Left Behind? Older Adults and Online Education
A Case Study

by

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ABSTRACT

Distance education is moving more and more to an online delivery mode. For our traditional aged students (18-24 year cohort) this is not a big issue – they have been using technology for their entire lives. However, for the mature returning student the move to online format can cause serious problems. Pilot study data and case study observation document the progress of two mature learners as they struggle with computer literacy in an online WebCT environment. Emergent themes from grounded theory analysis of interview and classroom transcripts include language, power and generational differences in technology use. Findings suggest older computer challenged students need additional instructional support to succeed in obtaining computer skills before commencing online coursework – this can be done through an online classroom if enough mediation is provided.

This thesis is dedicated to my three grandmothers,

Rose McIntyre,

Clara Bjarnason

& Margaret Ballard.

Your strength and wisdom made me

who I am today.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

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There are writers who write for fame. And there are writers who write because we need to make sense of the world we live in; writing is a way to clarify, to interpret, to reinvent. We may want our work to be recognized, but that is not the reason we write. We do not write because we must; we always have choice. We write because language is the way we keep a hold on life. With words we experience our deepest understandings of what it means to be intimate. We communicate to connect, to know community. Even though writing is a solitary act, when I sit with words that I trust will be read by someone, I know that I can never be truly alone. There is always someone who waits for words, eager to embrace them and hold them close.

(hooks, 1999, p. 13)

In/clusion
        Ex/clusion

E-qual Opportunity
E-learning
E-xcellence
E-xclusion

I am more than you see
I am more than you know
I am I am I am

To share a piece of me
        On-line
                With you

Someoneistherealways reading/writing/relating/listening

The door is open
        On the inside ...

But only

        If you

                Have the

                        Key ...

CHAPTER 1:
SETTING THE SCENE

Five years ago, a 60-year old woman walked confidently into a conference room in New York City. She was presenting at an international transformative learning conference at Columbia University. After twenty years of academia she was finally close to achieving her goals. She had recently graduated with her PhD; she had published numerous articles and academic book chapters. And she was being asked to present and teach in greater capacities.

As usual, her presentation was brilliant. But afterward, at the wine and cheese social, cracks in her success began to show.

It wasn't long before the dreaded question came up: "What's your email address?" Again and again, she smiled and laughed – made a joke about not using email. But it became harder and harder to sell that line. She was a mature, successful woman but she had avoided learning any computer skills. In fact, she paid to have her book articles and PhD dissertation typed up. Today, five years later, the door to academia – one she had struggled for 20 long years to reach – has closed completely and she has retreated from the life and learning she loved.

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There can be no argument that technology is playing a larger and larger role in higher education. As institutions of higher education embrace technological advances,

the image that is often projected to the public is a glowingly positive one. And while it's true very few students of higher education today do not have at least basic word processing and Internet skills, as the narrative at the beginning of this work illustrates, there is a large percentage of the general population who are not competent or comfortable with computers and technology.

In Canada, only 1.9% of our Internet users are people aged 65 and older and only 5.8% are in the 55-64 year range (Public Works Canada, 2005). Many older adults do not have the computer skills that our traditional aged students[1] take for granted.

As Palloff & Pratt (2001) note, continuing education and distance education are the areas most often accessed by these older learners. It's ironic that continuing education and distance education are also the areas where the advances in technology have been most noticeable. Ironic but not surprising. I believe, through my personal experiences as both online instructor and online student, that online education is very well suited to the mature student – provided they have the computer skills and confidence to try.

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[1] Note "traditional-aged students" refers to the 18-24 year cohort of students who are seeking their first undergraduate degree.

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+------------------------------------------------------------+
|                     Researcher Note 1                       |
|                                                             |
|  Why am I so confident with computer technology?  I didn't  |
|                                                             |
|  grow up with it … so is it a matter of being part of the   |
|                                                             |
|       'wired' generation?  Or am I just an anomaly?         |
|                                                             |
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Changes in Distance Education at SFU

At Simon Fraser University, our Centre for Distance Education (CDE), which was established in 1975, has recently been renamed the Centre for Online and Distance Education (CODE) – the new name reflecting the changes in course offerings. Note, in the new name the word 'Online" comes first. Whether this lexical positioning is intentional or not, it is certainly indicative of the future of distance education at this institution and others.

The CODE at SFU currently offers 74 courses with an online component (Centre for Online and Distance Education [CODE], 2005) and more and more courses are adding online elements every semester. The traditional distance education course – essentially the paper correspondence course – is becoming a thing of the past.

But to recognize where we are going in the future, it helps to know where we have come from. The province of British Columbia has a rich tradition of distance education. From the time people first settled on the West Coast, education at a distance has been a priority.

History of Distance Education in British Columbia

The geography of British Columbia, with far-flung settlements scattered throughout the province, ensured the growth of distance education from the time higher

education was first introduced. In 1890 the *University Act* was passed to create a province-wide university (The Homeroom, 2005). Although this legislation ultimately failed in its goals, the task of setting up a university for the whole province had been identified. Three short years after UBC opened its doors in 1915, university-level education was provided throughout the province by the Extension Lectures Committee (UBC Archives, 2005). From 1918 through until 1938 the Extension Lectures Committee sent professors throughout the province to bring their expertise to students living in remote places. Then in 1936 UBC established the Department of University Extension (UBC Archives). UBC's distance education division still operates today - under the title of Continuing Studies.

But the real revolution in post-secondary education with regard to distance education didn't happen in British Columbia at all. It took place in the UK with the establishment of the Open University in the early 1970s (Bates & Poole, 2003). "... [S]et up explicitly to provide university-level education and qualifications to adult students who had not been able to get into traditional universities" (Bates & Poole, p. 122), this government supported institution has been hugely successful. It was the first higher institution in the world to offer online courses (in mid-1990s) and is now the world's leading e-university. "Today more than 180,000 students are interacting with the OU online from home." (Open University, 2005)

SFU first offered distance education in 1975 (CODE). Now we offer approximately 135 courses (more and more are converting to online format each semester) and we are one of the largest Distance Education departments in Canada (CODE).

The Open Learning Institute was also established in BC in the 1970s and it has worked in conjunction with the province's universities to continue to offer classes many of which are now offered partially or wholly on-line. The British Columbia Open University (a division of Open Learning) now has more than 16,000 students per year (British Columbia Open University, 2005).

As we can see the demand for distance education in British Columbia is not a new phenomenon. From the very beginning of post-secondary education in this province, distance education has played a large role and will continue to play a role in the years to come. However, the form in which distance education is offered is changing.

The Evolution of an Online Distance Education Course

It is the end of April 2005 and I am setting up my online distance education course. I have been tutor-marking this same course (Children Literature) for nine semesters now so one would think that setting it up would be second nature to me. But it's funny how the course just keeps evolving. And it's because of the students – they make suggestions every semester and some of those suggestions invariably get incorporated into the next semester's course.

When I started tutor-marking this course it was essentially a correspondence course put online. The students had to completed twelve (12!) papers plus a final exam. Now the students have to complete 3 papers plus a final exam. And they keep a journal. And they do an online presentation. And they respond to others' online presentations. But the content of the course actually hasn't changed all that much ... it's just ... evolved.

Why Online Courses?

So why is there this trend towards online learning? The supporters tout it as the new wave, offering more than we ever could have envisioned with traditional distance education. As Bates & Poole (2003) note: "One of the great advantages of online learning is the opportunity for students separated by time and place to work together on a common task. Working together online is an increasingly important workplace skill; it also provides opportunities for students to share experiences, learn how to work collaboratively, and test and develop their own ideas" (p. 236). The cynics say it's merely a way to save money and resources. But realistically, online education has much to offer. And although it is not without faults, it is the way distance education will be provided in the future.

☜

September, 2000

Letter to a Friend

I have just enrolled in this incredible distance education course! It's an Education course - I know, I know, you thought I was going to do more English courses but this one is on children's literature (Bobby and Cait are loving it because I've been reading to them like mad). But the best part of the class is that it's offered TOTALLY online! I love it!

I can log on any time of the day or night and complete my assignments or read what other students have written. And I don't ever have to leave home ... well, except to go to the library and take out more picture books (we have been going three times a week!).

Anyway, if you are going to take some courses, you should try an online one - I know I'm going to keep my eyes peeled for them in the future.

There is an abundance of literature available which compares online education with face-to-face education (Hollan & Stornetta,1992; Skrabec, 2002; Bates & Poole, 2003). But there is very little research investigating what effects the transition to online education will be for distance education.

Distance education is (and always has been) unique. The similarities between distance courses and on-campus courses are often difficult to recognize despite the fact that the course may share the same name and number. One of the main differences in distance education courses is the type of student they have traditionally attracted – often mature returning students. As Palloff & Pratt (2001) point out: "Often institutions intend to use distance learning to extend their reach without much thought about who those students really are or how they will access programs or courses" (p. 41).

Thus the question remains: will online courses appeal to the same type of students as distance education courses have done in the past?

Who Takes Online Courses?

> It is widely acknowledged that nontraditional students (that is, working adults returning to school or students who are unable to attend classes on campus for other reasons) make up a rapidly growing population in education today. Their educational needs and demands are different from those of traditional students and it is these students to whom online distance education is geared. (Palloff & Pratt, p. 3)

An interesting statement but is it an accurate one? As Bates & Poole attest to, more and more traditional aged students (that is, the typical 18-24 year old university student) are opting for the convenience of online coursework especially with the rising costs of post-secondary education. Many of our traditional aged students now need to

work full-time to meet their tuition expenses, leaving them with less time to devote to on-campus courses.

> ... on-campus students are likely to be a major source not just for mixed-mode by also for fully distance courses. Many students now work part-time, even students who are classified as full-time. Their jobs may clash with lecture times, so a distance or mixed-mode option is very attractive. In many universities now, classes at third or fourth year are capped in terms of student numbers. This means that students cannot sometimes get into classes that they need to complete their degree. Rather than stretch out their time to the next semester or academic year, such students may opt for a distance version of the course. Finally, some on-campus students prefer the distance version of the course, either because they prefer working this way or because they find it easier to learn from a well-designed distance course than from a poorly delivered set of lectures from an inexperienced teaching assistant. (Bate & Poole, p. 149)

Nonetheless Urlig (2002) still characterizes the typical on-line student as "the working person who wishes to upgrade his/her skills or who wants to increase his/her employment opportunities" (p. 671). Non-traditional students are returning to post-secondary institutions in larger numbers as they experience career change, seek to upgrade their educational background or wish to explore higher education as a fulfillment of a lifelong dream.

The student population in distance education therefore is changing. More and more adult learners are returning to university and more and more traditional aged students are opting for distance courses. The challenges of creating courses for such different types of students, students with totally different life commitments, are immense. The institution, familiar with our traditional aged students, who have been weaned on technology, is not necessarily prepared for the needs of the adult learners. Because we are so dependant on computers and technology in academia, too often it is assumed that every job incorporates some use of a computer. This is simply not the case. And one

should remember that computers have only entered mainstream higher education in the past ten years.

Indeed it's hard to believe, as Bates & Poole note, that: "The first Web course in higher education was not developed until 1995" (p. 75). This is an especially difficult point to remember for those of us working in the post-secondary institutions where we are so reliant upon technology. All it takes is a server to crash for us to recall how dependent we are on computers.

$$\partial$$

Spring 2004

"Students often drop our course because they don't have the computer skills necessary to access it." I am discussing this trend that I've seen in the online distance education course I teach with one of the professors at the University. I am intrigued to know whether he (a leading researcher on online education) has heard of others who have observed this same trend as their distance courses go online.

He interrupts me halfway through my question – "Who doesn't have computer skills?" He demands. And I am at a loss for words. I think of my mother, my father, my aunt, my mother-in-law, three friends from high school, several of the teachers in my son's elementary school. I consider throwing those examples out there but I can see, to my surprise, that he is absolutely serious ... he doesn't recognize that there is a huge segment of the population that just doesn't use a computer.

Non-Recognition

Because, as instructors and course designers, we are so entrenched in the technological age, we often fail to remember that many of our mature students are new to the computer and have unique needs such computer upgrading demands and access issues that our younger students do not face. As Czaja & Lee (2003) note: "Although most older people are receptive to using new technologies they often encounter difficulties when attempting to adopt these systems. Barriers to successful adaptation of technology are largely related to a failure on the part of system designers to perceive older adults as active users of technical systems." (p. 127)

Researcher Note #2

How many times have I passively watched students drop my course due to computer illiteracy rather than help them obtain the tools they need for success?

Part of the dilemma is as a result of having to plan online courses for both traditional and non-traditional students. Teaching a short thirteen-week semester course is a large enough challenge without having to deal with the different levels of computer literacy – however, in an online course it's essential that we do acknowledge the breadth of computer experiences our students may have had.

A recent letter written to a local newspaper from a grade 12 student illustrates the 'digital divide' between the typical 18 year old and 50 year old: "... most teenagers can relate to the feeling of withdrawal they experience when they haven't logged online in a long time. A computer is simply the gateway drug to all the programs and services

offered online. The thought of not being able to check e-mail becomes unbearable, as if all of humanity has just been completely cut off. It is the lifeline of communication, essential to pass along news and photos and share feelings in web blogs." (Contreras, 2005)

Very few mature students can relate to this kind of fascination with technology. For them, the computer is a tool that allows them to access the classroom. For a younger student who has grown up with the computer it is a source of communication, entertainment and education.

