of the principles as possible, given the time constraints. Drawing on what I knew of our students, the goals and objectives of the course, and my own online learning experiences, I chunked the course down into half a dozen units, using a series of Word documents with a table format to organize the course. I then began filling in lists of documents, handouts, and activities for each unit. I put together a detailed week-by-week schedule, a list of posting topics, and several documents giving tutorial information for inexperienced computer users. I also developed a simple entrance survey, an orientation session, an exit survey, several tutorials to help students learn basic computer skills, and several simple assessment tools.

This writer found her experiences atypical in comparison with Orwig's (1999), however; after spending 350 hours to plan and construct the original course in WebCT, the original Applied Writing course website was used for only one semester. The textbook then changed editions, and the addition of a chapter forced me to make multiple changes. With the many steps required by WebCT's software to delete and add new content, this added an estimated 40 hours to the task of preparing the course for use in the second semester. Fortunately, the third semester did not require much more than revising the documents with specific dates, so updating the web site did not take as much time, which allowed this writer more time to think about other issues.

Unfortunately, it may not be realistic to see web courses as having a longer shelf life than one to two semesters without major revision. Odasz (2002) stated, "The 'shelf life' of an online course can be as little as six months, as URLS change regularly" (Lesson Three). Odasz (2002) structured his courses around having students explore a variety of websites and then interact and complete an activity; therefore, a few broken links would lessen the effectiveness of his course design.

This writer found, however, that there was a perception at her college that these online courses would be developed and then used for several years without significant changes; her documentation of the time required to develop the course provided valuable data, and more than a few surprises.

The Second Course: Using Blackboard

In the spring of 2002 I was given an opportunity to develop a second web-based course, using Blackboard, as an adjunct for a small university. The main campus had been using Blackboard for several years. Furthermore, the university had established a national reputation for its progressive technical policies and practices; it became a wireless campus in the fall of 2001, with students and faculty alike having laptop computers. Blackboard is used in all of the courses on main campus as a way to connect students and faculty through its communication tools, as well as a way to post course materials.

One of the university's other notable innovations has been its outreach to community colleges all over Iowa; it has almost a dozen centers at community colleges across the state, where students can earn their four-year degrees upon completion of their two-year degrees. However, the centers had not yet used Blackboard in their classes and

students did not have as much access to technology, so my project was a pioneering effort. As such, it seemed a logical choice for a graduate project, and became the focus of this paper.

This writer worked with Dr. Nancy Wilson, Center Director, to make the arrangements for this project; we agreed that I would attend several training sessions in how to use Blackboard and then develop a supplemental web site for a hybrid course (to be delivered over the ICN, with a web component), using Blackboard.

Getting the necessary training. I attended several training sessions in June, along with other adjuncts and staff members. Paul Bowers, the Director of Teaching and Learning with Technology from main campus, and an experienced online teacher, was our trainer. He spent much of the first session discussing instructional design as it applied to developing web courses, as well as the change in teaching style that technology seems to promote. He gave numerous examples of how to use the web: to extend learning, provide interaction, collect models to demonstrate, and reinforce explanations, among other things. He also stressed the need to plan the course, gather documents, and use a simple pattern of arranging documents within folders on the website for easier navigation.

Bowers then took us a computer lab, where we spent the rest of the training sessions; he added us to an existing online course (Webagogy) so that we could some experience using Blackboard from a student's perspective. Knowing that I was going to implement this tool in my summer course, he took time to visit with me; I showed him my planning documents and he thought they looked useful. He encouraged me to look at

his course, which included a lot of information about adult learners as well as web course development, and look at the way he structured the content by arranging it in folders.

Planning the course design. Throughout June and into early July I worked on constructing the course in Blackboard. As before, I began with a series of tables in Word, with each table representing a unit. I listed activities, resources, handouts, textbook chapters, and assignments for each unit. I developed an entrance and exit survey. I put all of my lecture notes into PowerPoint presentations, located web sites and sources for each of the units, created some activities, wrote up prompts for the postings, and revised the assignments for the course to build in use of the web, active learning and collaboration.

I tried to accommodate multiple learning styles, and posted the power point presentations both as power points and the outlines as notes. I also saved the power point presentations themselves in several formats: as earlier versions of power point, in case my students would not be able to open the newer one, and as shows. I found myself playing with various file formats more than I had done in my first course; for the Webct course, everything was first created in Word and then opened in an html editor (Front Page) for final formatting. In contrast, Bowers (2002) recommended that teachers use Word, post documents as rich text format files and encourage students to create file folders on their own computers and download documents there. This was done to minimize time students might have to spend online, in case they were either limited in how much time they could spend online or had a dial up connection, and were thus sharing the phone line with the computer.

As Hopper (2001) had warned, I was somewhat disconcerted by the realization that in the ten years of teaching the course, I had assembled a collection of file folders full of clippings, frequently photocopied handouts, and older "lessons," that did not seem adequate to the task. I determined that if I did not have a document in electronic format, I did not have it at all and ended up updating the course much more than originally planned, using less than 50% of my original material. In contrast to my WebCT experience, I found Blackboard to be very user friendly, streamlined, and felt that I could focus more on developing the content and not as much on trying to master some strange new technology. However, as noted, I also took a critical look at my course materials; I had been teaching this class for a decade and realized that some of my materials looked shabby and outdated. I was amazed by all of the rich content that I found on the web that reflected current research and practice, and decided that I would weave a number of external links and resources into the course. I spent approximately one hundred hours planning and developing the website. When I had questions, I contacted Paul, consulted the online instructor's manual, or went directly to the Blackboard website. My questions were answered promptly and I felt much more supported in my efforts.

Implementing the course. I then implemented the course during July and August; I drove down to the center for the first session to meet the students and do an orientation; we went over the course website, and students completed the survey. As expected, none had taken a web-enhanced or web-based course before, and the range of technical skills and experiences varied. Several times during the early weeks I took time to explain such routine things as how to set up folders, send an email attachment, download something

from the course website, and how to save a document in Word in rich text format. I also posted links for technology tutorials. For the most part, students adapted quickly to the discussion board and I found that my results more or less matched those of other web teachers: females tended to post more frequently, to respond to other students' postings, and to think that the course web site had helped them learn (Comunale et al, 2001). In addition, students who used the website most tended to earn higher grades in the course (Comunale et al, 2001).

Students commented during class sessions on how much they enjoyed having all of the materials available should they miss a class session, how useful the external links were, and how much they liked having ready access to email. Over and over, I heard them say that every class should be using Blackboard. However, the best part to me was the growing sense of community that had developed just a few weeks into the course. Even though a number of these students had been taking classes together for several terms, many of them mentioned that the Discussion Board was giving them a chance to get to know each other as people, and that they liked it.

The class was taught twice a week for eight weeks, in the 5:30 to 8:05 time slot; we were originally going to deliver the class over the ICN and use the Blackboard site to supplement the course. However, we had more problems with the ICN than I had ever encountered in previous classes, so I ended up making several trips to the Center during the first month; I wanted to do some face to face conferences over writing assignments and give further instruction on how to do research on the web. After several more problematic ICN sessions, I ended up terminating that mode of delivery, and made the commute. However, I felt that the Blackboard Site was still instrumental in delivering the

course, since I could post announcements, agendas for the next class session, handouts, and PowerPoint presentations on it. It also gave me several ways to communicate with students—as a group or individually—share websites' URLs that had been mentioned in class, and keep them updated as to their progress with the grade book.

Evaluating the course. As already noted, students completed an entrance survey, giving me further information about their technology skills and experiences. This prompted me to schedule some additional orientation and to include additional information on the website. I also received numerous email messages from students, often in response to the group email messages that I had sent to them. I was able to do this from within Blackboard, which I felt was a time saver and it also helped students feel more comfortable with the technology. However, it also provided me with a rich source of formative evaluation: how were things going in class, what needed to be clarified, how well were they finding their way around the Blackboard site?