Figure 1: Kids & Computers

As Spender (1995) put it: " As we know full well, three-year-olds can manage the new technologies, often with much more facility than can their parents. This is not because the three-year-olds are brighter or more technologically gifted. Computers are not technology to them; they are just the way their world works." (p. xvi)

But computers may not be the way the world of the mature student works. And as Zirkle (2001) reminds us "Knapper (1988) found that distance education students are

more likely to have insecurities about learning" (p. 41). When the online element is added to the distance element, students may have extreme difficulties.

Computer Skills: Doesn't Everyone Have Them?

The problem identified earlier (lack of comprehension on the part of the academic community to the fact that there are those without computer skills) is one we need to acknowledge and recognize. It is always hardest to see our own weaknesses. One of the weaknesses with working and studying at a major university is that we tend to come to believe that everyone has computer skills. Especially in the Faculty of Education: there is a computer lab with all the latest iMacs, instructors and students are constantly exchanging email addresses and URLS. How could some people not have computer skills?

But consider the challenges if you did not have computer skills even if you did not enrol in online classes. The university I work and study at, and most others, has become completely wired. If one doesn't know how to use a computer how will one access the library, contact one's professor or TA, or even register for one's courses?

The irony is that much of the world's population does not even know how to turn on a computer. Even if one considers only first world populations there are many people who do not have computer skills – or who have limited computer skills.

And as Bowers (2000) points out, "Just as computer literacy frames computer illiteracy as socially abnormal and deficient, the individuals and cultural groups that do not participate fully in the seamless web of cyberspace are increasingly framed as less developed and thus less intelligent." (p. 41).

Yet these are not necessarily uneducated individuals. If one looks at the typical professional – doctors, lawyers, teachers. Are they competent on the computer? Not necessarily. Although recent studies have shown physicians are becoming more proficient with the computer (Allen, Kaufman, Barrett, Paterson et al, 2001), they are well known for being too busy to use a computer. Similarly, lawyers rely on legal assistants, secretaries and word processing operators to access the computer for them.

Teachers are also rather infamous for their reluctance to use computers. Roberts (2004) looked at computer efficacy in the Faculty of Education at Simon Fraser University among Master teachers and examined ways student teachers could be encouraged to use technology in their future classrooms in an effort to eliminate some of the technology reluctance on the part of our future teachers.

Looking Ahead

The needs of our mature students are different than those of traditionally aged students. This has always been the case and distance education has provided a practical means for our students to continue their studies despite life circumstances. Online education can provide an even more flexible way for these students to complete their education but we need to keep in mind the different needs and levels of computer efficacy these students possess when they arrive in our online classrooms.

Having recognized this issue, the problem remains for online instructors to deal with. What is the best way to bring those students who have lower levels of computer proficiency up to speed with our younger students? Is it through computer workshops – if so, how does this work with distance students? Should online courses have computer proficiency testing along the lines of our English literacy testing (such as TOEFL, etc.)?

Can online distance instructors, many of whom are already stretched to the limit with high numbers of students and low numbers of hours to commit to those students, be expected to tutor needy students in computer skills? Or will those students without the skills necessary to access online education simply not have the option of returning to school?

These are questions that need to be seriously considered by distance education program designers and instructors. The future of distance education depends upon it.

CHAPTER 2: IN THE BEGINNING ... A QUESTION

"Mommy, why is the sky blue?"

"It's not always, on rainy days it's grey."

*"But **why?***

"Because the clouds make it that colour."

*"But **why?** "*

"Because ..."

"Because WHY?!"

[I must have driven my mom nuts!]

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<u>THE</u> research question:

Why are some older adults unable to get online?

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My research question is easy to identify. Why it had to be this particular research question is more complex. Originally, I thought I would be "helping" my participants by getting them online. My naivety was exposed as this project unfolded. I thought my research was focused on the other. But once the interviews were coded and the grounded theory analysis had begun, my preconceptions and expectations were shattered. I could see reflections of myself in every shard of this project. And if I dared to look close enough I saw the reality of who I was trying to be.

Identifying a specific point in time when this research started is impossible. Perhaps this fact alone should have alerted me to the complex blending of technology and natural evolution in this work. As Abrams (1996) says "Today it is easy for most of us, living amid the ever-changing constructions of literate, technological civilization, to conceive and even *feel*, behind all the seasonal recurrences in the sensuous terrain, the inexorable thrust of a linear and irreversible time" (p. 185).

The roots of my research cannot be pinned to linear time. Instead they fall somewhere between my birth and the present and will continue to grow and spread even after this thesis is written.

The most I can say is that the conscious planning of this work began through a problem I had in practice as an online tutor-marker.

January 2004

Letter to a Friend

I'm teaching that Children's Literature course again. We have 120 registered. Of course that will end up being 60 (if I'm lucky) by 3-weeks into the semester. I know I shouldn't feel like the high drop-rate is a reflection on myself as instructor but I guess I do.

You know the fact is most of the students who drop never log on. One of the students emailed me yesterday (she said she got her son to send the message for her because computers aren't her thing). She just wanted to let me know that she was dropping the course, even though it looked really good, because it was online. She wanted to know if there was anyway she could take it by correspondence.

I wonder how many of the other students who drop don't have access to a computer or don't know how to use one. I wish there was something I could tell them – but the courses are all changing to online format. I bet in five years there won't be a single correspondence course offered at the university.

I considered designing a questionnaire to send out to all the students who took distance education courses at SFU. But I questioned what a survey would really show. First, there was the problem of getting it to all the students – the logical route would be to have students access the questionnaire online. The students I wanted to hear from were the ones who had below average computer skills. Online surveys obviously wouldn't work for them. I could have mailed one out. It would have been costly but it could have been done. But I wondered what it would show anyway. Statistical analysis and quantitative research, while I can see uses for such studies, are not of interest to me. It is the exception to the rule in which I am interested.

So I turned to qualitative research and case study methodology. As Stake (1995) described it, "… the case, the activity, the event, are seen as unique as well as common. Understanding each one requires an understanding of other cases, activities, and events but also an understanding of each one's **uniqueness**." (p. 44) [my emphasis].

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Researcher Note #3

The exception to the rule — how do I fit into this?  My

above-average computer efficacy is hardly the norm.  Am I

again researching myself?
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In 1999 my sister-in-law was diagnosed with breast cancer. As a family we were devastated. She was only 37. She didn't smoke. There was no family history of

breast cancer. On the bright side, she was told that she would have a 90% chance of

recovery. I remember at the time she told me she didn't believe in statistics. Two years

later, she underwent a 10-hour surgery to repair her spine, which had been destroyed

by a lesion. This was followed by tumours in her lungs and eventually brain

metastasis. At this point, the "statistics" were not promising. Today she is active,

healthy and in remission - so much for the statistics.

In addition to the students I met through distance education, I could see people in my daily life that lacked computer competency. My mother, my mother-in-law, my cousin, my friends – even my husband, a successful lawyer, relied on his secretary for the most part (and me at home). So I saw that there were people who did not have stellar computer skills. Could any of them survive in an online course? I didn't think so. But I was sure that if they could obtain basic computer skills, they could be successful in an online environment.

HAT #1 – Course Designer
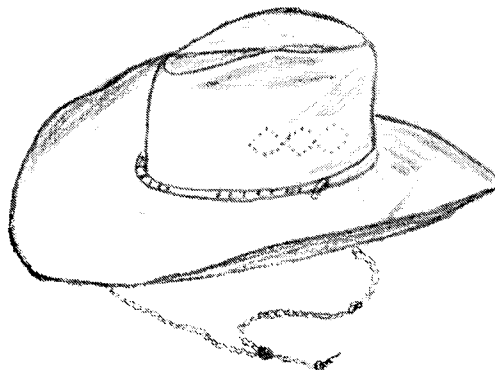
Figure 2: Hat #1

In 2004 I had the opportunity to take the Certificate in Web-based Instruction through the Learning and Instructional Design Centre at SFU. As part of the program we were required to create a module for an online course. I came up with idea of designing an introduction to Internet and Online Skills course. My idea was to have the students learn online skills in an online classroom.

"Hold it here – you are going to design an introduction to online skills course that is delivered _online_?"

People who heard my plans loved the idea of an introductory online skills course. They just didn't understand how I expected computer illiterate people to log onto the computer to access the online classroom. But I had a gut feeling that this was the way to go.

Working from an intuitive knowledge that what I planned would work, I went about designing my module. Having participated in online environments, both in an instructional role and a student role, I am aware that intuition plays a large part in the online environment. Recognizing when a student's abrupt and seemingly rude comments are a cry for help is not an easy task. Often I have relied on my intuitive knowledge to 'read' where the student is coming from.

Of course, I kept my mouth shut when it came to admitting that I was working from intuition – I knew how intuitive practices could be interpreted in an academic setting. As Claxton (2000) points out, "One of the reasons that intuition got a bad name was the apparent contradiction between the grandiose claims of incorrigibility – of direct revelation of unquestionable 'truth' – on the one hand, and the transparent fact that it can be blatantly wrong, on the other" (p. 42). Intuitive knowledge – especially when it

comes to course design – is about taking risks. Although I was willing to take the risks, paradoxically, I wasn't willing to admit I was taking them.

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│                    Researcher Note #4                         │
│                                                               │
│  Why are we so reluctant to admit that we might be making a   │
│                                                               │
│                        mistake?                               │
│                                                               │
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The Learning Management System

My small module quickly grew into a four-module eight-week course offered through WebCT (see Appendix A). I chose to use the WebCT platform for delivering my course for two reasons: 1) my Certificate program was offered through WebCT and so it was the platform I first used to create my course; and 2) it was available and free for me to use as a graduate student at SFU. Perhaps not the best reasons to choose a learning management system but they were the only reasons I had.

My own preference would have been to use the FirstClass conferencing system because this is the system with which I am most comfortable. I was not totally comfortable with using WebCT with my beginner students - to say I had some trepidation about it would be an understatement. I consider myself an advanced computer user and yet I had problems with WebCT when I first used it in 2003. And I saw other

participants in my Certificate program struggling with the program – if individuals who were skillful enough to take a certificate program in Web-based Instruction had difficulty with the WebCT, how would my computer 'illiterate' students fair?

To my surprise, when I actually did run the course, this was not an issue for my students. They had no problems with WebCT:

Q. The WebCT program – did you find it easy to use.

A. Uh, yeah. I mean I don't think it really would have mattered what kind of program I would have been hesitant and I would have had problems with it because I'm unfamiliar with all of it. But I didn't really have great difficulties with that – I could move through the program quite easily.

(CR1[2], Int 2, Nov 2004)

I wondered if this was due to the fact that my students had no prior experience with learning management systems. Perhaps by learning the technology with no previous computer baggage to carry with them, it actually made the system easier to use.

I decided in the fall of 2004 to run a pilot of the course with two mature female learners. These were two women that I knew very well – they had acted as mentors and friends to me. So I knew the random selection of research participants would not be a part of this pilot. But I was taking a risk and I felt more comfortable doing it with two trusted friends.

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[2] My participants will be referred throughout as CR1 (Co-Researcher 1) and CR2 (Co-Researcher 2)

My Participants

My participants were both retired women in they're 60s (see Figure 3). One had a doctorate in counselling psychology and had previous worked as a nurse. The other was a retired nurse of 37 years. Each of them had a history of struggles with the computer. Both of my participants had tried on numerous occasions to access the computer but had never been successful. They both had developed varying degrees of anxiety around the machine. One of the women did not have even basic computer skills; the other participant did have some basic computer skills but she was frustrated by the problems she continually had with the computer. They were both eager to participate in my course.

As mentioned, I knew both women very well. They are strong, smart women whom I admire. And I have watched each of them struggle with computer technology for at least ten years.
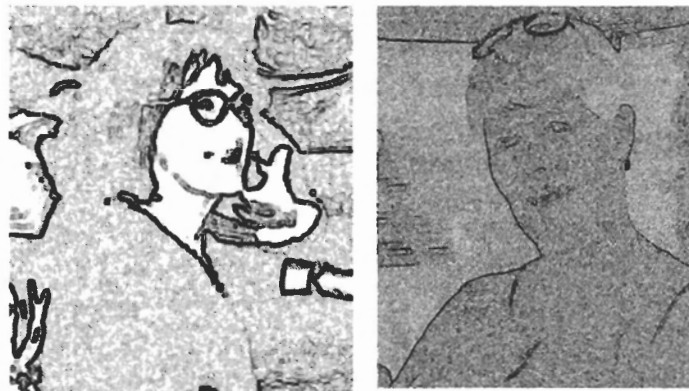
Figure 3: My Participants

I began the course by giving my participants each an in-person tutorial in their homes. I also provided them with a Study Guide (see Appendix B) – little did I expect the Study Guide to have such a profound affect on my students. I thought of it as a supplement but they saw it as much more important than the actual online environment.

But as Spender (1995) points out my participants had grown up with print culture. It was natural for them to look for the book to guide them rather than the electronic form of the instructions.

... that's the big thing – when you are from a book orientated society this is quite a switch over.