At the end of the course students completed an exit survey along with their essay test format final exam; they gave me a great deal of feedback about the experience and were fairly enthusiastic about the addition of the Blackboard website. This writer felt that her investment of time and energy in creating the companion website had been well spent, and that with some additional materials; the site could then be used for a web-based directed study.

Documenting the experience. Later in the summer I compiled the survey results and wrote a report to my graduate college professor as well as the university's center director; I documented the experience, reported on the process taken to develop the course, and presented the survey results and student comments. I also took time to detail

some of the procedures used to organize materials as well as tips and tricks for using Blackboard, including some things I had discovered that were not mentioned in our training sessions (see Appendix A).

More recently I took time to compile some instructions for other teachers needing to transform a face-to-face course to an online course, using Blackboard. I put together a step/action table to guide them through the process. I also included some of the documents previously created to help plan the course design, as well as some organizational documents I had developed to help my students keep organized: a unit checklist; a detailed week by week schedule that incorporated elements of an orientation in the first few weeks; and a sample syllabus, showing some of the additional information that online learners need to know upfront (see Appendix A).

Reflecting on the experience. The shift to web-based instruction alters the teaching and learning process in several ways. Depending on the circumstances, instructors and learners may not have any face-to-face contact. In addition, not all learners placed in a web-based course may be adequately prepared for the rigors of taking an online course. They may not be sufficiently self-motivated, have time management skills or the computer/technical skills to be successful. They may not have access to a powerful computer with a high-speed Internet connection. Complicating these realities, many colleges are not doing an adequate job of assessing students' readiness to take online courses or of giving students an orientation to online learning; moreover, many sources encouraged doing an orientation (Bi, 2000; Hricko, 2002; James & Voigt, 2001).

Therefore, it becomes essential that the course website is "user friendly" and well designed. Most, if not all, of the materials will be embedded in the course website and it

will be the learner's responsibility to locate them, determine how best to use them, and then complete the tasks assigned. The class environment is no longer a room with chairs, desks, chalkboard, and classmates but a virtual space available twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week; however, this new environment is only evident once a student has logged on and navigated around.

After that, it is up to the student to access course materials, send an email message with his or her question, post a message to the class discussion board, or check out an external link. While the plan of instruction is often invisible to students sitting in the traditional classroom—beyond passing out the syllabus during the first week of class—it must become an integral part of the web course. The format may vary from one course to the next, but often includes a detailed calendar and weekly email messages to the entire class (Hricko, 2002; James & Voigt, 2001, Olivas, 2002).

Wrapping up the project. Reflecting on the project, and the process of developing the second course, my experience matched the points mentioned in the earlier summary:

- Designing the courses for online delivery forced me to re-think or "re-vision" the courses' goals and objectives as I considered how best to transform them for the online environment (Hopper, 2002; Hricko, 2002; James & Voigt, 2001; Orwig, 1999).

- I used both entrance and exit surveys to assess students' technology skills, needs, and previous experiences (James & Voigt, 2001; Ko & Rossen, 2001; Simonson et al, 2000; Sheinberg, 2001).

- I planned the courses on paper first, in an effort to structure the physical layout to make it easy to navigate, visual, and rich in interaction and content (Hricko, 2002; Ko & Rossen, 2001; Moore et al, 2001).

- I found it useful to chunk material down into smaller documents, created folders for the major units, and added one for orientation and another one for wrapping up activities (Moore, Winograd & Lange, 2001; James & Voigt, 2001; Ko & Rossen, 2001).

- I tried to engage learners in more than one learning style/mode with a variety of assignments (Campbell, 1999; Howell, 2001; Sheinberg, 2001).

- I built in interactivity and engaged learners in activities geared towards solving real world problems, with postings on the discussion board as well as assignments calling for collaborative learning and group projects (Alley, 2000; Elsenheimer, 2003; James & Voigt, 2001; Odasz, 2002; Palloff & Pratt, 2001; Thornburg, 1996).

- I included opportunities for active learning, critical thinking and reflection in the writing assignments and postings (Alley, 2000; Campbell, 1997; James & Voigt, 2001; Muirhead, 2002; Odasz, 2002; Palloff & Pratt, 2001).

- I found several ways to evaluate students, using surveys, self reflective essays, pretests and posttests, collaborative projects, and project based learning (Hricko, 2002; James & Voigt, 2001; Ko & Rossen, 2001; Moore et al, 2001; Odasz, 2002; Orwig, 1999).

Conclusions and Recommendations

Based on the combination of my research and my experiences, the problems that have occurred in the development of course websites have been caused by a number of factors, including administrative pressure, time pressure, not having instructional designers on staff, lack of training in the course design or the pedagogy of teaching online, lack of experience as online learners, and developing courses in isolation. Factors fueling the pressure to offer online courses include demand of students for flexibility in learning, desire of colleges to be competitive, and curiosity and desire for professional growth on the part of the instructor.

However, it is my opinion that the enormous pressure to produce web-based courses quickly also compromised the ability of many instructors to incorporate principles of instructional design into their efforts. One of my college administrators made a comment late in the spring that it would be great to have a dozen new web courses by the following fall: however, it did not happen for several reasons. Even so, the comment reflected the pressure many colleges have felt. Furthermore, if twelve new web courses were offered in a matter of a couple of months, one of the following things would almost certainly have had to happen:

- Shovelware – the teachers put together a collection of syllabi, lecture notes, handouts, and other materials and called it an online course.

- Over-reliance on a textbook – teachers relied on textbooks to supply PowerPoint presentations, objectives, and assignments and didn't know how to structure interactivity.

- Over-reliance on courseware management tools, such as WebCT or Blackboard, to supply the necessary instructional design components. There is no guarantee that a course done in either one of these courseware tools will necessarily be more effective, yet it is easy for people to confuse structure with design.

In addition, since traditional instructional design models have not taken web-based learning into consideration, some teachers may not have been certain how to do so, or may have felt overwhelmed by the simultaneous tasks of converting course material for the web, learning new software packages (such as html editors, WebCT or Blackboard), and trying to determine how to transform activities into opportunities for interaction and collaboration.

As noted, development of such a course is time consuming; it took in excess of 350 hours for this writer to develop her first course using WebCT, and approximately 100 hours for her first course in Blackboard. The paradox is that online teachers are told that the course should be complete well before the beginning of the semester, and yet almost every teacher finds new ideas, discovers a website, or rethinks an assignment and wants to modify or expand material, so the task seems all the more overwhelming, especially the first time. Unfortunately, few colleges plan ahead adequately for the task: I had only one semester for the community college course and less than that for the university course. Administrators at my college had locked us into using WebCT and arranged for us to join a consortium without getting feedback from faculty; after spending thousands of dollars on these arrangements, they wanted and needed to have some tangible evidence of online courses, and so pressure was placed to get a number of courses developed and implemented by the following fall.

To accomplish this, we used a variety of approaches: we purchased several prepared WebCT courses from another college (which proved to be less than adequate, since they fit Hopper's label of "shovelware," lacking rich content and having few opportunities for interactivity). We used the publishers' free products of Pageout and Course Compass for several other courses. One instructor simply put his materials together on a website off the college home page; it was not password protected nor did he have any interaction built into it. He communicated with students individually by email, and did not see any real need for them to interact with each other.

In contrast, I was one of a handful of "guinea pigs" who created a WebCT course from scratch; however, training was perfunctory, technical support was not available, and the only help came from Ask Dr. C, an online discussion/support group monitored by WebCT experts. Later, a reference book was located and purchased: *The Ultimate WebCT Handbook* (2002), which was written by the Web Resources Staff at Georgia State University. Unfortunately, some aspects of the software remained elusive: some of the formatting features of the grade book proved to be more time consuming than it was worth, for example.