(CR1, Int2, Nov 2004)

I planned on having 6 interviews with each participant (for a total of 12 interviews) and I carefully calculated when the interviews would take place (see table 1).

Interview 1	Pre-Course – This interview will take place before the in-person orientation in each participant's home.
Interview 2	After Module 1
Interview #3	After Module 2
Interview #4	After Module 3
Interview #5	After Module 4
Interview #6	Two month after the end of the course

Table 1: Interview Schedule

The best laid plans ...

When I planned the course and research project, I admittedly planned for it to work around my schedule. I certainly didn't plan for it to be adapted as my participants'

needs and demands came into play. Although I was determined to conduct a qualitative study, I think I still had the notion that my research would be conducted in a sterile test tube. Little did I know how dirty it would get.

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The Course

The course itself comprised of four modules. Module 1: Getting Online, Module 2: Email Applications; Module 3: Surfing the 'Net; Module 4: Chats. Each module was to be completed over a 2-week period. I designed Module 1 in great detail. The other three modules I designed the framework for but left enough flexibility for my participants to dictate what was of use to them (and what was not) and then focus on what they wanted to get out of the course.

I did not anticipate motivation to be an issue with my students – they were mature women who wanted to learn online skills. This was framed as a no credit course – the only thing my students would take away from the course would be online skills. I assumed that my participants would be internally motivated. And this assumption proved correct – my participants had no problem asking for what they needed and they certainly required very little prodding from me to log on everyday. By the end of the pilot CR1 had logged on a total of 215 times while CR2 had logged on 524 times!

I designed the first module of the course with the aim of getting my participants comfortable with the technology. This included increasing their comfort level with (a) their own computer hardware: the keyboard, the mouse, the screen; (b) the WebCT classroom; and (c) the idea of communicating in an electronic format.

So module one, supplemented by step-by-step guidelines in the form of the study guide (see Appendix B) was deliberately planned as a way to ease the students into the classroom.

Module Two was the introduction to email applications. My hope was that in the previous two weeks my participants would have become familiar with using a computer and would now be able to leave the WebCT classroom to learn the ins and outs of Microsoft Outlook. And both my participants were eager to move on at the end of Module One.

As each module ended and a new one started I made sure that the skills my students had learned in the previous modules would continue to be used. So after they had spent all of Module 1 using WebCT, they moved on to using Microsoft Outlook but they still had to log into the WebCT classroom to do their readings. After they finished Module 2, where they had mastered MS Outlook, they moved onto Module 3 which was all about Microsoft Explorer but they still had to log into the WebCT classroom for their readings and to post their assignments while sending one another URL in Microsoft Outlook.

Module Four was designed to introduce my participants to online chats – this module was the least developed of the three and perhaps this explains why it was so unsuccessful. I wanted to leave room for student suggestions – after all these students were self-motivated and taking the course for a specific reason – to learn online computer skills. I wanted to make sure there was space in the course outline for any skills they hoped to have covered that I may have missed.

But by the time we arrived at Module 4 (during the last two weeks of December) my students were a bit distracted and so was I. In hindsight, I should have postponed the final module of the course until after the Christmas holidays but I felt I had to stick to our original schedule of finishing the course by December 31st. So we continued albeit halfheartedly.

I didn't provide any readings for Module 4 nor did I provide a study guide section. So my participants were thrown into the chatroom without any kind of background knowledge on chat technology. They both left the chat feeling disappointed and CR2 felt downright frustrated. It was a bad way to end the course.

The interesting thing from an instructional design point of view about conducting research with my own students, was that I was able to check in with them on a regular basis and get detailed feedback of how they were doing in the course and make adjustments as the course went along. So from a course design point of view being the teacher of the pilot course while challenging was also rewarding because I was able to adjust the course to suit my participants. My role of instructor was enhanced in this way.

CHAPTER 3: ENTER THE CLASSROOM

**Into the Web:
Identifying the Researcher as Teacher**

☙

"Come into my classroom,"
Said the Spider to the fly;
"'Tis the prettiest little classroom that ever you did spy;
The way into the classroom is through an Internet line
And I promise once logged on, you'll have a lovely time."

(based on *The Spider and the Fly* by Mary Howitt)
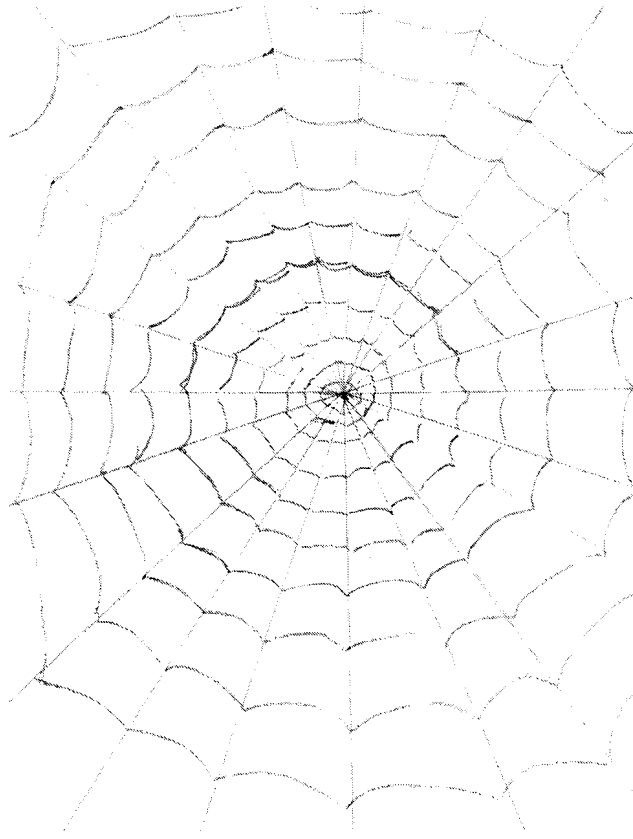
Figure 4:   Spider Web

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Researcher Note #6

I want to identify myself as researcher

And yet I am once again … the teacher

How do I separate the two roles?
```

&

I am a spider

        Sitting in my World Wide Web

Waiting for the flies

        To become ensnared

     So

       I

        can

         pounce

The roles I play in this project are multiple and complex. Realistically they can't be separated. I am researcher. I am teacher. I am course designer.

HAT #2: Teacher
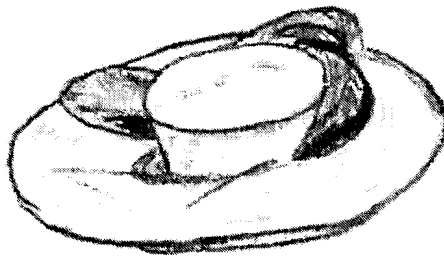
Figure 5: Hat #2

Interestingly, I am least comfortable with being identified as the teacher in this course. Even with all my experience as an online instructor, I have a hard time embracing the designation. To me a teacher is someone who stands in front of the chalkboard – green chalkboards and white chalk are symbols of the teacher. And I always feel like a bit of a fraud when I proctor my online distance students' final exam and write the time on the chalkboard. I feel like someone is going to jump out at any moment and say – "Ms. Shaw, just WHAT do you think you are doing?"

When I graduated with my undergraduate degree in English in 1993, it seemed obvious that I should apply to the Faculty of Education and teach. I even spent a year or so tutoring to prepare for the application because that was apparently what one did with an English degree.

But I never completed the professional development program – instead, after graduation I continued to work as a word processing operator in a major Vancouver

lawfirm. Teaching just didn't feel right to me. However, even in my work roles away from the University, I was continually prodded to go into teaching. I was always the person who was asked to train people on various procedures and computer programs. And the trainees always commented on how I should be a teacher. Still I resisted.

"I've noticed something about you. You are very good at explaining things."

[Comment made to me by retired professor who was also enrolled in the Certificate in Web-based Instruction Program at SFU]

Due to my experiences tutor-marking an online Education course, I am very comfortable in my online role. But I rarely identify myself as 'teacher'. I like to think of myself as helper or facilitator – those are safer words. They stay away from the power issues that always emerge when we think of students and teachers.

It would be all too easy revel in the role of teacher - to embrace the 'Ms. Expert Shaw – computer guru' identity. "Queen of cyberspace". The power aspect is very appealing. Cloaked always in the claim that I am helping my students, of course. But the realities of teaching are sometimes not so pure.

"... as teacher, we very often want to make our students become more like us."

(Sleeter, 1999, p. 41)

Researcher Note #7

How am I empowering my students by helping them acquire computer skills? Is it even my job as educator to empower them?

November 2004

Letter to a Friend

Well, I started the pilot of that online skills course today.
I'm a bit nervous but also excited about how my students are
going to respond. So far so good. I spent time at each of their
homes, conducting an interview and then giving them their
study guides (which they clung to like the Bible) and helping
them get into the WebCT classroom.

I hope this is going to work!

"The teacher cannot be the only expert in the classroom. To deny students their own expert knowledge *is* to disempower them." (Delpit, 1995, pp. 32-33) This is an especially important point to remember in a classroom such as my Introduction to Online Skills course. At the same time it is a difficult one to administer because both of my students had very low levels of computer efficacy and both had very bad experiences in computer courses in the past. CR1 dealt with her frustration on a daily basis as she knew how to do certain things but couldn't remember exactly how to do them – she hated asking her adult son for help because he would continually mock her skills which only increased her computer anxiety.

Q. ... But you are still worried about losing things. That's your main worry?

A. Oh, yeah, I lose stuff all the time.

Q. Or that you'll break the computer somehow because your son threatens you with it?

A. Oh, yeah, he tells me I'm going to break it.

Q. So what do you think learning better Internet and online skills will do for you?

A. Hopefully I won't have to ask anyone to come and help me. I won't have to listen to this "You've broken that computer again!"

(Interview 1, CR1, Nov. 2004)

I could see as the course instructor that I would have to use lots of positive encouragement because she was receiving not only internal negative feedback about her computer skills but external negative feedback as well. Although I wanted the course to be delivered entirely online, I did give her my telephone number and ask her to call me in

case she ran into any problems. I didn't want her to have to ask her son, who was continually giving her negative feedback.

Again, this was an entirely intuitive move on my part – giving both participants my telephone number. But it seemed to reassure them – they were both comfortable with the telephone technology. But CR2 pointed out that this had not always been the case for her.
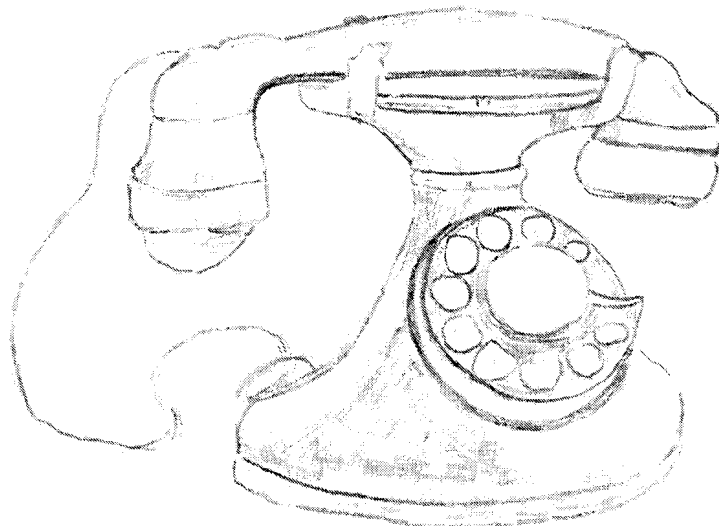
Figure 6: The Telephone

A. Fourteen was the first telephone. ... And it was just phenomenal the first phone call that came in for me I was just in a state of shock and even though I could hear the other person on the other end of the line I had to ask about three times pardon? Pardon?

Q ... did you then start to use the telephone?

A. I could use it whenever I wanted. But I was a person that – thinking back, I was very nervous. I was a shy person as a teenager ... and then the telephone was an additional thing and I do remember it was one of the boys in the class that

phoned me and I was so nervous. And I didn't use the telephone if I didn't have to. You know for a while and then I was comfortable on it.

(CR2, Interview 1, Nov. 2004)

I began to understand in a small way that for my participants the computer was yet another invention in their lifetime. They both spoke of when the television first became a household item and the microwave. And, in a sense they took on the role of teacher to me – trying to give me some understanding of where they were coming from. As CR2 told me in our first interview: " ... because it seems impossible to somebody as young as yourself that when I was growing up until I was 14 we didn't have a telephone in our home!"

I realized that with my students modelling and scaffolding would be essential to their success. "Crucially scaffolding involves simplifying the learner's role rather than the task" (Daniels, 2001, p. 107). One issue that came forth in the initial interviews was the fact that my participants' trepidation over using computer technology centred around having the spotlight on themselves.

I'm thinking of the initial one I took at [the community] college and there was about 20 people in the room and we were just kind of verbally given the instructions about how to get on the computer and tap into the program and always everybody else would have finished and I would still be having to get the instructor over to help me. And it always made me feel like this was something I wasn't going to be good at and couldn't do.

(CR2, Int2, Nov 2004)

Ironically, the online environment took the attention off the students in a way that could not have happened in a face to face classroom. There is an anonymity about being online – no one knows how long it takes you to log on or how many mistakes you make along the way.

As an instructor I relied rather heavily on the Study Guide to provide scaffolding for my students especially in the first module. I also started the course modelling the tasks that I required of my students. For example, I posted my own introductory message for the students to read before they wrote their own message.

Hi, everyone!

My name is Cathi and I'm the instructor for this course. I thought it would be nice to tell you something about myself.

On the Educational front: I am a Master's candidate in the Education faculty at Simon Fraser University. I took my first online course in the Fall of 2000. I have recently completed a Certificate in Web-based Instruction and I am currently enrolled in the Certificate of University Teaching (both offered through Simon Fraser University).

On the Instructional front: I have been the online tutor-marker for a Children's Literature course at SFU for seven semesters now.

On the Personal front (the most interesting, of course): I am the mother of three children (Bobby, 8, Caitlin, 6 and Matthew 3). I also have a chocolate lab puppy named Sam. My hobbies include: cooking and baking with Matthew, running and riding my mountain bike. I tried to take up knitting last year but haven't had the time to actually finish any project I started (although I do find it relaxing).

I'm looking forward to reading all about you and participating in this course with you!

Cathi :)

I was intensely aware "that uncertainty makes learning more difficult. When a learner is uncertain or unfamiliar with the relevant features of a task then motivation, task

40

orientation and memory of the task itself is reduced" (Daniels, p. 108). So my main goal

in the first few weeks of the course was to make the students comfortable in my virtual

classroom by giving them clear examples of what they needed to do and by being

available via a technology they were familiar with (the telephone) should they need

support.

As a teacher, it also helped to know where their strengths were as students and

then use those strengths to encourage them to continue with the course. This is where my

background knowledge of my students became useful.

I knew that CR1 is a talkative woman who has no difficulties expressing exactly

what she thinks of situations both verbally and in writing. CR2 is more methodical and

thoughtful – preferring to completely analyze an issue before jumping in. If I look at the

WebCT Discussion board from the first few weeks of the course, I can see that I

intuitively encouraged them to use these different strengths to utilize the discussion area.

CR1 & CR2:

I think congratulations are in order - you've both posted your introductory
messages! This is no small task, you should pat yourselves on the back. I've
seen seasoned academics unable to post message in this program so you
should be proud of yourselves.

By the way, feel free to post/vent/express your feelings in this area - you don't
have to wait for an assignment to do so. That's why it's entitled 'discussions'.

C :)

I see this process as intuitive because it was just something I did rather than

something I sat down and planned. As Atkinson & Claxon (2000) point out "It is self-

evident that much of what teachers and others do, in the heat of the moment, is not

premeditated; it is intuitive. A situation arises; the teacher responds, and only later, if at

all, will she or he pause to 'figure out' what was going on, and why they did what they did" (p. 1). I thought my ways of teaching were privy to only myself but my participants were well aware what I was doing.

☙

I think what was very helpful to me - was like coaching. I use the word "coaching" - saying about Cathi's coaching and I thought it was just something that came out spontaneously. Spontaneously but really not spontaneously because it was the exact right words and it was really, really important because so often I looked at the way your personal style and how you gave us positive feedback and also how you wrote and often – so therefore you modeled on the computer. I thought that was just so important – you modeled how you wanted people to be, I thought. Like, oh say the formality, kind of the language – whether it should be formal or informal kind of how emoticons and acronyms should be used not too many but a little here a little there some ways to show your emotion. And very positive – like you'll have no idea how important when you say congratulations you two you got on the computer. That was extremely important to me – I thought oh! Because that was kind of a little turning point. So I think the instructional part of it. When you're saying what was important – the instructional part of it and your actual writing – how you write and how you model how you want others to write was just critical. That was really greatly useful.

(CR2, Int. 2, Nov 2004)

☙

As hooks (1994) says "… my voice is not the only account of what happens in the classroom" (p. 20). Turning to my role as researcher I was able to hear from my students their own account of what happened in our online classroom.

CHAPTER 4 – METHODOLOGY:
IS THERE MADNESS IN MY METHOD?

A **grounded theory** is one that is inductively derived from the study of the phenomenon it represents. That is, it is discovered, developed, and provisionally verified through systematic data collection and analysis of data pertaining to that phenomenon. Therefore, data collection, analysis, and theory stand in reciprocal relationship with each other. One does not begin with a theory, then prove it. Rather, one begins with an area of study and what is relevant to that area is allowed to emerge. (Strauss & Corbin, 1990)

If I were asked to identify a metaphor that I started this project with it would be researcher as virgin. This was closely followed by the metaphor: researcher as first time mother. I truly had no idea what I was doing – I just waded into the muck and tried to figure it out as I went along. But until one has conducted many, many of these kinds of projects, I can't imagine feeling completely at home with the whole researcher role. And part of me doesn't ever want to feel at home or for this to become 'old hat'.

❧

Hat #3 - Researcher
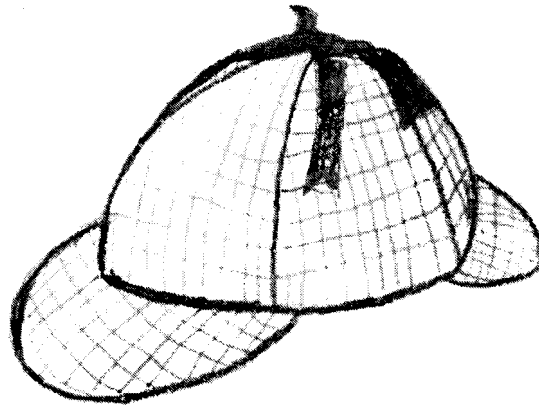
Figure 7: Hat #3

Researcher Note #8

My research question has been identified — at least my official one. What are the unofficial research questions?

The Interviews

I initially approached my interviews unintentionally in a manner that suggested I had the aim of proving my hypothesis. On reflection, I can see that the quantitative methods I grew up with were rooted far deeper than I expected.

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+--------------------------------------------------------------+
|                   Researcher Note #9                         |
|                                                              |
|             Hypothesis testing ...                           |
|                                                              |
|                 Is this what I am doing?                     |
|                                                              |
|                       Quantification                         |
|                                                              |
|                          of my                               |
|                                                              |
|                    Qualitative Process?                      |
|                                                              |
+--------------------------------------------------------------+
```