A related factor to the struggles of online teachers learning how to develop web-based courses is that not many teachers have taken these types of courses themselves, and since so many are done in password protected formats, there are few models easily accessible for study. At my college, I was one of the few people who had been an online learner, and I would encourage others to enroll in an online course before developing their own.

Not only is online learning a new experience, web development often occurs in isolation. I was somewhat surprised at the amount of trust demonstrated by busy administrators and colleagues; no one sat down and previewed my course before the beginning of the semester, and I had not seen any of the other web-based courses at my college until I served on a committee recently. Our task was to determine which courseware tool to use in the following academic year, and to see if we could somewhat standardize what it means to have a web-based course. We went to a computer lab for one session and several of us gave a tour of our class websites; it was a very interesting experience to see the range of strategies and approaches, as well as the rationale for the choices made.

The experience of creating the second class was a much more positive one, especially since the training and technical support were more than adequate. I felt truly supported as a teacher: my questions were answered promptly, and technical problems were few and quickly resolved. In addition, the contrast of the two courseware packages made the experience seem all the easier; it took far fewer steps to prepare materials for the web site and far fewer steps to add content to Blackboard. The lessons learned while planning and developing the first course were also valuable, since I was able to build on the successes of that experience and learn from some of the struggles as well.

In the meantime, my college has taken several steps to address concerns regarding online courses. This writer was given a faculty mini-grant to gather information about the evaluation of online courses and developed and helped pilot an exit survey for the fall of 2002; the survey has been further revised for the spring of 2003. Embanet (our vendor

for Blackboard) is hosting the survey, and it is hoped that the convenience of being able to complete it online will encourage more students to participate.

Second, a number of online teachers served on an informal committee with staff and administrators to help determine the future of online courses at our college; we used the material on the Edutools website to carefully review the various courseware management tools, and then made a recommendation to adopt Blackboard. Many of the articles and resources located by this writer were instrumental, as was her experience of having using both Webct and Blackboard.

We are in the process of changing over to Blackboard in the fall of 2003, with several instructors using Course Compass (a version of Blackboard provided by publishers) this semester; therefore, this writer looks forward to converting her Webct course into a Blackboard course for the fall, and will be assisting other instructors in their efforts to create their first Blackboard courses. In addition, we chose to obtain Blackboard through Embanet, a company that provides training and technical support to both online students and teachers.

Finally, we are exploring ways to enlist experienced online teachers to serve as technology mentors for teachers wanting to integrate technology more fully into their classes, in either a web-enhanced or web-based course. This writer looks forward to the fall of 2003, when three hours of release time will allow her the opportunity to help other teachers design and develop their online courses, among other things. Thus, while our college, like so many others, has struggled in its first couple of years of offering online courses, it is clear that online learning is here to stay. Based on my experiences and research done for this project, colleges still in the process of developing an online

program would be wise to avoid the mistakes made by others, and to consider the following suggestions.

Recommendations

While there certainly is value to investing in better technology, such as more user friendly courseware tools, we need to first invest in the people who will be using them: the teachers. Teachers play a key role in structuring the teaching and learning environment, regardless of whether it takes place in a traditional classroom or online; however, the demands of the virtual classroom create additional challenges and require additional training and support.

- Teachers need to be involved early on in the decision making process when an institution is developing an online program.

- Teachers need training in instructional design and the pedagogy of teaching online first, and then in the courseware tool and related software.

- Teachers should ideally become online learners themselves first before they attempt to design or deliver an online course.

- Teachers need access to current research and resources, both print and electronic: the references mentioned in this paper would be useful.

- Teachers need to understand that supplying content without interaction is not enough: active learning, collaboration, and interaction are necessary ingredients.

- Teachers need access to technical support and instructional designers trained in web course development.

- Teachers need to be given enough time to do a quality job of developing an online course: three to six months may be feasible for a more experienced teacher, while a novice may need longer (six to eight months or more).

- Technology needs to be kept as simple as possible, for the sake of the students and the teachers.

- Administrators need to be cautioned that online courses will not be able to be reused half a dozen times without reinvesting in their revision: shelf life may be as little as one to two semesters.

I mentioned earlier in the paper that I had been one of the distance education pioneers at my community college, teaching composition and literature courses over the ICN. That experience transformed my teaching style, led me to integrate computers into all of my courses, and ultimately led me to where I am today. Becoming an online learner—and now an online instructor—has also affected me profoundly. I have integrated the use of a free online discussion board (available at http://nicenet.org) into each of my non-web classes, and look for ways to build in active learning, collaboration, and links to web resources in every class.

Teaching and learning online has also given me the opportunity to rethink my overall teaching strategies, to question the same old syllabus, and to be willing to try new things. In doing so, I think the experience has helped me to become a more reflective teacher, and one more capable of not only integrating technology, but also of understanding more clearly the reasons for doing so.

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Appendix A

How to put together a course website in Blackboard: tips for new teachers

Step One: Plan the Course

Step	Action
1	**Start with your "regular" (face to face) syllabus and course outline and a calendar.** • Recognize that an online syllabus typically contains far more information; I will give you a sample. You will want to spell out any policy that you would normally talk about in your classroom, especially how you will handle plagiarism and the need for active participation. • Break your course down into units – or logical chunks of chapters. Your textbook may do this for you already. Most of my courses have ended up with about 4-6 units, but there is no magic number.
2	**Look at your face to face course outline and the calendar:** • How much time do you estimate you spend on each unit now in class? • What chapters, activities, and assignments do you now do for each unit? • Write this information down. • **Develop a week by week detailed plan** that will guide your students through the course: what chapters, what assignments, what activities, what postings should they be doing in week 1, week 2, week 3, and so on? • You may also choose to use the calendar feature; however, it is better to develop the detailed narrative first. Don't just start sticking random dates and brief notes into the calendar. (September 15—turn in assignment). Okay.... Which one?
3	**Now each unit should be looked at as a standalone piece.** • I use a table format and will include a sample in this document. Create tables • List the specific documents that already exist, and what may be needed, for each unit. This could include PowerPoint presentations to cover material in the chapters, handouts for the assignments, chapter worksheets, lists of resources (websites, textbook helps, campus resources, etc.) • Notice my comments later in this document about creating a Unit Checklist for my students. This evolved out of this original table.

Step	Action
4	**Create a file folder for your course documents on ONE computer, if possible, and put all of your documents into this file folder.** I put my folder right on the desktop, but you can put it into **My Documents** or wherever you want. • Again, create a series of file folders **inside the main folder:** one for each unit. • Don't just randomly start "sticking documents into your Blackboard shell." PLAN FIRST. It is easier to put things where you want them the first time around, and not have to fiddle with them half a dozen times later. • You may want to create additional folders for collecting external links, for documents in progress, power points you have downloaded from the publisher's website, etc.
5	**Using your table (think of it as a list), find and update/revise, or create documents for each unit.** • Do yourself a favor and be consistent in how you name documents. Establish a pattern. • It's best to NOT have any spaces in your file names. Example: chp1_worksheet.rtf Chp2_worksheet.rtf
6	**Create any supplemental documents.** Remember, in a web course, all your student has is the information/content on your website. Look at what your students need to know how to do as you consider what supplemental documents you need to create or find. For example, I actually created an Orientation folder with activities to do before beginning Unit 1. I put a number of documents here: --Cherie's schedule & contact information --The FULL syllabus (a shorter version is posted under the syllabus ICON) --A list of the writing assignments (also found in the full Syllabus) --A list of the Units (also in full Syllabus) --Resources on the Web --The Writing Survey & UFO exercise handout (two things for them to complete in the first week and return to me) **Here are some ideas for documents:** • How to attach a document to email (include information about file formats, such as saving things as .rtf) • How to do a posting to the discussion board • Your schedule • The schedule for Academic Support, the Library

Step Two: How to Add Content

Do not 'STICK STUFF' into your Blackboard shell until you have the first unit all ready to go.