For the purposes of this thesis, I conducted three interviews with each of my participants, each of them completed one written reflection and I facilitated a circle dialogue with them. The interviews were conducted in my participants' homes and lasted about 40 minutes each. Although I believed the interviews went smoothly, I couldn't help feeling that they had gone places I never expected.

The first interview was the one that most closely stuck to the interview questions (see Appendix C). As we moved further into the research project and the roles of course designer, teacher and researcher merged and blurred, the interviews evolved. My plan for the interviews, as outlined in Chapter 2, never came to fruition.

The funny thing about the interview is that it formalizes a conversation. And as researchers we try to document the conversation by recording and transcribing it. But things happen in the interview ... in that space between the interviewee and the researcher that can't be analyzed or documented.

"The analysis of an interview is interspersed between the initial story told by the interviewee to the researcher and the final story told by the researcher to an audience."

(Kvale, 1996, p. 184)

My original plan was to impartially put on the researcher hat and listen to what my participants had to say. But this is an incredibly difficult task when one also has an experience of what has happened in the classroom. To listen without imposing one's own memories or interpretation of classroom events is extremely difficult. As Delpit says,

> To do so takes a very special kind of listening, listening that requires not only open eyes and ears, but open hearts and minds. We do not really see through our eyes or hear through our ears, but through our beliefs. To put our beliefs on hold is to cease to exist as ourselves for a moment – and that is not easy. It is painful as well, because it means turning yourself inside out, giving up your own sense of who you are, and being willing to see yourselves in the unflattering light of another's angry gaze. It is not easy, but it is the only way to learn what it might feel like to be someone else and the only way to start dialogue. (pp. 46-7)

It is no surprise then that my first interview, conducted before the course started, was by far the easiest. During this interview I could truly be the impartial researcher - at least more so than I could in any subsequent interview.

The second interview was a triumph for me – my participants had arrived online and had successfully participated in the classroom. They were full of accolades and glowing comments.

But I think, as well, that I might have changed a little in the process. I think the academic and the benefit of this and teaching online the way that you teach, Cathi - and that isn't meant to flatter you in anyway – it's meant to say how important I think it is and I thought oh, that's a cool thing. That actually the

academic part of it and working online is – and even being a student, a learner, a teacher – having a dialogue online in the classroom maybe superceded the email and importance although they are all are my learning. That all goes together too. I had a real spark of my old enthusiasm for academia and for what could come out of this project.

(CR2, Int2, Nov 2004)

Then life intruded. Interview 3 was to have been conducted at the end of November but we were moving to our new home at this point in time and then my daughter was hospitalized for 3 days. Then Christmas was approaching, there were exams to mark and I felt this urgent press of time to get the interviews done. So I made a calculated error.

For the third interview, I convinced myself that it would be good to have my participants write a response to their learning. This was a fatal mistake. I am a writer. I express myself far more succinctly in writing than I do verbally. I assumed my participants would do the same. They did not.

The interview sheets I received back were short and sweet. My questions obviously did not spark a deep reflective writing practice in my students. And, for Module 2, the email module and the most important module of the course, I had no valid data!

But linear time was pushing on, Christmas holidays were approaching and I needed to conduct my fourth interview. Then my furnace died and I developed pneumonia. But, within my instructor's hat, the course was moving along – I knew that

if we interrupted the course, my students would risk losing the momentum they had achieved. So the interviews were put off. Delayed until after the course was completed.

Interview 4 was conducted in late January, a full month after the course ended. Interview 5 morphed into a circle dialogue at the request of both participants. Interview 5 revolved around the chatroom experience – the least successful component of the course for my participants.

Interview 6 did not happen at all.

Participant Selection

The selection process that I engaged in was not empirical and random. Even though this may devalue my research in some eyes, I wanted these two particular women in my study.

As mentioned earlier, this was partly selfishness on my part – I was comfortable with both these women having known them for years. However, I soon discovered that interviewing and instructing people one knows and cares about is actually harder than doing the same work with strangers. We bring into the classroom and into the research interview all the baggage and history of our relationships.

The reason I wished to have the participants I chose was that I wanted them to learn computer skills. For years I had watched both of them struggle with this new technology and I didn't understand why. I also thought they were representative of a type of student I had observed during my academic career at SFU: the older woman who has so much knowledge to share but is unable to do so because of the limits of technology.

And yet the older woman is evolving as I age. Who is the older woman? When will I be her? Am I already her to some of my students?

I actually had another woman in their age cohort approach met at our Fall Faculty Symposium. I had been telling her about the research project I was doing and she asked if I wanted another participant because, even though she was completing her graduate degree, technology was a huge challenge to her. But after hearing that the course was offered online, she declined to join the study citing that she did not have enough computer experience to take an online course. I did tell her that the other participants were in the same boat but her computer angst was palatable. She was not willing to take a risk. My participants were willing to take that risk.

Data Collection

The interviews that I did complete were all conducted either in my participants' homes or in my own home. Each interview was audio-recorded and after the interview I transcribed the tapes.

Transcription is an interesting process. In my previous life as a word processing operator I had transcribed hundreds of interview tapes. However, transcribing my own was an enlightening experience. I discovered that my memory of the interview was not necessarily a true reflection of how the interview had proceeded. Several times I would sit down with the transcription machine and start typing only to be surprised at how an interview had gone.

Do not conceive of the interviews as transcripts: The interviews are living

conversations – beware of transcripts.

(Kvale, p. 182)

Data Analysis

After transcription I printed out my interviews and sat down armed with highlighters of various colours and index cards to match. I was going to do qualitative coding. I thought I was going to do a grounded theory analysis (as much as I understand what grounded theory was meant to be).

"What most differentiates grounded theory from much other research is that it is explicitly emergent. It does not test a hypothesis."

(Dick, 2002)

Dick's definition of grounded theory appealed to me – I was not into testing any hypothesis – at least I wasn't going to admit that I was testing a hypothesis but aren't we always doing so when we conduct research? Doesn't the research question, regardless of how empirical a question, hide behind it our beliefs and assumptions? How does one let go of those beliefs to see the emergent codes in the interviews?

The coding process was an incredibly difficult one for me. I found it very hard to let go of what I expected to hear my participants discuss and be open to new metaphors and ideas. And I found the coloured markers and matching index cards very false. I was 'armed' with these tools but the reality was that I didn't really need them.

Grounded Theory

In the Dark

    Rich

       Moist

          Soil of the Ground

A theory emerges ...

                    Alonetinygreen

Yet ...

       The earth/ground

         Feeds it

           And it pushes up

Through

    Qualitative

       Codes

To emerge

      In the Fresh Air

         Of Narrative.

I wondered if it was phenomenology that I was engaging in. Jardine (1998) says, "Phenomenology lays out for education inquiry a painful task of articulating our actual lives as educators. But, in a sense, the bad news turns out to be the good news. Phenomenology raises the possibility of real hope, i.e., the hope that life as it is actually lived can be faced" (p. 24).

I was determined that qualitative research was what I was practising and yet I struggled constantly to find validity in my research.