Note: the following directions assume that you have looked around your Blackboard website and are familiar with its basic components, or areas.

Step	Action
1a	**Add Content -- Begin with the syllabus.** (The syllabus is a separate link or button on the navigation bar to the left). You can create or add the syllabus several ways: • You can copy and paste text from a Word document, or even type it in the text box. • You can also browse your computer to select a document and attach it.
	FIRST, go to the control panel and select the syllabus. (You will find the Control Panel underneath the list of links on the left-hand side; it's below Course Map). Notice your choices once you've clicked on syllabus; you want to select "add an item" – this refers to one document. You will then have a form open up, with a place for a text box. You can copy and paste here. Or you can scroll down and see a place to browse and select a document to attach.
1b	**After adding content, you will be asked the same questions each time. (Say Yes to All).** • Do you want to make the content visible? Yes • Do you want to add offline content? Yes • Do you want to track number of views? Yes • Do you want to add metadata? Yes • Choose date restrictions This means that you can select the date that you want to have the document visible to students; the simplest thing is to make all documents visible now and set the date for a couple of years in the future. When done checking off these options, select "submit" and your document will be added to the Blackboard site.
2	**Click on Staff Information in the Control Panel to add a brief bio of yourself, as well as recent photo.** • A form with a textbox will open up, much like the one for the syllabus. • Again, you can copy and paste text here. • You can also easily upload a photo of yourself. • Note also that you can "modify" (edit) or delete documents after you have created and/or added them.

Step	Action
3	**Create a series of file folders in the Course Documents area: create one for each unit. Again, use a model or standard for naming them: refer to your planning documents.** (You may notice that you can decide on the font color now; however, you can also change it later). • I also create folders for Orientation (activities for the beginning of the semester) and one for Wrapping Up (exit activities and reminders). This seems to help students focus on getting organized at both ends of the calendar. • **To create folders, you must use the Control panel button,** which is found at the bottom of the list of links at the left hand side of the screen. This opens up a screen that gives you all of the options for creating and maintaining the course. • Select the area you want to work on, and when it opens up, you will see the same choices: add an item, a folder, a URL, etc. • When you create a folder, you can also make a note of its contents on the folder itself, by selecting "modify" and then typing in the textbox. • All you are doing here is creating the structure/the course design. It would be overwhelming to simply dump 147 documents one after another into the Course Documents area! You are making it easier for you—and your students.
4	**Add folders to the Assignments area.** Again, I create folders for each unit as well as several for supplemental materials as well; since this is a writing course, I will have some folders for documenting sources, web research tips, etc. I typically put handouts here for the writing assignments, along with grading slips, peer editing slips, and student samples from previous semesters.
5	**Add folders to the External Links area.** External links gives you an opportunity to provide your students with resources: it is a place to list online resources, such as dictionaries, online newspapers, etc. • Check with your textbook/publisher; many instructor manuals list websites for each chapter or major topic. • Use metasearch engines to locate new sources. • Again, you do not want to simply start listing 42 websites to check out; put them into categories that make sense and will be easy for you and your students to remember.

Step	Action
	For new teachers, do not bury things too deeply. I was given the "rule of three" in my training and it makes sense. • Think of the general area as one folder: for example, Course Documents. • Think of the Unit folders inside Course Documents as the second folder. • If you think it will help your students to create subfolders inside the Unit folders, that may be okay, but I wouldn't go any deeper. Ideally, students should be able to find any specific document in three clicks.
6a	**Begin to add content to each folder (unit).** Remember, if you make a mistake, you can modify (edit or remove) individual items.
6b	You can also rearrange the order of items in a folder; there is a little number by each item and it is a drop down window, with a series of numbers reflecting the number of items in the folder. As a general rule, the last item you added is the last one on the page/screen. If you want that to be the top item, you simply choose #1 in the little window by the item, and everything changes to reflect that choice.
7	**Go to the Communications area and set up the discussion board forums (each forum is focused on one topic) one at a time.** • You will probably want to create a document in Word and compose your writing prompts there, and then copy and paste the individual prompts into their respective areas. • Prompts should include enough detail to help students know what you expect them to talk about, as well as other guidelines. Do they need to type more than one sentence? Should they respond to another student? Do they need to read something in the textbook, look at one of the external links, etc? Is there a deadline for doing the posting? • You may also want to establish some brief ground rules (or netiquette) at the beginning of the semester: no flaming (hostile messages), no profanity, and no disrespectful comments. • Most courses begin with a brief introduction of each student.

Step	Action
8	**Set up the grade book by typing in the names of the assignments and filling in the point values, etc.** Start at the Control Panel and look for the Assessment section. This will open up the grade book area. The list of student names will be added when students are actually added to your course. The columns will automatically begin to total up. The grade book easily downloads to an Excel spreadsheet and is user friendly.
9	**Add announcements.** Again, I would create a word document and create these offline, or look back at the week-by-week document you created earlier and resave it just for the announcements. I found it works well to post agendas or lists of what students need to do each week. These announcements will be the first thing they see when they log on and enter the class website.
	Congrats! You're well on your way to creating your online course…..

More Details on my Orientation folder

The document on the following page is one that I created for my students: a unit checklist. It is designed to guide them through each unit and keep them organized. This particular document addresses Orientation, which I have found is essential. I try to meet with each student face to face and go over the basics of the course; however, this document also helps students cope with what they need to do "to get started" with the online course. I encourage them to print it off and literally check off each activity; it helps them to build some confidence early on that they have the skills and information to be successful.

Orientation to Online Learning (Cherie's sample)

Step	Action	Check off
1	Attend one of the orientation sessions, meet the teacher, and get a syllabus.	
2	We will go over the rest of the Orientation materials and explore the WebCT website together.	
3	Log on to WebCT and practice navigating around the web site at the orientation session	
4	Do the introductory posting (posting 1) and later, respond to one posting	
5	Complete the writing survey and send to Cherie	
6	Do the writing sample – 1 to 2 pages, double spaced	
7	Buy your textbook at the HCC bookstore	
8	Get a three ring notebook and start to organize your materials. You will be responsible to download worksheets and handouts from the WebCT website	
	Documents to notice in the Orientation folder: --Cherie's schedule & contact information --The FULL syllabus (a shorter version is posted under the syllabus ICON) --A list of the writing assignments (also found in the full Syllabus) --A list of the Units (also in full Syllabus) Resources on the Web --The Writing Survey & UFO exercise handout	

Planning Documents for an Online Course

The main idea here is to begin gathering what you have (handouts, power points, and supplemental materials) and then chunk things down into units. This will also help you to see "gaps" or things you need to create. Ideally, it would be nice to name these documents something close to the names you will use for the files; it's best not to leave spaces between words, for example.

A related task is to think of all of the information you normally convey in the first few weeks of the semester; this must now be translated into a written format. You may expand your syllabus, add documents to the orientation unit/folder, or decide to put together a group of documents to email to your students after they enroll. Some of these documents deal with common technology tasks required to participate in an online course: how to attach documents to an email, how to save documents in various file formats, how to do a posting, email etiquette, and other matters.

Orientation & Getting Started

- What information do your students need to know right away?

- What textbook or supplemental websites should you point out?

- Do they need the syllabus broken up into chunks of documents that will signal their purpose for easier access?

Orientation/Getting Started

Item	Check when done

First writing assignments

It's a great idea to have them write something almost immediately, if nothing else, to do a posting to the discussion board that serves as a brief introduction. You may want them to complete a short survey, write a short paper, or complete another task. This gets them into the mode of completing a task and lets you see how successful they are doing so; some students may need help sending an assignment as an email attachment, for example.

First Writing Assignments

Item	Check when done

Web Resources

- What web sites have you found useful for your students?

- Does your textbook list any? What electronic resources does the publisher offer for this course (have you checked?) (Most publishers have a website; many textbooks do as well. Check to see if your text is one).

- Have you used a metasearch engine like http://surfwax.com to locate additional resources?

Other sources for search engines include:

http://searchenginewatch.com (for multiple lists of search engines)

http://google.com (another good search engine)

Blackboard has a special section devoted to listing external links; this was a popular feature with my students. What types of links should you include? It depends on

the course content; however, here are some ideas. You might consider also listing some

sites such as:

- OWLS (online writing labs)

- discipline-specific national organizations

- online newspapers, magazines and journals

- online reference sources (dictionaries,

- lists of search engines (all of those mentioned above are useful)

- technology tutorials

Here is a link to my faculty website, with some examples of links I've discovered and

post for my students. (Several examples follow the URL).

http://www.hawkeyecollege.edu/faculty/cpost/Web%20Resouces%20for%20Writing.htm

Professional Organizations

> http://www.iste.org
> International Society for Technology in Education
> Journal: Learning and Leading with Technology
> National Education Computing Conference

> http://www.aect.org/
> Association for Educational Communications and Technology
> Publishes Educational Technology Research and Development and TechTrends journals
> Yearly AECT convention

> http://www.nsdc.org/
> The National Staff Development Council (NSDC)
> Site provides access to books, conventions, and professional development standards
> A nonprofit professional association committed to ensuring success for students through
> staff development and school improvement

More search engines

http://www.hawkeyecollege.edu/faculty/cpost/more_search_engines.htm

ONLINE DATABASES -- MAGAZINE ARTICLES

http://findarticles.com -- this is an online database of magazine articles from a variety of sources.

http://magportal.com -- here is another online database for magazine articles.

http://www.lib.duke.edu/libguide/citing.htm -- Citing Sources and Avoiding Plagiarism: Documentation

Guidelines. From Duke University Library.

http://owl.english.purdue.edu/handouts/research/r_docelectric.html --Purdue University has one of the

BEST Online Writing Centers (known as OWLS, by the way). Here is the link for their handouts.

Where should you look for web resources? List them here.

Item	Check when done

Continue with a table for each unit; this will help you get organized!

It would be very useful to also make note of the actual file name, so you may

want to add a column for this purpose.

UNIT CHECKLISTS

By the way, I found that this same plan could be adapted for my students. So I

came up with a Unit Checklist that is really just a table of documents and activities for

each unit, along with a column for students to check off when done reading that

document or completing that task. Students LOVE this feature, because it helps them

stay focused too!

Unit 3 Checklist -- Business Correspondence (Spring 2003)

Step	Action	Check off
1	Refer to the handout, Differences between letters, memos, and e-mail. It is important that you understand this material!	
2	Read chapter 8, view the PowerPoint on your student CD-ROM, and do the worksheet.	
	There is also a handout that gives lots of tips on memos overall.	
3	Read chapter 9, view the PowerPoint, and do the worksheet.	
4	Read chapter 10, view the PowerPoint, and do the worksheet.	
5	Read chapter 11, view the PowerPoint, and do the worksheet.	
6	If you haven't done so yet, email Cherie with your topic idea for the annotated Webliography assignment. This is the web research project.	
7	As you will recall, we have actually already done two memos: the Library memo and Writing Instructions. I did that because I didn't want you to feel overwhelmed by this Unit.	
8	**Do the first letter assignment:** see the handout on this. You will be doing a "real world" type of letter.	
9	**Do the second letter assignment.** Choose from these cases in Chapter 10: 10.9, 10.14, 10.21, and 10.23.	
10	**Do the third letter assignment.** Choose from these cases in Chapter 11: 11.14, 11.19, 11.21, and 11.28.	
11	• Notice that there is a peer editing slip/grading slip for each one of the assignments. • Notice too that there are a number of sample letters throughout these chapters. • You are expected to use a template in Word to complete these assignments. • You can have a friend, coworker or classmate complete the peer editing slip by sending it to them as an attachment; if you need help, I will be glad to show you how to do this. You can copy and paste them into a new word document as well.	
12	Do the POSTINGS for this unit. I will put the details into the writing prompt. There is a short document with links to several articles about using cell phones; you will need to look at this before you do your posting.	
13	There are several articles about e-mail, which is becoming such an important part of the workplace. Read them as you have time. Talking to a number of people over the past two to three years, I am hearing over and over again how big of a role email is playing in the workplace. Several have commented that they use email for up to 70% or more of their contact with clients, coworkers in other areas, and other professionals.	
14	Be sure that you refer to the Due Dates handout for the information about when specific assignments are due.	

Revised February 2, 2003

Pros and Cons of inserting content as Word documents versus web documents

Word -- Save as .doc OR .rtf	Web page -- Save as .htm
You can use an ordinary word document; this saves a lot of time for the teacher. However, you may want to **save down** if you have the very latest version of software, since many people are at least one or two versions behind. (Use "Save As" and select version. Or simply use .rtf)	You can still accomplish this from inside word; do a "save as" and simply select "web" from the list of options.
You can also use rich text format or .rtf documents for easy opening by students who may not even know "what they have" at home.	You don't have to put every document into Front page: you can just leave it in Word and save as a web document
However, if you use word documents, you **cannot then open them up directly inside the BB site.** - You have to save them (download) to the desktop or someplace else first. I am afraid that this will be frustrating to some students who are already insecure about their technical skills. - On the other hand, for students who do not have a speedy internet connection, it may be better. They can download documents they need, open them in word, and work offline. - You will then want to review some of the basics about file formats, creating file folders, and downloading documents (saving).	**.htm documents open right up in the frame. I did this for the syllabus.** You can save a web document and it opens, although some of the images may not be there (I am still trying to get these details worked out!)

Tricks I have learned that weren't covered in the training sessions

Item	Comment
How to rearrange content within a folder	There is a little number by each item; it is a drop down type window. Just choose another number and it rearranges content
How to send an email message to everyone in your class	Two ways: 1) go to the communication folder and select email 2) within the control panel, go to list users and select all for a list of names and email addresses
How to add the scores for one assignment to the grade book	For one assignment, click on the name of the assignment and you get a list of the students and can put in scores easily
To post the Agenda and reminders on the announcement section before each class.	Students are more likely to see the information because it appears on the home page.
How to post power points as shows; they open right up (.pps extension)	Students can't edit them, but they do not have to have power point loaded on their computer to see them.

Here is part of my online course schedule; I break it up into three documents.

Week by Week Schedule -- Spring Semester 2003, Part 1, January 13-February 9

Week 1 – January 13-19.

Orientation to Webct – I would like to set up several face to face opportunities for you to come together, meet each other and me, sit down in a computer lab together and go over how to get around in and use Webct. **We will look at the class Webct site and make sure you know how to find and use it.**

- You will also get a copy of the syllabus packet.
- We will discuss purpose and audience with the on-line document, Writing Basics, and we will do a brief orientation (as needed) to the types of computer skills/tasks you will need to know how to use. I have created several documents that may be useful to you:
- Computer Basics and MS Word Workshop – Using Templates & Creating, Saving, & Revising Documents

You should also:
- Buy the Guffey textbook and begin reading the first chapter.
- Note: we will cover the first unit, chapters 1-4, rather quickly. These chapters lay a foundation for better understanding the challenges of communicating in the workplace. Please realize that you are not going to be tested extensively over this material: instead, you will complete chapter worksheets and discuss some of the key ideas on the discussion board.
- **Your first assignments**: complete the writing survey, do the UFO proofreading exercise, and write your diagnostic essay (the writing sample)
- **For the writing sample, write an essay that tells me about yourself**: answer the "who, what, where, when, and why. " Who are you? Where did you grow up & go to school? What brings you to Hawkeye? What program/major are you in, or considering? Where do you hope to go after here? Where might you transfer? Where would you like to work? What would be your ideal job? When did you decide to come to Hawkeye? What do you hope to get out of this class? Why are communication skills— written and oral--important in your current and future personal and professional life? **Your instructor is the only person who will read this essay!** It should be at least 1 ½ to 2 pages long, double-spaced and typed. (Yes, you can spell check—it's not cheating).