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┌─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┐
│                                                           │
│               Researcher Note #10                         │
│                                                           │
│  What is validity?  Are there two different kinds — the   │
│                                                           │
│  validity of this research for the research community and │
│                                                           │
│     the validity of this research for my participants?    │
│                                                           │
└─────────────────────────────────────────────────────────┘
```

I was still attempting to define what my research methodology was, so I looked at my process. My research started with a question – why do some mature learners struggle with online technology? Then I chose to observe how this would play out in an online classroom with two computer illiterate mature learners. "You are doing a case study." People informed me when I tried to describe what I was doing. Stake (1995) seemed to agree. He described a case study as beginning when "… we will have a research question, a puzzlement, a need for general understanding and feel that we might get insight into the question by studying a particular case" (p. 3). Stake also notes: "It may be useful to try to select cases which are typical or representative of other cases, but a sample of one or a sample of just a few is unlikely to be a strong representation of others.

Case study is *not* sampling research. We do not study a case primarily to understand other cases. Our first obligation is to understand this one case." (p.4) [my emphasis] This was precisely my goal – to understand why these two women struggled to get online and to observe what would happen if they were given the tools to develop computer literacy.

Triangulation

The keystone of validity in any kind of qualitative research seems to be triangulation of data. Janesick (1994) identifies interdisciplinary triangulation which "... us[es] other disciplines such as art, sociology, history, dance, architecture, and anthropology to inform our research processes ..." (p. 215). But for me there were many layers of triangulation in my research. Triangulation of my roles of researcher, course designer, teacher. Triangulation of my methods of interview, course weblogs and circle dialogue. Triangulation of the emergent metaphors of language, power and intergenerational difference. At times I felt the triangle was becoming the symbol for my work.

However, triangulation of my research was not my largest challenge. Letting the themes emerge rather than imposing them upon the research filled this role.

CHAPTER 5: LEFT BEHIND
A QUESTION OF METAPHORS

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              Researcher Note #11

              "Left Behind"

              Whose metaphor is this?

              Is it theirs …

                                      Or is it mine?
```


Figure 8- Left Behind

From my birth until just before my 4th birthday, I went everywhere with my father. I was

his little shadow.   Then just before Christmas, 32 years ago, my father was tragically

killed. He left one morning for work and never returned. I asked where he was. My

mom, unable to tell me the truth, told me he had to stay in the hospital for a while. But I

had heard the 'grown ups' talking – I just didn't understand. I told her, "No, Mommy,

Daddy is <u>dead</u>." Then I asked, "But WHERE is he?" For he had gone somewhere and I

was, forever, LEFT BEHIND.

❧

The metaphor of being left behind came to me before I even started my interviews

with my participants. At the onset, it seemed very obvious to me that technology had left

them behind.   I framed my questions and, admittedly, my entire research project around

this metaphor. My original literature review confirmed my suspicions – women make up

the largest group of distance education students (Kramarae, 2001), even students who

have been exposed to technology from an early age (which my participants had not) have

difficulty performing in a Web-based environment (Osika & Sharp, 2003), gender

differences in technology are well documented – boys outperform girls, men outperform

women (Bryson, Petrina, Braudy, & de Castell, 2003; Cooper & Weaver, 2003;

Campbell, 2003).

I knew men and women approached the computer in different ways. I knew boys

and men felt more comfortable with computers and I knew computer society marketed

products designed for men.

But as my research advanced the typical gendered responses to the computer did

not emerge. Try as I might, my respondents simply did not see gender as an issue. Ask

them to draw a competent or expert computer user – they drew a woman at a desk. Ask

them to describe limitation to getting online they named many but none of them were

gender based.

Finally in our group discussion at the end of the research I asked them why gender did not seem to be an issue. They certainly agreed that men used the computer in different ways than women. CR2 paralleled it with surfing the television channels. But they didn't believe that men were more competent.

Firstly, both their spouses, although they could use the computer, were not experts. CR1's spouse had used the computer in his career as a real estate agent but after being retired for 10 years, he rarely went near the machine. She indicated that he got frustrated whenever he sat down and mentioned the similarities she now sees in his behavior to her own before she took the class.

"…my husband comes in and sits down at the computer and gets mad at it because it won't do such and such and he says I can't figure this out – he is the frustrated one and I go over and go beep-beep there you are dear, is that what you want."

(CR1, Int 5, Feb 2005)

CR2's spouse is currently employed as a professional and although he is competent on the computer, he has an assistant (incidentally a woman) who does most of his computer work for him.

I asked my respondents why they thought of a woman when they thought of computer expert. They both indicated it came from their nursing background. In the hospital (at least when these women worked there) few doctors (mostly men) used the computer. The one who used the computer was the ward clerk who was invariably a woman.

"CR2 … at the hospital it was probably a woman using the computer, [she] did all of the requisitions.

CR1 That's exactly it!

CR2 And at the church, just thinking about that - the secretary is a woman."

Researcher Note #12

"How do I let go of my metaphor

To see theirs?

Listening can be a disturbing experience. Through truly listening to another, a person runs the risk of seeing the world in a way that may be contrary to previously held perceptions. When listening is really happening – when a person is attempting to gain an understanding of another person's perspective – the listener is exposed to the risk of being changed. In essence, artful listening contributes to the intuitive leader's way of knowing.

(Dyer & Carrothers, 2000, p. 29)

Metaphor 1: Language

If I want different specific sizes or I want to change the program or do something. I can't use the programs. The clues don't make a – their guidance don't make a lot of sense to me when I go to use them they have – you seem to have words that only means something in the computer language… It's a completely new language. "

(CR1, Int.1, Nov 2004)

Computer literacy was one of the emergent themes that came out in the initial interviews with my participants. And it remained one of the dominant themes of the study.

Learning a new language is always challenging but particularly difficult as one ages and although most of us who are regular users may not recognize it, one of the larger issue with learning computer technology is language. Suddenly words that mean something in your native tongue - desktop, mouse, icon – have an entirely different meaning when one is using them with reference to the computer.

My participants both expressed difficulties with the whole concept of the new language possibly because it built from a language they already knew. Although they

knew the conventional meaning of words, the 'new' meanings were lost on them. The codes that they had grown up with suddenly did not make sense.

As Egan and Gajdamaschko (2003) note: "… it seems it ought to be easy to teach the principles of the decoding system, and then all the stored knowledge would be available to the newly literate person. But it does not work so easily, partly because of the difficulty many people have in learning to become literate in even basic ways, and partly because of the complexity of what is stored in the codes of literate cultures." (p. 84)

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            Researcher Note #13

Turning the gaze on computer culture — what are the codes

stored in that literate culture?  How are codes stored IN a

                  culture?
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The issue of language was not one I would have recognized – I am so entrenched in "downloading", "burning" and "booting up" that I don't even recognize these words as being used in a different ways anymore. But my participants recognized the true meaning of computer literacy immediately:

"2B or not 2B computer literate is the question."

If we consider literacy, as Egan & Gajdamaschko do, from a Vygotskian perspective then it is seen as a "complex cultural phenomenon" which will "give a new set of cognitive tools" to the newly literate person (p. 87). Once one recognizes that

within any language are codes of the culture, one can begin to comprehend that becoming literate is a much more complex exercise than one would otherwise belief.

It stands to reason that my participants are building a new set of cognitive tools as they become computer literate. If this is true, then becoming computer literate will actually affect them socially and culturally.

As the study went on, I began to question if true literacy should be the goal. My students didn't necessarily want to be computer literate in the true sense of the word. They wanted to be computer competent – in other words they wanted to be able to use the computer for the tasks they needed to do but they did not really want to change the way they viewed the world. Instead of developing new cognitive codes, they continually imprinted the cognitive codes they already possessed upon the new literacy they were trying to learn.

Could someone please tell me what view thread means?

(CR1, WebCT Log, Nov 2004)

But I am not dealing with the adolescents, which Egan & Gajdamaschko are referring to in their article. For my older adult learners the computer is already a thing of wonder – in fact they have built it into a monster machine in their imagination that eats their files and data.

And then there was some confusion and hesitation on my part because I was afraid ...

(CR1, Int 2, Nov 2004)

Instead of sparking their imagination in a wondrous way, I had to alter their perceptions of the computer monster so they would be less intimidated or afraid of it.

My participants have no trouble seeing the transcendent qualities of online

communications, but rather than wanting to understand it more, they saw it as

supernatural, divine, something that can't possibly be understood.

I looked back at the message and moved ahead and lost it. And I worried

about where it was gone.

(CR2, Int 2, Nov 2004)

And also understanding – it was difficult the concept that your instructor

could – knew- how many times you went into the program, what you'd written all

this sort of thing was very foreign.

(CR1, Int 2, Nov 2004)

In a sense my participants saw the computer as something supernatural that,

perhaps, should not be tampered with – at least not by mere mortals like themselves. My

main goal, as teacher, was to make the computer communication seem mundane and

normal – rather than fantastic or exciting.

"The image can carry the imagination to inhabit in some sense the object of our

study and inquiry. By such means mathematics and physics, history and auto mechanics

are not conceived as external things but become a part of the student; the students thus

learn that they are mathematical, historical, mechanical creatures" (Gajdamaschko &

Egan, p. 91). My students did not see themselves as computer literate creatures. Even by

the end of my study, my students saw themselves as competent enough to do what they

needed to do.

... it's going to be an everchanging technology as they add stuff. How much I will progress will depend on my needs.

(CR1, Int 4, Feb 2005)

Egan and Gajdamaschko speak about the child and adolescent's need to learn everything about a topic. This helps to explain the generational differences we see in adaptation to the computer. Children are extremely successful with the computer with very little instruction – it is a technology they are utterly confident that they can learn everything about. At the other end of the generational spectrum are my students – who see the computer as an inexhaustible machine which they can't learn everything about (there is too much) and which they show no desire for learning everything about – they only want to know what they need to know to serve their purposes. They see the computer as a tool.

It's a tool, not a plaything – I think that's the way I view it. As a tool.

(CR1, Circle Discussion, Feb 2005)

"The ability to see text not merely as an object but as a product of another human mind provides a further cognitive tool that are [sic] constituents of literacy" (Gajdamaschko & Egan, p. 95). One of the major problems was that my students did *not* see the computer as developed, created, or invented by a human mind that has anything in common with their own.

As an instructor, I recognized the most powerful tool I had for promoting computer literacy in my students was the use of metaphor.