Do your first posting to the WebCT discussion board. I will show you how to do this in our orientation. This is a brief introduction so that we can get to know each other a little better. Everyone will be able to read this document, which should be at least a couple of paragraphs.

- **Posting 1 – Write a brief introduction** (Write one or two paragraphs and tell us about you, answering some of these questions. Where do you live, and where are you from? Why are you taking this course? What program are you in here at Hawkeye? What experience, if any, have you had with online courses, sending and getting e-mail, using the Internet, or posting messages to a discussion or bulletin board? What do you enjoy doing in your free time?)

  Later, go back to the Discussion board, read a couple of introductions and respond to at least one student. Do you have something in common? You can ask a question, make a comment, etc.

- I will post chapter notes based on a PowerPoint presentation as well as a worksheet for chapter 1. Find these, view the PowerPoint, and complete the worksheet. You will turn in these worksheets for ten points each. Worksheets should either be written neatly in PEN or they can be downloaded and typed. **I do NOT like or accept work done in pencil. Worksheets can be turned in one at a time, or by Units.**
- You will also do a brief posting on each Unit (set of chapters). **I will post a writing prompt that gives you details to consider as you compose your posting.**
  Things to notice about the way the website is laid out:

  - **There is a Unit Checklist for each Unit; BE SURE** to look at this, because it will help you get organized. The weekly guide is designed to help you manage your time, but it does not replace the rest of the documents on the website.
  - **The Unit checklist will make note of the documents to find and read, the postings that need to be done, etc. You can literally check things off as you do them.**
  - Without exception, all of my students from last semester who earned grades of A and B commented that they used these checklists, and often printed them out.
    Notice these features in the Guffey textbook.

    There is a quick look at the list of chapters (Brief Contents) as well as a more detailed Table of Contents.
    - There is an Appendix after page 566. The first document (A) is one that covers CLUE (Competent language usage essentials); answers to your questions about punctuation, usage, and grammar can be found here.
    - The second document in the Appendix (B) is one that discusses how to format documents.
    - Item C covers how to document sources in both MLA and APA styles.
    - Item D presents a list of common grading symbols.

- There is also an answer key to the review exercises in the CLUE section.
- You can locate specific items by using the index

The chapters are set up in an easy to use format.

- First, the learning objectives are listed on the first page of each chapter.
- A case study follows, highlighting a real world example
- It is a very visual text, with headers that "chunk up" the material, and the use of key words and ideas in the margin (these serve as quick summaries of the main ideas on this page)
- You will see lots of charts and pictures: check them out, and see how they fit overall into the chapter
- Notice the colored boxes: Career Coach (light blue), Tech Talk (purple)
- Make sure you take time to look at the Spotlight on Communication: a picture and brief bio and quote from a business leader.
- Notice the sample documents (both poor and excellent). These are annotated, meaning that you will see little labels and comments that point out key features or parts.
- END OF CHAPTER MATERIALS
- Summary of learning objectives
- A chapter review in list form, with page numbers (on light tan/peach paper)
- Activities (a list of sample things to do, discuss, writing activities, sometimes cases)

A note about the power point presentations, chapter notes, and worksheets.

- The power point presentations cover the chapters' highlights in sequence: in other words, they will begin with the start of the chapter and move on from there. So, as you look at the PowerPoint, you should have your textbook open and skim along, taking time to annotate (mark up) some of the key ideas. This will help you as you complete the worksheets.
- The PowerPoint presentations are found on your student CD

I will put a link on the website so that you can download power point viewer: this allows you to open and view the presentations, but will not allow you to edit or create a new power point. I also routinely create a Word document that contains the outline view (the text) of the presentation; some people like to print these out as well.

WEEK 2 – JANUARY 20-26.
- **Turn in your first set of assignments by Friday, January 24th.** (This refers to the UFO proofreading exercise, the writing sample and the writing survey).

- **Continue to explore the website.** You will see that there is a site map that lists all of the documents, unit by unit.
- **Check out the discussion board and respond to another student, if you haven't done so already.**

If you come to orientation, I will give you paper copies of the syllabus, UFO exercise, and survey. However, they are also available on the website, and can be downloaded (saved) to your own computer: you will then want to save them to a special folder that you create for the class. Rename them and save them either as a word document or as a rich text format document (Donessay.doc or Donessay.rtf). This will make it possible for you to send me the electronic versions of these documents, and alert me as to who wrote them. So you can fill out the survey and complete the UFO exercise by hand (USING PEN ONLY). The essay MUST be typed.

You can get your assignments to me several ways:

1. Send them to me through e-mail, and attach your essay as an attachment. My work email is: cpost@hawkeye.cc.ia.us or cdargan@hawkeyecollege.edu
2. (Need help figuring out how to send and receive attachments to email? I can show you how!)
3. You can also send it to me through the Webct e-mail system; this is built into the Communications area.
4. You can drop it off at my office in the new Library Building, second floor, or in my mailbox, which is located in a small staff room right around the corner.
5. If necessary, you can mail it to me at campus. However, you will need to allow time for it to reach me, and will need to mail it a few days ahead of time. (I don't encourage this method, by the way!)

Here is my spring 2003 online syllabus

Hawkeye Community College
Applied Writing/CM102U Syllabus
Spring Semester 2003
Online Section – **Section 45833**
Cherie Post Dargan, Instructor

Course Description: Applied Writing focuses on composition and editing of curriculum-specific technical and business-related writing projects. Instruction includes formatting, information gathering, document drafting, editing, and written employment strategies.

Course Objectives:

❑ Introduce standard formats for routine business correspondence, including letters, memoranda, resumes, reports, and emails.

❑ Provide opportunities for students to apply elements of audience, purpose, and language in the writing process.

❑ Develop skills in using standard, vocation-specific grammar, sentence structure, and style.

❑ Provide experience in technology routinely used for business and office correspondence, including email, Internet, and word processing.

❑ Involve students in conducting and evaluating vocation-specific field research, printed source research, and electronic source research

❑ Emphasize integrating gathered information in written products typical of vocation-specific communication.

❑ Develop a full range of job-search strategies and written application materials.

❑ Cultivate students' active interest in career-specific reading and writing that will contribute to continuing professional and personal growth.

Textbooks and supplies: Students will need the following textbooks and supplies for this class. 📖
1. Business Communication: Process and Product. Mary Ellen Guffey. 4th ed. South-Western College Publishing Company, 2003.
2. A Spiral notebook for class notes.
3. A Three ring binder (1 ½ inch size) for handouts—to help get you organized.
4. One IBM formatted Diskette, with a label on it, and a small plastic storage case. If you have to use computers at campus or elsewhere you need to be sure you are organized.

Course Outline: Please see the attached, detailed Course Outline.
The major topics of study include:
• Orientation to the Online Learning and WebCT
• Communication Basics (Chapters 1, 2, 3, and 4)
• The Writing Process (Chapters 5, 6, and 7)
• Gathering Information (library & Internet sources) (Chapter 6)
• Business Letters and Memos (Chapters 8, 9. 10, and 11)
• Business Reports and Proposals (Chapters 12 and 13)
• Job Search (Resume, Cover Letter, Mock Interview) (Chapter 16)

- Presentations/Intro to PowerPoint (Chapter 15)

Activities: Powerpoint Presentations/chapter notes, worksheets, interactive discussions using the class bulletin board, written exercises and assignments, small group activities, and presentations. You will be expected to read the assigned material for each week and be ready to discuss it in your postings.

Student Web Sites
1.   Course Website (WebCT)
http://courses.kirkwood.edu/
This is link to the Kirkwood Webct list of classes. Click on Log In in the list of items in the tool bar at the top of the screen. This will take you to the log in screen for our class website. You will find all of the course materials here!
This includes: an internal e-mail system, our class bulletin board, a place to check your grades, a place to find PowerPoint presentations, worksheets, and other course materials.

2.   Textbook (Guffey's web site) THIS IS A SUPPLEMENTAL RESOURCE
http://www.meguffey.com
Communication at Work, with several links:
- **Research Resources** – links to 120 national and world newspapers, search tools, magazines and journals, and Usenet news groups
- **Writing Help** – links to OWLs (online writing labs) that have lots of handouts, tips, and guides for specific writing tasks
- **Financial Aid** – links to information about locating and applying for financial aid
- **Job Search** – links to job search information, resume writing helps, job banks, ads, and internship resources.
- Fun Time – **jokes, puzzles, games, and diversions**

Grammar Web sites

http://www.grammarlady.com/
The grammar lady website; this is run by a retired English teacher. It offers advice on grammar, punctuation, spelling, and other language issues.

http://www.english.uiuc.edu/cws/wworkshop/grammarmenu.htm
The Grammar Handbook at the Writers' Workshop, University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign. It explains basic grammatical rules concerning parts of speech, phrases, clauses, sentences and sentence elements, and common problems of usage."

http://userpages.umbc.edu/~kpokoy1/grammar1.htm
Grammar help for ESL (English as Second Language).

http://www.library.mwc.edu/english.html
English Resources. This includes online dictionaries, grammar help, and online journals.

Top Ten Metasearch Engines

Metasearch engines are search tools that look across multiple databases and often eliminate redundant listings.

1.	Surfwax	http://www.surfwax.com
2.	Dataware	http://www.queryserver.com
3.	Ixquick	http://ixquick.com
4.	C4	http://c4.com
5.	InfoZoid	http://infozoid.com
6.	Brightgate	http://www.brightgate.com
7.	Profusion	http://www.profusion
8.	Centrapoint	http://www.centrapoint.com
9.	Mamma	http://www.mamma.com
10.	Redesearch	http://redesearch.com

Source: The Bovee and Thill E-Newsletter, 4/30/01

Cherie's Hawkeye Faculty Web page
http://www.hawkeyecollege.edu/faculty/cpost/start.htm

Evaluation: Evaluation is based on a number of things—class participation through posting to the bulletin board, written assignments, and individual exercises. Grading will be based not only on your performance on the assignments, but also on your overall participation in class and progress.

The assignments will be graded on the basis of content (organization, expression, etc.) and mechanics (spelling, punctuation, sentence structure, etc.). Your textbook is an excellent resource—refer to it as you have questions, and be sure to bring them up with me as well.

I will give you a checklist for all of the major assignments, so that you can see my criteria for assigning scores. If your document fails to meet the minimum standards, you will be required to revise. However, you will also have the opportunity to revise assignments for additional points, which I assign depending upon the effort.

Estimated Points

Writing Assignments	Points
Diagnostic Writing sample	50
UFO activity (Proofreading activity)	10
Writing Survey	25
Memo to Cherie regarding the HCC library,* discussing the sources relating to your career field and analyzing if any additional resources are needed	50
Two Library Worksheets (2 x 25)	50
Writing Instructions Assignment – Fill out the Step/Action Table and do an analysis of the task	50

Short Report (Memo) Solving a Problem	50
Annotated Webliography (5 electronic sources)	50
Letter 1 -- requesting information (Chapter 9)	50
Letter 2 – persuasive (Chapter 10)	50
Letter -- with a negative message (Chapter 11)	50
Postings – 15 postings, 15 responses	300
Short Report/Memo to Cherie on a company in your career field.	50
Resume Packet (includes resume, References, and Letter of Application, geared to a job ad)	150
Mock Interview participation and list of questions for your partner (based on resume)	150
Powerpoint Presentation – on a topic of your choosing.	100
Final Exam (Short essay format)	100
Chapter Worksheets (We do all but Chapter 14)	140
Total	

Late Work: Assignments must be turned in within one week of the deadline to receive any points. **Example:** The letter is due on Monday; you can hand it in the following week, without penalty; however, I won't take it if it is more than one week late, unless there are extraordinary circumstances. I will NOT accept stacks of old work en mass towards the end of the semester; at midterm, the slate gets wiped clean. If you haven't turned in an assignment that was due before midterm yet, you waited too long.

Students' Special Needs: Let me know if you need special services or adaptations due to special needs or disabilities. Hawkeye Community College strives for quality, student-centered education with flexibility to meet students' special needs.

Oral Competency: Hawkeye Community College policy states that the oral competency (speaks English clearly) of an instructor will be evaluated by students at the end of each academic term. A minimum of one class per term will be asked to complete an oral competency evaluation per instructor. If at anytime you have a concern about the oral communication skill of your instructor, you are encouraged to contact the department chair or appropriate dean.

Late Starts & Weather Closing: Since this is a course taught over the web, it will not matter whether or not we get a big snowstorm! However, as a general rule, if we have a late start due to inclement weather, your other classes will begin at 10:00 am (two hours past the normal time of 8:00 am). If the college is closed and work was due that day, and you had planned to drop it off at my office, I will let you turn it in the following day without any penalty.

Plagiarism: This has become a major concern for online classes. There are hundreds of websites where students can buy or borrow essays; however, I doubt that there will be any suitable for this class. Please be aware of how serious it is to pass someone else's thoughts, quotes, or papers off as your own. Furthermore, there are also websites where

teachers can submit student assignments to check for possible plagiarism. If caught, you will suffer consequences beyond this course, since I will have to inform other key personnel on campus.

Simply put, I expect that the work you turn in will your own! It is one thing to work together with a tutor over in the Academic Support Area in Bremer Hall to improve your papers (fixing punctuation, spelling, and scrambled sentences or improving the organization). It is something else to plagiarize.

Instructor Availability: I will be on campus every day. My office is in the new Library building, room 209. My extension is 1701. I'll post my office hours during the first week of classes. You are ALWAYS welcome to stop by and visit with me. I know you're busy, too, however, so many students rely more on email and phone calls when they have questions or concerns.

Work Phone: (319) 296-2320, ext. 1701

E-mail address: cdargan@hawkeyecollege.edu

Remember, too, that there is a separate email system inside Webct. You should use this whenever possible to send me assignments or to contact me, since I can check that account from either home or work.

Guidelines for Written Assignments

All assignments should be typed (word processed). You should send them as e-mail attachments, or if necessary, drop them off or send them via snail mail (but you will need to allow more time).

Sample Assignment Format

Make sure you put your name and the following information on each assignment. Don't make me guess who you are, what class you are in, or what it is that you're handing in!
IMA G. Student
Mrs. Dargan/Applied Writing
Web Class
Assignment #3

Computer Survival Skills & Etiquette

This course is taught using WebCT, which will require you to have regular access to a computer that has the Internet, as well as a word processor (such as Microsoft Word) on it.

You will have access to many resources:

- **The Hawkeye Home Page – and with it, my faculty web page**

- **http://www.hawkeyecollege.edu/faculty/cpost/start.htm**

- **The course WEBCT website, which is located on the Kirkwood Community College server. You can access it two ways:**

- **First, at http://courses.kirkwood.edu**

- **Second, from the Hawkeye web page, and the Distance Learning Launch page**

- **The Hawkeye library**, as well as the entire consortium (UNI, Waterloo Public Library, and Cedar Falls Public Library)

You will need to learn how to manage and balance your time; use your desk calendar to set aside at least 2 to 3 hours a week for this course. Find at least two places to use computers in case your "Plan A" falls through. What does this mean? If something happens to your computer at home, you can still work on the class.