The power

Of a metaphor

Can make the world of difference:

```
HTML = Baking a cake

   Logging on = Tuning in to Television

      Email = Answering Machine

         Chatroom = Telephone call
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tomakeitunderstandable

CONTEXT IS EVERYTHING

Besides the theoretical issues surrounding computer literacy, there were the practical ones. Urlig (2002) points out that in the online classroom, "Nearly all communication will be written; and students must feel comfortable expressing themselves in writing" (p. 671). This is true in one sense but in another it is not. In an online classroom students must be comfortable expressing themselves not only in 'writing' but also in 'typing.' To the traditional aged student this is not a big concern – they have been typing on a keyboard for their entire life – my son's grade 3 class starting keyboarding skills this year. However, for the mature student keyboarding may not have been a requirement of their previous career or lifestyle.

Typing has certainly been a requirement for many, many years in various high schools; however, typing on a computer keyboard is a different process than typing on typewriter. Think about it – we are not only talking about the ability to know where the keys are, but to know what the keys are for – another twist on the term "computer literacy". More proficient computer typists know how to Ctrl-block text and move it, they use the backspace key and home/end keys automatically. However, on a typewriter, the backspace key only allows you to type over what you have already written making an ugly black mess (unless, of course, you are young enough to remember the brief love affair we had with eraser tape in an electric typewriter).

Typing is also a skill that needs to be practiced. It's the old "use it or lose it" phenomenon. For many older adults, high school typing class goes the way of high school French or Spanish. It is forgotten.

I find repetition is the only way I remember. With the computer because it's such a foreign thing to me. It isn't logical to me. Computer doesn't isn't logical. Pen and

paper is logical to me. To me it's a written record. At any time if I get confused I

can go back in it and pull out what I want. On the computer I do not have the

ability to go back and see what I did.

(CR1, Int1, Nov 2004)

Dale Spender (1995) puts it succinctly: "Because we have grown up and become skilled in a print-based community, we have developed certain ways of making sense of the world. We are, to some extent, what print has made us. And now we have to change." (p. xv)

Differences in how text appears on a computer are also an issue. As Spender points out "Even where print appears on the screen, it is not fixed; it moves, it can be changed. There isn't the same sense of finished product or of a fixed meaning." (p. 14) For online students this can be a huge issue as they are submitting papers and messages via the World Wide Web.

Delpit (1995) points out that there are rules that relate to such things as linguistic codes and communicative style. For students with little or no computer skills, much of the online classroom (often every aspect of the course from registration onward) operates in a "foreign" language. Without computer skills, some students can't even 'open the door'.

But language and literacy have always been related to power issues. Throughout time those who have had the cognitive tools of literacy have been able to participate fully in society – so those who have been literate have had power that others have not had. This is true whether we are talking about government and social politics or family and internal politics.

Figure 9: My greatgrandmother
I remember when I was a little girl, my dad telling me the story of his Icelandic

grandmother. The woman lived in Saskatchewan with her husband and umpteen

children. She spoke English just fine but whenever my father and his parents visited she

reverted to speaking in only Icelandic.

When I was young I thought his bitter stories of her speaking in her native tongue

illustrated how cranky an old lady she'd been. But now I see it a bit differently.

This grandmother knew that her Dutch-Canadian daughter-in-law didn't speak a word of

Icelandic and neither did her grandsons. And so the issue of power comes into play. The

power to speak so only a select few can understand = the language of the culture of

power.

Metaphor 2: Power

"There are codes or rules for participating in power ..."

(Delpit, p. 25)

Lisa Delpit identifies those rules as linguistic codes and communicative style. If you don't know the rules or codes, you can't participate. And the participants in my study lacked the rules and codes for participating in any kind of computer mediated environment. And they were absolutely aware of this fact.

To work
> **For something**
>> **Celebrate**
>>> **Achieve**
>>>> **Reach for the goal**

Andthenhaveitalltakenaway

Because
> You didn't see the computer screen coming

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And I remember like the most humiliating thing for me was I was the slowest. You

had to do – each week had to come and do whatever to get online. And I just

seemed to be so slow at catching on. Like everybody in the class would be online

and I would be asking what exactly to do. ... And I expected – and actually I do

remember this about it – that it made me feel as if I wasn't quite as smart as the

other people in the class even though I knew that in other respects – you know at

that time I would have taking a Master's degree at UBC and I knew that that wasn't

the case but in fact that made me feel as if I wasn't as smart as the other people in

the class.

(CR2, Int 1, Nov 2004)

Silence has become stupidity; taking time or hesitating before you speak
has become a sign of incompetence or a lack of mastery in certain
specifiable 'communication skills'; speaking has become self-declaration;
failing to declare oneself has become weakness; speaking with one's own
voice has become gastric self-reporting. (Jardine, p. 86)

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          Researcher Note #14

       What makes me uncomfortable

   Is acknowledging how I have participated

      In taking the power away from

           These women ...
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"Those with power are frequently least aware of it – or least willing to acknowledge – its existence. Those with less power are often most aware of its existence."

(Delpit, p. 26)

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Q. "So if something isn't working with the computer how would you work on

solving the problem? What would your typical plan of action be?"

A. "I'd go and get one of the people I knew that was very good on the computer and

that's actually been one of the reasons is that I have some very competent people

that I can rely on to do some of the work even though I know I need to become

proficient."

(CR2, Int 1, Nov 2004)

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"Making use of other people is a reasonable strategy for older adults who are not strongly enough motivated to acquire the tools and the skills to do things by themselves" (Rogers & Fiske, 2003, p. 21). This point is difficult to remember. I wanted my participants to be able to figure out the computer on their own without the help of other – I became impatient and annoyed if either of my participants fell back on old ways and asked family members or others to help them when they had problems with some aspect of the course. I refused to see this as a valid coping mechanism.

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Researcher Note #15

Competent people/Others/More proficient

Do it for me

Don't show me

Do it for me

How many times have I played this role?

The ego is a dangerous thing …

Metaphor 3: Intergenerational Differences

I think a lot of this has to do with my grandchildren ... I so wanted to get on the computer to be proficient on the computer and communicate or just share their things or if something went wrong with the computer to be able to fix it for them.

And they're so good on the computer. Firstly, I was going to do that with my oldest and he's just sailed miles ahead. Then with the next. Then I thought oh, my youngest grandson, here he is, he's on the computer just really flying ahead and here I'm not. And now I've promised him that I'm going to get on the computer so that I can fix it or if something goes a little amiss with something he does and share his games with him.

(CR2, Int1, Nov 2004)

Being able to communicate with the younger generation was a motivating force behind both my participants' desire to get online. They both recognized that their children and grandchildren were proficient on the computer and in order to communicate and relate better with them, they wanted to be able to understand the computer.

As noted earlier, the different generations view the computer in different ways. Younger people, particularly children, have been using keyboards and computers from a very young age. To a seven-year old child, ten years of online courses is a long time. But to someone who is older, the computer has just appeared on the scene.

What does this do to intergenerational relationships? In the past, the grandmother was seen as the wise woman – the one to seek in time of counsel. Are we losing this?

In the middle of my research project I had a dream. It was such a powerful dream that I could not get it out of my head. It evolved into the following story.

☙

A story is emerging. A story about betrayal and, perhaps, redemption.

A story about two wise women. One, an esteemed healer of her people, a mother and grandmother. Her wisdom spread across her own and comforted them.

The other also trained as a healer but excelled as a scholar. Also, a mother and grandmother. For many years, she too was looked up to and esteemed.

In their own communities these two wise women were raised up on pillars above others – their wisdom held their children together.

Then a darkness spread across the land. Moving silently and quickly, this darkness ensnared the children and grandchildren. They began to speak in a new language – a language not understood by the two wise women. And the wise women on their pillars watched in dismay as the children and grandchildren turned from the old ways.

As the language continued to grow, the wise women tried to learn it but it seemed garbled nonsense to their ears. And their sons mocked them for their attempts to learn. But worse was their collective daughter, who became a scholar in the new language, and withheld the new knowledge from them. The earth shook in anger and the foundations of the pillars cracked and fell, tossing the wise women to the ground.

As the evening light became continuous the wise women, retreated – one into solitude – the other into domestic duties. And the children and grandchildren forgot the wisdom these two held in their hearts.

Until one day the daughter, began to remember the old wisdom and came to the wise women. She asked that they come with her and try to learn the language so that their wisdom might once again raise the people.

The wise women hesitated. But this daughter made promises. Promises of teaching the new ways grounded in the wisdom of the old ways. And the wise women trusted her. And the three of them retreated into the dim light.

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CHAPTER 6: DISCUSSION & CONCLUSION

My participants did not become computer literate; however, it is now five months since the course ended and they are still checking their email accounts and surfing the net. They are both able to communicate online with their grandchildren. So they have both experienced small changes in their relationship with the computer.

As for the researcher, course designer and, yes, teacher, I intend to continue writing about this experience. I am beginning to understand what Jardine (1998) means when he says:

> Education is a risky, tense *conversation* between the old and the young,
> between the old and the new. Given this, educational theorizing be cannot
> simply a matter of declaring an end to this conversation through objective
> re-presentations which render it univocal (i.e., turn it into the singular
> voice of the disinterested, methodological theorist). (p. 29)

As such my questions are growing rather than diminishing. I am beginning to understand that there are no answers. This is perhaps the greatest discovery I have made so far.

I began this project not as a RE/searcher but as a Searcher. I was searching for the answer I thought was there. Somehow during the journey, through the steep terrain of qualitative coding, I changed ... from the Searcher to the RE/searcher. To be able to look at my participants' words anew and discover ... the unexpected. To really hear what they were saying and let the theory emerge – grounded in our collective experiences.

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Researcher Note #16

My comfort level has been shattered …

I thought narrative was easy

Confronting the TRUE story is anything but.

Is this what good re/search does?
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"In this chain and continuum, I am but one link. The story is me, neither me nor mine. It does not really belong to me, and while I feel great responsibility for it, I also enjoy the irresponsibility of the pleasure obtained through the process of transferring. Pleasure in the copy, pleasure in the reproduction. No repetition can ever be identical, but my story carries with it their stories, their history, and our story repeats itself endlessly despite our persistence in denying it."

(Trinh, 1998, p. 122)

ॐ

I can never

       Capture

           Your

               Story

But

     Your Story

         Can

           Teach

               Me

How

        To

           See

              My Own.

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APPENDIX A
THE WEBCT DESKTOP

Welcome to the Internet and Online Skills Classroom. Now that you've successfully navigated into our online classroom, please have a look around and make yourself comfortable with this space -this is YOUR classroom!
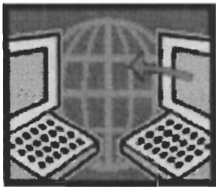
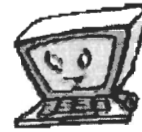Syllabus   Communication Tools Welcome Video   Discussions

Module 1 NETIQUETTE RULES   Module 2   Module 3

Module 4 (Conditional)   Calendar

Welcome!

Welcome! I'm Cathi, the instructor for this class. From this page you will be able to navigate through the classroom. Click on the links, above, to familarize yourself with the course.

APPENDIX B:
THE STUDY GUIDE

Introduction to Internet and Online Skills

Study Guide

Welcome to the Internet and Online Skills course. You've probably enrolled in this course because you don't have any Internet or Online skills. Or perhaps you've enrolled because, although you know the basics, you are continually frustrated with your inability to problem solve while online.

This course is a basic introduction to Internet and Online skills including Email Applications, Internet Searches and Live Chats. You will be required to participate in an online classroom delivered through a program called WebCT. WebCT is a Learning Management System and was developed at UBC and is now used at post-secondary institutions worldwide. Your course is being offered through the SFU WebCT site as part of a research project.

This Study Guide will provide Step-by-Step instructions for getting online and using the various applications. It is meant to be used in conjunction with the WebCT classroom. It is in the WebCT classroom that you will ask questions of your instructor and classmates.

I hope that you enjoy this Introduction to Internet and Online Skill course!

Module 1: Getting Online

Perhaps the most daunting task of this entire course will be this first week when you are becoming familiar with the online classroom. This study guide will provide you with step by step instructions for accessing the online classroom. If you have not logged on by Wednesday, November 3rd, your instructor will be contacting you via telephone to walk you through the process.

Logging On – First some computer basics

Turning on the Machine
**(*It sounds basic but if you can't get the darn thing to power up, then you are defeated before you even start!*)**

The first step to logging on will be to turn your computer on (if it is not already on). To do this:

1) Press the Power button

2) Your computer will 'boot up' (warm up) – this may take a few minutes.

3) Windows will automatically load – Windows is the operating system – it's what lets all the programs you'll be using run.

4) If there is more than one user for the computer, you will want to click on your own name.

Mini-Lesson: The Mouse

The mouse is your friend but it may take you a while to be totally comfortable with it. Think of the mouse as a pointer – you will point the mouse at things you want to open and
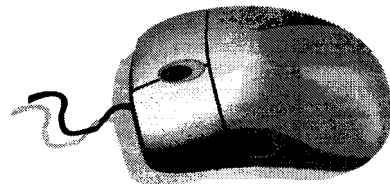
then click it. Most mouses look something like this: . *For most computer applications, you will click the right button of your mouse. Sometimes you will have to 'double-click' which simply means clicking twice.*

Getting to Class

Our online classroom will be found in the WebCT program and to get there you will have to enter the Microsoft Internet Explorer® program. This is the program that is used to access websites.

1) Locate the Internet Explorer® icon (symbol) on your desktop (the screen that appears after you click on your name). It looks like this:

2) Double click (right click twice) your mouse arrow on the Internet Explorer® icon. Internet Explorer® will open up. It will probably open up a Search Engine like MSN or Google. Ignore all that right now. All you need is the address line. It looks like this:

Address http://www.eiu.edu/

3) You will want to type the following address into the address line: http://webct.sfu.ca. *Hint: type it exactly as it appears or it may not work – even one letter missing or an extra punctuation mark will make it not work.*

4) This will take you to the WebCT log in page. It looks like this:

Log in to myWebCT

Having trouble logging in? Click here for help.

Student Resources

Student FAQ

Faculty/Designer Resources

Faculty/Course Designer FAQ

WebCT ID:

Password:

Log in

5) In the WebCT ID: line type: [student id]. Then press the TAB key (or click your mouse in the password line).

6) In the Password: line type: [student password] (this is your password). Press enter.

You will go to your WebCT welcome screen which looks like this:

Courses	Announcements
EDUC: Introduction to Internet and Online Skills Instructor: Catherine Dianne Shaw News:	There are no announcements.

	Institutional Bookmarks
	mySFU
	SFU WebMail (Not WebCT course mail)
	Access WebCT online support
	Student FAQ

9) Click on the **EDUC: Introduction to Internet and Online Skills** line and it should take you right into the classroom!

Good job – you did it! The rest of the course will be a piece of cake!

Posting Messages in WebCT

Now you've navigated online and into the WebCT classroom, you can play around checking out the syllabus, the Welcome Video and other tidbits. But once you're finished playing you will want to start on the Module 1 assignments. All the assignments for this Module will be handed in within the WebCT Discussion forum. So you need to know how to post message to the WebCT Discussion area.

WebCT Discussions
To Post a message:

1) Click on the Discussion tab on the Course Menu OR on the top of the Module 1 screen.
2) This will take you to the discussion area which looks like this:

Discussions

Compose message   Search   Topic settings

Click on a topic name to see its messages.

Topic	Unread	Total	Status
Main	0	0	public, unlocked
Introductions	1	1	public, unlocked
Netiquette Discussion	0	0	public, unlocked
Emoticons and Acronyms	0	0	public, unlocked
All	**1**	**1**	---

3) To read messages click on the name of the area which is showing message (for example, above you would click on Introductions because it shows there is one message in the introduction section).
4) To compose a message, click on the Introduction section. Then select compose message.
5) Type a subject in the subject box.
6) Type the body of your message in the Message box.
7) When you have finished typing your message, you can click the post button and it will post your message.

Module 2: Email Applications

This is probably the module that you've taken the course for – to learn how to use email properly and efficiently. This study guide will be used extensively for this module simply because it is the easiest way for you to figure out what we are doing here.

Things you need to know:

Your email address is [insert student email address]

Setting Up Your Email Account

1) You already have an email address (noted above).
2) Open you email program.
   To do this:
    a) Click on the Start Menu on your Desktop;
    b) Click on Microsoft Office Outlook®;
    c) Click on the Tools menu across the top of the page;
    d) Click on E-mail Accounts
    e) Select View or Change Existing Accounts, click next.
    f) If there is more than one user on your computer, you may see a list of email account. Select your account if it is there (if there is only one account listed select it to see if it is yours).

   [If your email account/name is not there:
        i) select Add;
        ii) select Pop3, click next;
        iii) type in your name, your email address (as shown above). For incoming mail server type: shawmail.vc.shawcable.net; for outgoing mail server type: shawmail.vc.shawcable.net
        iv) for user name type:
        v) for password type:
        vi) click test account settings.]

   g) if your email account is there select it and click change.
   h) click test account settings just to make sure it is working. It should say "Congratulations! All tests completed successfully." Click close. Then select Next. And Finish.

Your account is now up and running – now you can start sending and receiving messages!

Composing and Receiving Messages

Composing a Basic Email Message
1) Open Outlook
2) Click on "New" (on the far left of your screen) OR Select File, New, Mail Message. The mail message will open up.
3) In the To: line type my address: cathishaw@shaw.ca
4) In the Subject line type something relevant to your message (such as Hi! Or First Message). Never leave the subject line empty – empty subject lines make people suspicious of viruses!
5) Type your message in the body of the message.
6) Click Send.

Checking Messages
1) Open Outlook
2) Click Send & Receive
3) New Messages will go to your Inbox (Hint: you should be able to see a list of files on the left hand side of your screen – if you can't see this list click on View, Navigation Pane and the list should appear. Once the list appears, click on Inbox).
4) To read a message you can either (a) click once on the new message in the list and then click on the bottom half of the screen where you will see part of the message and scroll down through it; or (b) double click on the message to open it and read it that way.

Replying to Your Messages
1) Open Outlook
2) Open/or click on the message you wish to reply to.
3) Click on the Reply button at the top of the screen **or** click on the Actions menu and select Reply **or** press the Ctrl key and R together.
4) A new message will open already addressed to the person who sent you the message you are replying to. The Subject line will say Re: [whatever the person's message was entitled]. In the body of the message you will see the person's message 'quoted'. You should type your reply message ABOVE the person's message (it's only polite, they after all know what they wrote). To do this, just press enter a couple of times at the start of their message and then type your reply.
5) Click on send when you are finished.

CC'ing Messages
1) Open Outlook
2) Follow the steps (above) for creating a new message
3) In the Cc line type your instructor's address.
4) Continue as you would with a regular email message.

Bcc'ing Messages
1) Open Outlook

2) Follow the steps (above) for creating a new message
3) In the Bcc line type your instructor's email address.

Forwarding Messages
1) Open Outlook
2) Check your messages
3) In your Inbox, you will see a message from your instructor entitled "Message to be Forwarded"
4) Open that message or click on it
5) Click on the forward button **or** select Actions, then Forward, **or** press Ctrl and A at the same time.
6) Type a message above the forwarded message so your classmate knows it's from you (this is important when you forward messages otherwise people get worried about viruses).
7) Send as you would a normal email.

Attachments

You will have two files to send as an attachment. One will be a picture (if you don't have a picture on your computer, let me know and I will make sure you get one before this class). The other will be a Word file. This way you will get practice using attachments with two different kinds of files.

The Picture

1) Open Outlook
2) Proceed as you would if you were composing a regular email message – when using attachments it is VERY important to write a personal note to the person you are sending the attachment so that they know it's from you (nasty people send viruses via attachments).
3) Before you send the message, click on Insert (or the Paper Click button below the Insert menu). Then click on Picture. The click on From File. This will open the My Pictures files on your computer. Select the picture you want to attach.
4) Send as usual.

The File

1) Open Outlook
2) Proceed as you would if you were composing a regular email message
3) Before you send the message, click on Insert. Then click on File. Where it says Look In My Documents. Select the file that says Linda.
4) Send as Usual.

Address Book

Adding Individuals to Your Address Book
1) Open Outlook
2) Select the Tools menu

3) Select Address Book
4) Click on File, Select New Entry
5) Select New Contact, Okay.
6) Insert the information for the person you want to add to your address book. If you want you can add address and phone numbers too.
7) If you want to add more information about the individual, click on the Details tab and add in any additional information you need.
8) If you click on the Activities tab and wait a minute, it will list all the email correspondence you have had with that individual that has not been deleted.
9) The certificates tab lists any digital IDs that person may have (I have never used this tab).
10) The All Fields tab gives you the option of seeing the information you have on this contact in different ways. For example, click on All Fields and then select email fields from the little pull-down menu (the list in the window box beside Select from). This will list all the emails for that contact. You can do the same with phone numbers or addresses.
11) Click Save and Close when finished adding an individual.

Adding a List to your Address Book

Sometimes you may want to add a group of people that you send frequent emails to – for example, say you want to send an email to everyone in this class. In those cases, you can create a mailing list in your address book. Let's create one for this class.

1) Open you address book
2) Select File, New Entry
3) Select New Distribution List, Okay
4) Type a name in (for example: Online Skills Course)
5) Then you can add individuals by either selecting people already in your mailbox (click Select Members – this will open a list of people already in your address books – that way you don't have to retype their names, click on the individual you want to add, then click OK) or you can Add New, Type in the person's first and last name and their email address, then select okay.
6) Once you've added all the members (in this case, your classmate and instructor). Click Save and Close.
7) Try to send a message to your new list. Type in the name of the list (Online Skills Course) in the To: line.

Signature Lines

To create a unique signature line:

1) Open Outlook
2) Click the Tools menu
3) Select Options
4) Click on the Mail Format line
5) Go to the Signatures section (at the bottom of the menu)
6) Click on the Signatures button
7) Click New

8) Enter a name for your new signature (such as your own name)
9) Under 2. select Start with a Blank signature, Click Next
10) Type in what you want it to read (for example, I typed in Cathi Shaw, Instructor, Introduction to Online Skills)
11) You can select the Font button to change the typeface your message appears in
12) When you are done click the Finish button
13) Click Okay
14) Click Okay
15) Now compose a message and your signature should automatically appear.
16) **Note: Type your message ABOVE your signature line – so that your signature appears at the bottom of the message (just press enter a couple of time to move the signature down the page then type above it).**

Housekeeping:

Working with Folders
You probably have quite a few messages in your Inbox by this point in the module. To keep things in order, it's a good idea to set up a filing system. That is – you will want to put your messages in various folders depending on the subject of them.
1) Open Outlook
2) Click File
3) Click New
4) Click Folder
5) In the Name box type: Course or Online Skills or whatever you want to call it.
6) Leave the next line which should say Folder contains Mail and Post Items.
7) Under "Select where to place the folder" make sure your Inbox is highlighted
8) Click Okay
9) The new folder should show up under your Inbox now (hint: if there is a + sign beside your inbox, click on it to see all the folders in your Inbox).
You can create as many folders with as many names as you wish.

Filing Your Messages in the Folders
To file your messages:
1) Make sure Outlook is open
2) Go to your Inbox
3) Click once on the message that you want to file (for practice, find a message to do with this course and "highlight" it <make sure it's lit up with grey>).
4) Click on the Edit menu
5) Click Move to Folder
6) A list of all the folder will show up, select the Online Skills one
7) Click Okay
8) Your message will disappear from your Inbox and will now be in the new folder. Check that it is there by opening the new folder in the folder list on the far left of your screen.

9) Practice by moving all the messages to do with this course to the new folder. Then you can create more folders and file the rest of your messages if you want to.

Deleting Messages

It is important to delete messages that are obsolete (or are just the junk that you will inevitably receive from some senders).
To delete:
1) Select the message you want deleted
2) Click delete on your keyboard
3) The message is now gone

But it's not really gone it's only been moved to your Deleted Items folder (which is on the folders menu on the left hand side of your screen). It's important to permanently delete messages because they can really slow down your computer if you save them forever.

To permanently delete:
1) Open your Deleted Items folder
2) If you only have a few items you can deleted them one by one by selecting the message, then clicking delete on your keyboard, then clicking Yes when it asks if you are sure you want to permanently delete.
3) If you have a lot of items, you want to Select All (by pressing your Ctrl key and A at once). This will highlight all the items in your Deleted folder. Then click delete on your keyboard. And click Yes when prompted.

Sent Items

You also have a Sent Items folder that has all the messages you have sent in it. Again, you want to delete the messages you don't need. To do this follow the same instructions for deleting as above (the items will be moved to your Deleted Items folder).

If there are some messages you want to save you can either file them under the appropriate folder (follow the same instructions for filing messages from your inbox, above) or you can just keep them in your sent messages folder.

Remember to clean out this folder on a regular basis as it can also slow down your computer.

Drafts Folder

You'll notice a folder entitled "Drafts" in your folder list. This is the folder that Outlook automatically files messages in if you want to save them to send later. Essentially this is where your Drafts are kept. So if you are in the middle of composing a message and don't have time to finish it, just close it. Outlook will automatically ask you if you want to save a copy in your Draft folder. When you

come back to finish composing your message, open the Drafts folder to get your saved message.

Follow-Up Folder

Say you have a message in your Inbox that you must respond to but you don't want to do so yet. And you might just happen to totally forget about EVER responding. You can FLAG the message and a copy will be sent to your Follow-Up Folder. Then you can make sure you follow up on those messages in a timely fashion.
1) Click on the message you want to follow up on
2) Click on the Actions Menu
3) Select Follow Up
4) Select whatever colour flag you like
5) You see it added to the Follow-Up folder (Under Favourite Folders at the top of the Left Hand side of your screen) and a flag will be added to it in your Inbox.

Organize

Okay now that you've learned how to organize the hard way – here is the easy way to sort your email into folders.
1) Click on the Tools Menu
2) Select Organize
3) This will allow you to view your Inbox in a bunch of different ways. By colour, by view. You will probably stick to by folder. And you can simply click move for the messages selected below to the various folders. It's a bit faster than doing it all from your Inbox (as described, above).
4) To close the Organize view, just click on the black X in the top right hand corner of the organize screen (not the Red X which will close Outlook altogether).

Rules

To save time with your filing, you can have Outlook set up to automatically send messages from certain people or with certain Re: lines to certain folders. This is especially helpful if you join any mailing lists (which you will do in the next Module). For practice set up a rule to send all correspondence for this class into the folder you created for this class. To do this:
1) Select Tools
2) Select Rules and Alerts
3) Make sure the Email Tab is selected
4) Click New Rule
5) Select Move Message from Someone To a Folder, Next
6) Select from People or Distribution List
7) Move down to Step 2 and click on the underlined people or distribution list
8) This will open a list of people in your address book. Add the names of the people in the course. To do this, highlight the name and the click From for each person.
9) Click on the underlined specified folder.
10) Select the folder you created for this course from the list that appears. Click okay.
11) Click Next.
12) Click Next

13) Now you'll be at the Finish Rule Setup page.
14) Step 1: Name your rule (for example, Internet Skills)
15) Step 2: Check the Box that reads: "Run this rule on messages already in the InBox" and Check the Box that reads "Turn on Rule"
16) Click Finish
17) Click Okay.

All the messages from the people in this course should now be filed in the folder for this course.

Junk Mail Options

You'll notice after awhile that you will receive junk mail from places. Outlook offers an option for blocking this. You can also specify that certain people are "safe" senders and never have their mail blocked.

1) Click on the Actions Menu
2) Click on Junk Email
3) Click on Junk Email Options
4) Click on the Safe Senders tab and add the people in this course to the safe senders list (and any one else you always want to receive email from).
5) If you have a place that continually sends you junk mail, next time you receive a piece of junk email from them note down their email address and add it under the blocked senders list.

Customize

Font

You may not like the font that Outlook automatically uses. There are a number of things you can change about the font. You can change the typeset, you can change the size – you can even change the colour. To change font:

1) Select the Tools Menu
2) Select Options
3) Click on the Mail Format tab
4) Click on the Font button in the middle of the menu page
5) Click choose Fonts for each of the 3 options (hint: you will have to do this 3 times – once for messages you compose, once for replying to messages and once for composing and reading in plain text) – this will change the typeset of your messages (I use Bookman Oldstyle but there are hundreds of different fonts). Scroll through the different fonts (by using the up and down arrows on your keyboard) and select a font that suits you. Popular choices are Arial, Times Roman, Courier, etc. Hint: look in the sample box to see what the font will look like.