Possible ideas: find a friend who has a computer, go see Mom & Dad (if they have a computer), visit the nearest public library, go to the Hawkeye library, or try the Academic Support Area (ASA) in Bremer Hall.

Computer Survival Skills & Etiquette

If you are new to communicating by e-mail or discussion boards, here are some tips:

- ❏ **An e-mail message** goes to one person only. WebCT e-mail will only GO to someone else in the class, or your instructor.

- ❏ You can e-mail your instructor with questions and comments, or to submit an assignment.

A discussion forum posting is a message that everyone in class can read, so keep that in mind as you write your postings! You will do postings as part of class "discussion."

I will give you specific writing prompts for your postings. You will first do your posting (answer the questions in the writing prompt). Later, when others have placed postings on the bulletin board you will read some of them and respond to one person's posting. You earn points for doing both.

- You can comment on something the person said, agree with him or her, ask a question, or even disagree. However, you need to show respect for other classmates, and their viewpoints.

- **Don't Flame** – this means to be angry, verbally abusive, insulting, or "shout" using ALL CAPS, which is considered very rude!

- If you feel insecure about your spelling, punctuation or writing, you can always compose your postings in Word and then copy and paste into the bulletin board message or email.

- Do "chunk up" your message into paragraphs, capitalize where needed, and use punctuation. Some people see e-mail and bulletin board postings as very informal and not needing much attention, but if it is one of the only ways you communicate with others, you will soon find that people do not like to read messy, all-one-huge paragraph postings.

You will also have a number of assignments requiring you to do research, including the use of Internet sources. If you haven't had a lot of experience doing this, don't be afraid to ask for help.

⌨ Overview of Assignments

1.	**Diagnostic writing sample (50 points).** You will also complete the UFO activity (an error finding exercise) for 10 points, and the writing survey for 25 points. • **Write one to two typed pages (double spaced) that tells me about yourself: answer some of the following "who, what, where, when and why" questions.** • Who are you? Are you married or single? Do you have children, a sweetie, a pet, or a room mate? • Where did you grow up and go to school? • What brings you to HCC? What program or major are you in, or considering? • Where do you hope to go after here? Where might you transfer, if you are going for a four year degree? • Where would you like to work, and why? (Either area of the country or a specific company or job field) • What would be your ideal job? When did you decide to come to Hawkeye? What do you hope to get out of this class? • Why are communication skills (written and oral) important in your current and future life, both for personal and professional reasons? **Your instructor is the only person who will read this essay! Please feel free to proofread, spell check, and revise. (Hint: it should not be ALL one huge paragraph!)**
2.	**Two Library Worksheets (2 x 25 points each = 50 points)** You can do this on your own, or arrange to go with me. It is important for you to know how to use the library and where things are located. This is a great place for quiet study, to do research, or to use the internet. There are also some small conference or study rooms that you can sign up to use to work on group projects.
3.	**Memo to Cherie on the HCC Library resources in your career field.** Find a variety of sources (magazines and journals, books, videos, internet, newspapers, etc.) that relate to your career field, and then write a brief memo to me, listing what you found, and including any recommendations for additional resources that might be helpful. You will use a memo template in Microsoft Word. Your finished memo will be about one to one and a half pages. (I will post some samples).
4.	**Writing Instructions (Table/Memo). I have a separate handout.** You will choose from several options and use a step/action table to describe how to do something relating to your job field, a hobby, or an every day task. You will also analyze the task and write a memo to me that identifies the task, why you chose it, and then explains the process you went through to get your final version. For example, what type of audience are you gearing your instructions for, in terms of language or reading level (children or adults? ESL? College graduates or middle school students?) What terms do they need to know? What tools or materials do they need?

5.	**Letter 1 – Requesting Information. (Chapter 9)** You will choose from a couple of cases at the end of the chapter. Then you will use a letter template in Microsoft Word to write a letter requesting information.
6.	**Letter 2 – Persuasive (Chapter 10)** You can either write a short press release or sales letter; I will give you more details and refer you to several cases at the end of the chapter.
7.	**Letter 3 – Negative Messages (Chapter 11)** Choose one of the cases and write a letter, using a template in Word.
8.	**Short Report/Memo – Solving a problem.** See chapter 13's list of cases, p. 444-445. I will give you a handout with details; you will choose from one of three options, which are based on these cases. You will do research, summarize your findings in a memo to me, propose the best solution, based on your analysis, and then attach a list your sources in an annotated Webliography. **Length: 1 to 2 pages.**
9.	**Annotated Webliography.** This is a list of the websites you found doing research for the above memo. I will give you more details in a separate handout. You should find 6 to 8 sources; print out the article or page and write down the following information: Author (if identified), Name of page or article. Name of sponsoring organization. Date placed on web. URL of website. You will also write a short paragraph that describes what you found there, and how it helps you to solve the problem. **Length: 1 to 2 pages.**
10.	**Web Site Analysis Assignment** (using the annotated Webliography sources) Fill out the web evaluation form for each of your five websites. This will help you to document the basic information needed to cite (identify) each source. Give each website a score: the worksheet will explain how to calculate this. Use this information to write your short report/Solving a Problem. Turn in the five web evaluation sheets with your assignment; they are worth 25.
11.	**Short Report on a company in your field/Email to Cherie.** You will investigate a company in your field of employment; you can use the telephone book and interview someone over the phone, or you can use the internet. Your task is to gather the information you might need to determine if you would like to work at this company. • I'll give you a list of questions to use to find out information about the company's products, services, and background. • You will use a memo format, addressing it to me. **Length--1 to 2 typed pages.**
12.	**Resume and Cover Letter** -- Find an actual job ad in your career field or program, and then respond to it with a current resume and cover letter. **I have a simple template that you can use for your resume; however, there are several good templates in MS Word as well.** • **You can use ads from the newspaper or the internet, but the ideal job ad will list some specific qualifications, job duties, and give a few details about the company, and who to contact for information.** • Your complete package will include a filled-out job worksheet, the job ad, your resume, a separate references page, and a letter of application geared for the job in the ad.
13.	**Mock Interview** -- Using the job ad, resume and cover letter you've just created, you will either choose a partner, or be assigned a partner and generate a list of questions for each other. You and your partner will make an appointment to come see me, so that I can observe your mock interview, which should not take more than 15 to 20 minutes. You will do an email to evaluate your own performance.

14.	**Power point presentation**, which will be posted on the WebCT web site. - You will prepare an informal ten to fifteen slide presentation. You can use the short report about a company in your field, or the problem/solution research for the topic. The purpose is to share what you learned and give you experience preparing a power point presentation, as well as using visuals. - Please do a simple one to two page outline to be handed into me. Power point creates this for you, actually: it is one of the views. - We will use this as an opportunity to learn a few tricks about power point, a presentation software package that helps you prepare visuals. I will arrange for a couple of workshops where we can work together in a computer lab, as needed. - I will also post links to tutorials on the web that can help you learn about creating a power point presentation.
15.	**Final Exam.** I will post a review sheet to help you prepare for this exam, and arrange for several sessions where people can get together to prepare for the exam. This will be a short essay exam; you will choose 10 of 15 questions to write about, and can also do bonus questions.
16.	**Postings to the WebCT Bulletin Board** – You will do approximately 15 postings and 15 responses. - I will post writing prompts for each topic – this is a brief summary of what I want you to write about, along with some details or suggestions. - Your posting is your own response, as in writing your introduction. - The response is what you write after reading what other students have written. You only need to respond to one student, but I encourage you to read others and respond to additional people as your time allows.