6) Click the font you want (so it is highlighted grey on the list).
7) You can choose for it to bolded or italicized but I don't recommend this.
8) In the bottom left hand corner you will see the colour option. You can choose a colour for your print to be in (remember darker colours are best to show up on the screen). Using black is fine.

9) When you are satisfied click Okay
10) Do it for each of the 3 options (as noted in Step 5 above). Then click okay.

Stationary
You can actually select a stationary for your email message.

1) Select the Tools Menu
2) Select Options
3) Click on the Mail Format tab
4) Click on the Stationary Picker button
5) Then select the style you want (scroll through as you did with the fonts and check out each type of station in the preview window – hint: if you pick a stationary with a DARK background you will have to change your font – so stick with something light).
6) Click Okay
7) Click Okay

That method will change the stationary on ALL your outgoing messages. You may not want to do this. If you don't, you can follow the same steps above to select a Blank or <None> option under step 5 and follow these steps for selecting stationary for individual messages (such as at Christmas).

1) Click on the Actions menu
2) Select New Message Using
3) Select More Stationary
4) Select the Stationary you want for that message and practice sending it.

Send and Receive Options
You may want to set automatic Send and Receive options.
1) The Tools Menu
2) Select Options
3) Click on Mail Setup
4) Click Set Send and Receive Settings ...
5) Check the boxes at which you would like to apply to your account – for example I have my account automatically check mail every 5 minutes so I know if I've received a new message while composing another one.
6) Click close when finished

Calendar
You'll notice that Outlook also has a calendar feature. You can set up the calendar to display by the day, week, work week or month. You can set the calendar up to give you reminders of events, etc. By this point you should be able to navigate the calendar feature on your own. So I've not provided detailed instructions. Play around with it if you wish to use it. It's not necessary.

Webmail

Webmail will allow you to access your email from any computer that is hooked up to the Internet – anywhere in the world. Basically it is a website that lets you check your email message. And you can also compose and send messages.

To access your webmail account go to:
https://webmail.shaw.ca/
Type in your Account name
Type in your Password

This will take you to your Inbox. To read your messages click on the underlined subject.

To send a message, click on compose. Type in your recipient's email address and a subject and the body of the message, as per usual. Click on send.

If you are going to be traveling, you may want to put the email addresses of the people back home in under your Addresses folder (you can add up to 25 names). That way you don't have to worry about remembering all the addresses. You'll be able to access them anyway by just clicking the address tab.

Keep in mind that webmail doesn't usually allow you to send big messages – often you are limited when it comes to sending pictures, etc. Also, remember to empty your deleted items box and your sent items box just as you would in Outlook – this is even more important with Webmail because you are only allowed so much diskspace and if your file gets full people will have their messages to you, returned to them (like if you moved without a forwarding address).

Finally, and MOST importantly, ALWAYS, ALWAYS, ALWAYS, make sure you **logout** before you close Webmail – especially if you are traveling and are using a public computer. This will ensure that the next person using the computer can't access YOUR email.

Module 3: Surfin' the 'Net

In this Module you will learn how to navigate the Internet.

Internet Explorer®

For this course you will learn how to use Internet Explorer to navigate the World Wide Web. To access Explorer, either click on the icon or click on the Start menu and then click on Internet Explorer.

Changing Your Default Homepage

You will be using the Google search engine in this course. To simplify matters, you will now change your default homepage (the website that Explorer automatically opens into when you first log on) to Google. To do this:
1) Open Explorer
2) Click on the Tools drop menu
3) Click Internet Options
4) Where is says "you can which page to use for your homepage", type in http://www.google.ca
5) Click okay
6) On the Explorer main page, then click the "Homepage button" – the one that has the little picture of a house on it – it should be the 5th button from the left hand side at the top of your screen.
7) Your homepage should now load as google.

Performing Internet Searches

To perform a search:
1) Open Explorer
2) Google should automatically open up – type a search word in the box – for example, if you want to learn about cats, type the word "cats" in that box.
3) Click the Google Search button (or press enter)
4) If you actually searched cats, 24,800,000 hits will come up (so you should obviously narrow your search somewhat).
5) To go to a site that came up from your search, click on the blue underlined part.
6) If you didn't find anything of interest in your search, change the words you are searching under and try again (by typing the new search words in the same search box (which is now at the top of your screen).
7) After you've been reading or looking at a site that comes up in your search, to get back to Google just press the picture of the little house (your homepage button) and it will take you back to the Google mainpage.
8) If you don't want to go back to the Google mainpage, but want to go back to your search (i.e., you want to go to another site that showed up fter your first Google search), simple press the "Back" button at the top of your screen (the one with the green arrow pointing backwards <-).

Internet Explorer Functions

History Function
This function lets you see what websites you have visited recently. To access the history function:
1) Open Explorer
2) Click on the button that looks like an arrow going in a circle (it should be after the search and favorites buttons at the top of your screen). Or press your Ctrl key and H key at the same time.
3) A menu will open on the left hand side of your screen showing the History for the last few weeks.
4) Click on the title of the website you wish to revisit.
5) The folder will open with all the subpages at that particular website, click on one of them and Explorer will go to that page.
6) To close the history, click in the upper right hand corner of the History menu on the X.

Favorites Function
This function allows you to save website you use often or want to revisit. To save a website in your Favorites folder:
1) Open Explorer
2) Type in the webct website (http://webct.sfu.ca)
3) Once the log in page appears, click on the Favorites menu at the top of your screen
4) Click Add
5) Okay
6) Then click on Favorites again
7) The WebCT site should now be there on the menu and next time you want to go there, you just have to click on the WebCT name in Favorites menu.

Organizing Your Favorites:
Similar to your email inbox, things can get pretty messy after you've saved a few dozen websites to your Favorites folder. To make it neater you can organize your favorite websites into folders. To do this:
1) Open Explorer
2) Click on the Favorites menu
3) Click on Organize Favorites
4) Click on Create Folder and name it appropriately and then click on the websites you want to move and select the Move to Folder button.
5) You may want to delete any websites that you don't use anymore. To do this, simply highlight the website and click the delete button.

Security and Privacy Settings
Explorer has a number of security and privacy settings. The problems I've found with them are that they limit what you can search for. So I don't use any of them. I recommend that you don't change the security or privacy settings on your computer –

instead rely on a good anti-virus program (such as Norton Anti-Virus) and scan your computer regularly with SpyBot and AdAware software (more about these program in Appendix A – which you'll receive after Module 4).

Printing from Websites
Often you will find website that you want to print information from. For the most part this is a simple task. Unless there are a lot of adds or additional information on the website, simply click File and then Print (or use your Ctrl P buttons).

If there are a lot of advertisements on the webpage, you may end up using a lot of printer paper on information you aren't interested in. Always look for an option which says "Printer Friendly versions" on such pages – often the developers of the site have a text-only page for people who only want to print (you often see this on websites that carry different cooking recipes, for example).

I suggest that when printing from the Web, you select the Print Current page options from your print menu – just to see how it prints out and if you want to waste a lot of paper.

The other option is to copy/paste the information from a website to your MS Word program (the word processing program on your computer). This is simple once you know how to do it but it takes a bit of practice. To do this:
1) Left Click your mouse and hold as you drag it down the screen (it will highlight the text).
2) Once you've highlighted all the text you want to copy, let go of your mouse and click you Ctrl and C keys at the same time. This will "copy" the text to a 'clip board'.
3) Open your Word program (it's the icon on your desktop or in your start menu that looks like a blue W with a box around it).
4) When the blank screen opens, press your Ctrl and V keys at the same time and the text you've put on the 'clip board' will appear in Word.
5) You can then print from this program without getting all the advertisements (plus you'll know exactly how many pages you are printing).

Online Libraries
Almost every library in the Lower Mainland is now online. You can access your public library online, search for books & find call numbers, so that when you do go to the library, all you have to do is go straight to the section and pick up your books. You can also check to see if books are checked out, when your own books are due, and request books from other branches.

This section will require that you get a public library card. But you don't need one to perform the online searches.

To access the Surrey Public Library, "Google" it – type the words Surrey Public Library into the search engine. The URL (or website address) will come up.

1) From the Mainpage, Click on the Catalogue button. Keep clicking the Catalogue options until you come to the search page.
2) Type in the title of a book you would like to get, or books by a specific author or books on a specific subject (Note: the Search function which says General Keyword is a drop down menu ... which means you can click on it and select a different options, such as author from that menu).
3) Click Go
4) All the books that match your title or subject will come up.
5) Click the Title of the book
6) A page will appear that shows you the availability of the book and at which branch it is available.
7) If the book you want is available, write down the call number and then go to the library and find it. This eliminates (a) searching at the library; and (b) using old card catalogue system.

APPENDIX C
INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

Questions for Interview 1

Q1.   How would describe your experience with technology growing up. Did you family have a television, microwave, etc.? If not, how readily did you take to those technologies? Did you jump on board, excited by new possibilities, or were you a bit reluctant?

Q2.   How much experience have you had with computers? Do you remember the first time you used a computer? Did you have to use computer at all with work or school? If so, how did you respond to those expectations? Were you able to use the computer if needed?

Q3.   When did you first use a computer? Can you tell me how that experience went?

Q4.   How do you feel about technology, in general? For example, microwave, VCR, DVD, MP3 Player, Computer, Camera, or whatever you think falls into this category. Which technologies do you feel most comfortable with and which least? I've drawn a continuum line and I'd like you to write the technologies you on here from least comfortable to most comfortable.

Q5. If you are learning how to use a new technology, how do you like to receive the information? Give me an example of a time when you were learning a new technology that really worked for you – something that seemed easy – and why you think that was easy for you.

Q6.   When you are sitting in front of a computer what is the first thing you do? What about if something isn't working with the computer – describe how you would work on solving the problem, what your typical plan of action would be.

Q7. If you are in a situation where you MUST use online technology (the Internet or email for example) what do you do?

Q8.   What do you think learning better Internet and online skills will do for you? What do you hope to gain from learning these skills? Since you have agreed to take part in the introductory course I've designed, what do you want to get out of it? If you only took one thing away – what would you want that to be?

Q9.   Do you think you will be comfortable working with the other participants in the online classroom? Do you think it will be intimidating? What about if the course had more learners in it? Since you are participating in the pilot of the course there are only two of you. Do you think you would feel different if there were, say, 10 or more individuals?

Questions for Interview 2

Q1.   You have now completed Module 1 of your Introduction to Internet and Online skills course. Describe how the process went for you.

Q2.   Did you find the WebCT program easy to use? Tell me any problems you encountered with the program itself.

Q3.   Did you have any problems with the computer?

Q4.   How often do you think you were using the computer over the last two week? Every day? Every other day? Once a week?

Q5.   Which part of Module 1 did you find most useful?

Q6.   Which part of Module 1 did you find least useful?

Q7.   The next module has to do with Email applications. You indicated in our initial interview that you were most looking forward to improving your email skills. Are you still looking forward to this next module?

Q8.   On a scale of 1 to 10, how would you rate your current email skill level?

Q9.   What would you like to most take away from the Email module? If you could learn only one skill, what would that be?

Q10.   You had some interaction with the other participant in the course. How did you find that? Do you enjoy having someone else in the course or would you prefer to be working completely independently?

Questions for Interview 3
Q1.   Well, we've completed probably the most anticipated module in the course for you. Can you tell me how it went?

Q2.   How would you now describe your proficiency with email applications? On a scale of 1 to 10 what would you rate your skills?

Q3.   How often did you find yourself using the computer during this Module?

Q4.   How often do you think you will use email applications in the future?

Q5.   Do you now feel more comfortable with email applications?

Q6.   What would you say is the most useful thing you learned in Module 2?

Q7.   Did you find anything surprising in this Module? Were there things about email that you didn't know that you now do know?

Q8.   Our next module is Surfing the 'Net – what do you hope to gain from this module?

Q9.   If you had to rate your current proficiency with Internet searches on a scale of 1 to 10, what would it be?

Q9.   If you had to take one thing away from Module 3 what would it be?

Questions for Interview 4
Q1.   You have now completed Module 3 on Internet Applications. Can you describe how that experience went?

Q2.   How would you now rate your proficiency with Internet searches on a scale of 1 to 10?

Q3.   What was the single most useful thing you took away from Module 3?

Q4.   What was the least useful exercise for you in Module 3?

Q5.   How often do you think you will use the information you learned in Module 3.

Q6.   Our next module is Online Chatting. What do you hope to gain from this Module?

Q7.   If you had to rate your current proficiency with online chatting on a scale of 1 to 10 what would it be?

Questions for Interview 5
Q1.   You have now completed Module 4 and, in fact, this is the end of the course. Can you comment on how your experiences in Module 4 went?

Q2.   What was the most useful thing you took away from Module 4?

Q3.   Do you think you will use the online chat feature in the future? If so, in what capacity?
Q4.   How would describe your experience in this course?

Q5.   Two months ago I asked you what the first thing you did when you sat in front of a computer was – can you answer that question now?

Q6.   If we were to draw a continuum line of technology you feel most and least comfortable with, where would the computer be now?

Q7.   Do you think you will continue to use the skills you have learned in this course? If so, which ones?

Q8.   Has your confidence with a computer changed in the last two months?

Q9.   Was there anything in the course that you wanted to have covered but which we did not cover? If so, what was it?

Q10.   Would you feel confident to enroll in an online distance education course using the WebCT software?

Questions for Interview 6
Q1.   It has now be two months since the Online and Internet skills course ended. Have you continued to use the computer?

Q2.   How often do you use the computer?

Q3.   What do you think you have retained the most from the course?

Q4.   Has your perception of yourself as a computer user changed? If so, how?

Q5.   If you run into a problem which using your computer what do you do?

Q6.   Are there still skills you want to learn with regard to computer use? If, yes, how do you plan on obtaining those skills?

Q7.   On a continuum line, where 1 is the least useful and 10 is the most useful, please write down the skills you learned in the course.